

Col William E. Weber, USA Ret.
Chairman, Gen. RGS Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation, Inc.
Testimony on H.R. 2563
4 October 2011

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

I am accompanied by one of the principals, Mr. William Lecky from the architectural firm Cooper & Lecky, responsible for advising on and finalizing the design in accord with the guidance of the Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board as modified by the Commission of Fine Arts. Mr. Lecky is also a member of the Gen RGS Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation Inc., Board which I chair.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to offer a statement in support of H.R. 2563, as it is currently written. I was an appointee by President Reagan to the Korean War Veterans Advisory Board as provided for in P.L. 99-572. The mission of the Board was to select and gain approval of the design and the site for the Memorial, and negotiate approval for such through the various bodies of the District of Columbia that have jurisdiction concerning Memorials located on the Mall, and to raise the necessary funds to support the construction of the Memorial.

The Board operated in close cooperation with the ABMC, which was designated in the law as responsible for the Memorial. In essence, however, it was the Advisory Board that performed the myriad of duties involved in design, site selection and fund raising.

PL 99-572 specifically states in part, “-----to honor members of the United States Armed Forces who served in the Korean War, **particularly those who were killed in action, are still missing in action, or were held as prisoners of war.**” The design competition resulted in over 300 submittals by various groups, firms and individuals throughout the United States. None of these designs satisfied the full intent of the law and the preliminary design that was eventually selected would be subjected to many modifications. Sadly, after much negotiation, the design that finally received the approval by the numerous agencies involved in the process did not provide for meaningful and specific recognition to those KIA, MIA, POW or WIAs.

A subliminal message was included in the design to call attention to the human costs of the Korean War, by including a Pool of Remembrance to provide a place for reflection by the visitor to contemplate the true meaning of why ‘Freedom Is Not Free’, the symbolic theme of the Memorial. It was hoped that the visitor to the Memorial would relate to such by seeing inscribed in granite at foot level the total number of casualties friendly and foreign in the alcove opposite the wall on which Freedom Is Not Free is inscribed at eye level. Unfortunately, the subliminal message is too subtle and fails to visually convey to the visitor why ‘Freedom is not Free’.

The prominence of the Memorial Theme logo (Freedom is not Free), attracts the primary attention of visitors not the inscribed numbers. There is nothing that translates that phrase into an appreciation of what it cost for freedom not to be free. As well, and unfortunately, the location of the alcove at the head of the memorial allows only a limited number of individuals within such, discouraging the mass of visitors from entering. Most simply encircle the line of sculptures and depart. It is also apparent that in the pattern of visitation an insignificant number of visitors tend to encircle the outer perimeter of the Pool of Remembrance and gain no appreciation of the message intended.

As magnificent a work of art as is the Memorial, it does not satisfy the full intent of PL 99-572. Though several attempts were made during the design process to somehow include names of the fallen, they met with failure for a variety of reasons which are no longer germane to the purpose of H.R. 2563. To have continued to formally pursue such inclusion in the final design would have jeopardized the five year limitation in the law. In fact, an extension had to be negotiated as there were insufficient funds for construction in late 1991.

There will be those who question why HR 2563 must be so specific detailing exactly what the Wall of Remembrance will contain. The answer is that it should not be a negotiable area if PL 99-572 is to be finally fully complied with in substance and intent. There will also be those who say that the Kiosk located between the Vietnam and the Korean War Memorials does provide a way of acknowledging KIA; but the Kiosk is a one name at a time print out and only then if one knows what name to recover. This may satisfy the next of kin of those killed in action; but in no way will convey to the mass of visitors what the human cost was for the War.

For those who may say to you that it is not normal to specifically define changes to an existing Memorial, I say that the specificity is essential if there is to be full compliance with P.L. 99-572. And further I'd like to state that it is the right of Congress to be as specific as necessary to define how the honored dead of the Korean War will finally be acknowledged by the Memorial intended to honor them and their service. For they, absent any threat to our home shores or our way of life, served and died in obedience to one of America's most sacred principles that Freedom is not Free.

