

William P. Lecky, FAIA
Board Member
Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation

Testimony on H.R. 2563
October 4, 2011

I am currently a member of the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation, and was Managing Principal for the design of the Korean War Veterans Memorial created by Cooper-Lecky Architects, Inc. in 1995. Cooper-Lecky Architects, Inc. was dissolved in 2000. I am currently the President of the Lecky Design Studio, an architectural firm in McLean, VA., which recently developed the schematic design proposal for the addition of the Wall of Remembrance, the focus of this hearing. As an added point of interest, Cooper-Lecky also served as Architects of Record for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial....working for several years with Maya Lin in the early 1980's.

There are several reasons for the genesis of H.R. 2563.

1. The veterans of the Korean War have been pleading for years for a more definitive representation of their fallen comrades on the Korean War Memorial. We initially believed that request had been satisfied by the creation of a National Park Service pavilion, located near the entrance to the Memorial, which allowed anyone – family member or friend - to type in the name of a fallen soldier and receive a printout of a personalized document that contained a photo and brief background information on the soldier in question. Sadly, this has not worked well in meeting its intended purpose. The pavilion is not readily located and/or recognized for its purpose. Frequently equipment is out of service. The information on any specific soldier is only in the system if provided by the family of the deceased. And the enormity of the national sacrifice is not truly realized by the visitor when dealing with a single individual death.
2. During the original conflict, the Korean Military offered up thousands of their soldiers, known as KATUSAs, to fight alongside our troops. Exact numbers are unknown, but estimates are that roughly 10,000 of these men gave their lives in combat, side by side with our men in the field. The Korean Government does not the list of names...only estimated casualty figures, but we feel it only appropriate that some recognition be given to these KATUSA fighters, as the number of our US fallen would surely have grown without their courageous assistance.
3. The Korean government and its people are grateful, beyond bounds, for our help in preserving their freedom. Our memorial on the National Mall is on every Korean tourist's must see list. And they love this country and this memorial, but many feel that there is little about the memorial that speaks uniquely about Korea. Our hope is that artistic contributions by Korean artists can be added to the Wall of Remembrance to respond to those comments. As a designer, I feel this will make a unique and interesting contribution to the design of the wall.

Description of the proposed concept for Wall of Remembrance

The current design of the Korean War Veterans Memorial consists of two major elements....what we refer to as the "Field of Service" and the "Pool of Remembrance". The Field of Service consists of a sloped triangular hill covered by 19 stainless steel ground troops moving up a hill toward the American flag. The entrance walk to the memorial runs along the north side of that triangle. The departing walk runs along the south side of the triangle. Visitors overlook the ground troops on their right and a granite wall of 2500 etched faces of support forces on their left.

The top of the triangular field wedges its way into the black circular pool we call the Pool of Remembrance. Our intention was to honor the ground troops with the stainless steel figures, the support forces with the faces on the wall, and the fallen soldiers with the black reflecting pool. The pool is surrounded by a treed, circular plaza with benches that was intended as a contemplative area for reflection on all the lives lost. Because the images are so powerful in and around the Field of Service, the circulation of visitors moves predominantly up one side of the triangle and down the other. The Pool of Remembrance is seen, but not fully, or evenly partially, understood by the average visitor. The plaza around the pool is only sparingly occupied.

Our hope, with the Wall of Remembrance, is to create a transparent glass wall, perhaps seven or eight feet high, that would encircle the perimeter of the plaza at the top of the hill. Etched into the glass would be the names of the thirty-six thousand Americans who gave their lives in this conflict. But the wall would also contain a number of other potential elements, as yet undetermined or designed. These would include a statement (and numbers of dead) honoring the fallen KATUSA soldiers...perhaps homilies, images of appropriate flags or symbols honoring the contributing countries who gave support to our effort in Korea, and perhaps some artwork from Korea. The glass wall would not interfere with one's view across the Mall, and at night, the names would be lighted from concealed, below grade, fixtures.....allowing the names to sparkle against the black sky. Our hope is that the wall will draw people into the plaza so they can realize the intensity of the impact and the degree of sacrifice of one of the bloodiest conflicts in our nation's history. Our belief is that this will add major enrichment and a depth of understanding to the message of this memorial without impacting the strength and beauty of that which exists on the site today.