

Vietnam Veterans Memorial of San Antonio



John Baines, Lee Class of 1963 – Co-Founder & Chairman of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial of San Antonio, Inc. – San Antonio businessman and Vietnam veteran.

Location

Veterans Memorial Plaza is located across Auditorium Circle from the San Antonio Municipal Auditorium. The Municipal Auditorium was built in 1926 as a tribute to the veterans of World War I. In 1979 the auditorium suffered a devastating fire and the City of San Antonio seriously considered a controlled demolition of a true architectural masterpiece. After an overwhelming outcry from the community, the mayor and city council reconsidered and the auditorium went through a \$9 million restoration, returning it to its original glory. In 1981 the auditorium was added to the National Register of Historic Places and was re-dedicated to the veterans of all our nation's wars. In 2014 the auditorium was redeveloped and renamed – Tobin Center for the Performing Arts.

The Beginning

Veterans Memorial Plaza is designated as a central city location for the placement of military oriented memorials, plaques and statues. Additionally, this place of reverence is intended to be "hallowed ground" for military ceremonies and wreath laying vigils. Veterans Memorial Plaza is dedicated to the memory and sacrifices of those who served in our nation's armed forces. Their willingness to meet and overcome the most difficult of tests will never be forgotten.

September 1985: Vietnam veterans – John D. Baines (former Navy Seabee) and Major William "Bill" C. Stensland, USMC (Ret.) received unanimous approval from the San Antonio City Council to proceed with plans to develop Veterans Memorial Plaza and to commission Scottsdale, Arizona artist, Austin Deuel, to create "Hill-881 South" – San Antonio's Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

December 1985: John D. Baines and Maj. Bill C. Stensland founded and chartered The Vietnam Veterans Memorial of San Antonio, Inc., a non-profit corporation chartered in the state of Texas. They assembled nine veterans, representing all five branches of the military, to serve on the Board of Directors. This entity was established to raise funds to design and oversee the construction of Veterans Memorial Plaza and a Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

January 1986: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial of San Antonio, Inc. commissioned Austin Deuel, to create "Hill-881 South", San Antonio's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The three times life-size bronze sculpture is believed to be the largest sculpture of its type in the United States.

Total Cost: \$200,000.00.

February 1986: The City of San Antonio and Vietnam Veterans Memorial of San Antonio, Inc. entered into a legally binding contract for the design and construction of Veterans Memorial Plaza. The new urban park would be developed on what was a city-owned downtown parking lot. Veterans Memorial Plaza would be funded through charitable donations from the general public. All fund raising efforts would be organized by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial of San Antonio, Inc. organization.

Dedication

This place of honor is dedicated to the memory and sacrifices of all San Antonians who served in our nations armed forces. Their willingness to meet and overcome the most difficult of tests will never be forgotten.



John Baines with General Alfred M. Gray, 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps

Source: <http://vietnamveteransmemorialofsanantonio.com/>