It can be said that we fought WWII to **save the world for democracy**, and it can also be said that we fought the Korean War to **save the world from communism**. Such was the result of the Korean War, a benchmark of the 20th century and a catalyst for the beginning of the downfall of the intent by Communism to dominate the world.

The Korean War was also unique in that it was the first war in history in which an organization of nations bonded together to confront and defeat armed aggression designed to subdue a free people and enslave them. More nations provided forces during the Korean War than was so in WWII. These UN Member nations and the Republic of Korea placed their forces under the command and control of the US and their service and sacrifice is as deserving of recognition in terms of what it cost for freedom to be not free.

This is particularly true as it pertains to the 'Korean Augmentation to US Army', or KATUSA as they are commonly called. KATUSA consisted of young Korean men who were assigned to US Army Forces and at times comprised as much as 20% of our frontline infantry and field artillery combat strength. They were in every aspect except their nationality American combat soldiery who served under American leadership and fought and died side by side with their American counterparts. Because of the confusion of the earlier months of the War, it may never be known the exact number of KATUSA who died in place of what would otherwise have been an American soldier. However, on a statistical basis it is fair to conclude that the percentage and type of KATUSA casualties were at least equal and more probably, greater than that of their US comrades-in-arms. Though exact figures may never be known because of the critical nature of the early stages of the war in 1950, and difficulty in recording casualties for the KATUSA, at least between 8-10 thousand were KIA and a great many more wounded, missing in action or captured. Their total casualties would have otherwise been American soldiers. Surely they deserve recognition with their American comrades.

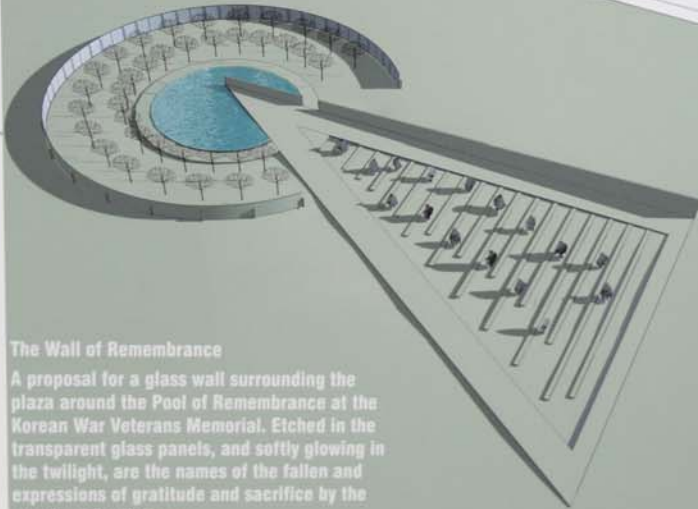
The same is true for the UN casualties, for absent the contribution of forces by the twenty other United Nations the Korean War would have been exclusively a US and Republic of Korea war against North Korea and communist China and the military, material and advisory support they were receiving from the communist world. Under such circumstances it would have had the potential for a prelude to WW III.

It is in the tradition of our people to honor our dead from our conflicts where such is feasible. By naming them on the Memorials we erect in our hamlets, towns and cities, we ensure they will not be forgotten. We can do so with the Korean War Veterans Memorial and the veterans and fallen of 'The Forgotten War'! It defies logic for others to suggest that a written brochure can explain to visitors the intent of a Memorial when the Memorial itself does not convey the intended message.

In closing I would like to emphasize that H.R. 2563 does not create a new Memorial on the Mall, it simply refines and enhances an existing Memorial in consonance with the original desires of the Congress stipulated in PL 99-572

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to answer any questions you and the other members of this Committee might have.

Attachment: Schematic rendering of proposed Wall of Remembrance



The Wall of Remembrance

A proposal for a glass wall surrounding the plaza around the Pool of Remembrance at the Korean War Veterans Memorial. Etched in the transparent glass panels, and softly glowing in the twilight, are the names of the fallen and expressions of gratitude and sacrifice by the people of South Korea.

Design/Concept : Architect WILLIAM P. LECKY - FAIA
Digital imagery : Harold H. Gonzalez

National Mall,
Washington, DC, April, 2008



KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL - WALL OF REMEMBRANCE