

MURRAY GREEN, K3BEQ

By Murray Green, K3BEQ

More Than Radio Spans the Oceans



Joe Nunemaker, KD3VR, uses a pencil to transfer an imprint of the soldier's name from The Wall. Many visitors make similar "rubbings."

In Washington, DC, stands a granite wall engraved with the names of 58,209 veterans who lost their lives or remain missing in Vietnam. It's formally called the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; those who know it well refer to it simply as "The Wall." Most of the veterans listed there were very young, I suspect, barely in their 20s. And so it was, through Amateur Radio, that I heard of such a lad who came from across the ocean.

A Very Special QSO

In June of 1997 our repeater organization, The Green Mountain Repeater Association, which serves the Washington, DC, area, decided to link its VHF repeaters to the Internet. The decision was largely influenced by the December 1996 *QST* article, "A New 'Band' for Your Radio." Members designed and built an interface module, which was connected between my 2-meter transceiver and computer. Soon, thanks to the Internet link, local hams were talking to other amateurs all over the world from their H-Ts and mobile units.

While I was monitoring the repeater one evening, a fellow amateur from the United Kingdom checked in. I quickly acknowledged his call and we began to exchange the usual banter about our stations, antennas, computers and so on.

From there the conversation turned to my Maryland location near Washington, DC, with its numerous museums, monuments and memorials. It was then that my UK counterpart conveyed the following story.

Sometime before the onset of the Vietnam war, his cousin had decided to come to the US and to live with his grandparents in Seattle, Washington. Exactly what happened next isn't certain, but it seems that eventually the young man joined the US

Marine Corps—something he had always talked about—and was sent to Vietnam, where he soon lost his life. He was barely 20 years old.

An Unselfish Act

My UK friend went on to tell me that when his cousin left Europe, it was, to the best of his knowledge, the last time anyone in his family ever saw him alive, except for his grandparents in Seattle. Since then, much of the family has passed on. He knew about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, but hadn't had the opportunity to visit it and see the engraving of his cousin's name (nor had most of his remaining family).

At that moment, the trustee of the repeater, Joseph Nunemaker, KD3VR, himself a Vietnam veteran, joined in the exchange. Joe explained that both he and I lived within a 20-minute drive of The Wall and that we would be most privileged to drive down and take "rubbings" off the granite and photographs of his cousin's name. I quickly agreed. There was more than the usual delay before the UK amateur responded.

After obtaining some additional information, we signed off, promising to keep him informed of our progress. Later that evening, Joe, via his computer, logged onto the World Wide Web and obtained the specific location of the engraving. He had done this many times before to locate the names of others with whom he had served. (You can do the same by visiting The Wall site at <http://thewall-usa.com/>.)

The Wall

July in America's capital city can be brutally hot and humid. The day Joe and I drove down to the Veterans Memorial was no exception. We parked and walked across Constitution Avenue, entering the grounds.

Transferring the rubbings and taking the

photographs took a little more than an hour. We were fortunate that this particular panel was only about four feet off the ground. Some are 10 feet tall and require a ladder, provided by the US Park Service, to climb. In those cases, Park Service employees or their volunteers will make the rubbings for you.

Fulfilling the Promise

Two weeks later we took an 8×10-inch package to the local Post Office and mailed it to an amateur in a small town in the UK. It contained something very special. Our only regret is that we were unable to deliver it in person.

Joe and I feel strongly that this is what Amateur Radio is all about—taking the time to help others, and to learn about the lives of others, whether far away or in our backyards. For these ends, merging Amateur Radio and Internet technologies isn't such a bad idea.

Author's Note: To respect the privacy of those involved, call signs and names have been omitted.

Murray Green, K3BEQ, has been licensed since 1951 and is an ARRL OO, VE, DXCC Field Representative and local area QSL manager for WAS awards. He has written several articles for QST, which appeared in the FM and Repeaters and YL News columns. He holds the Number 1 DXCC Honor Roll award and is an Extra licensee. His son David is KA3SGE. Murray is a Korean War veteran.

Joseph Nunemaker II, KD3VR, trustee of one of two repeaters operated and maintained by the Green Mountain Repeater Association, was selected as the ARRL Atlantic Division's Amateur of the Year for 1997. Joe also designed and constructed the repeater/computer interface box mentioned in this article. His spouse Allie and son Joseph are WB3AOA and KE3GD, respectively. Joe is a Vietnam War veteran. Six of his friends' names are engraved on The Wall.

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