

# VIETNAM GRAFFITI

## “Marking Time: Voyage to Vietnam” Exhibit Fact Sheet

- In 2004, Vietnam Graffiti Project founders Art and Lee Beltrone learn of the removal and imminent scrapping of troopship *General Nelson M. Walker* from Virginia’s James River Reserve Fleet
- In 2004, with the goal of preserving the history and artifacts from the ship, development of the Vietnam Graffiti Project’s *Marking Time: Voyage to Vietnam* traveling exhibit begins; the exhibit’s mission is to honor all Vietnam veterans
- In 2005, the troopship *Walker* is towed to All Star Metals in Brownsville, Texas where Vietnam Graffiti Project founders receive permission to remove and recover historic artifacts for the exhibit, including:
  - More than 300 graffiti-covered canvases
  - Three complete eight-man bunk units consisting of support poles, canvases on metal frames, sheets, pillows, mattresses, blankets and life vests
  - Ship cleaning artifacts
  - Ship safety artifacts
  - Signage and hundreds of personal items left on the ship by soldiers and Marines going to or coming from Vietnam
- Vietnam Graffiti Project founders use the bunk canvas graffiti to find the soldiers who wrote the messages or traveled aboard the *Walker*; interviews and stories from the veterans are recorded for inclusion in the developing *Marking Time: Voyage to Vietnam* exhibit
- During 2006-2007, an exhibit is created with:
  - A complete, free-standing eight-man berthing unit
  - A selection of approximately one dozen graffiti-inscribed canvases mounted on lightweight PVC pipe for wall display
  - Historic artifacts for display
  - An audio tour with recorded *Walker* troopship passenger stories

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- Exhibit canvases reflect specific themes with their graffiti—seasickness, home towns, loved ones, boredom, humor and anxiety (the latter represented by a reclining bikini-clad female with Ho Chi Minh facial features welcoming American GI's to Vietnam)
- In November 2007, the premiere of Vietnam Graffiti Project's *Marking Time: Voyage to Vietnam* exhibit opens at the United States Navy Memorial in Washington, DC to commemorate Veterans' Day
- An introductory movie, produced from original 1966-67 *Walker* voyage film, becomes part of the travelling exhibit
- In 2008, a second *Marking Time: Voyage to Vietnam* exhibit unit is created for use on the West Coast, with the premiere at The Washington State History Museum (Tacoma)
  
- In 2010, Jonee Kemp, a Virginia Commonwealth University film student from Great Britain, produces a second exhibit movie about *Walker* shipboard life and the rescue of Merchant Mariners from a sinking cargo ship in the Pacific Ocean

## **Exhibit Locations:**

Starting in 2007, venues and cities that have shown or are scheduled to show the Vietnam Graffiti Project's *Marking Time: Voyage to Vietnam* exhibit include:

- United States Navy Memorial (Washington, DC)
- Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society (Charlottesville, VA)
- Wisconsin Veterans Museum (Madison)
- Virginia Historical Society (Richmond)
- Atkinson Museum, Hampden-Sydney College (Hampden Sydney, VA)
- Washington State Historical Society (Tacoma)
- Santa Barbara Maritime Museum (Santa Barbara, CA)
- Los Angeles Maritime Museum (San Pedro, CA)
  
- Nauticus (Norfolk, VA)
  
- New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial (Holmdel)

## **Project Founders /Exhibit Curators**

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