

Museum of Forgotten Warriors stirs emotion

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I have never written anything for the Space Sentinel before, but I couldn't pass this up. I had an experience recently that compelled me to write it down and share it with everyone.

While driving down North Beale Road, we've all probably seen the sign for the Museum of the Forgotten Warriors, a museum dedicated to the men and women who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm, but how many of us have bothered to stop? Well, I did once, a little over six years ago, but the significance of the place didn't hit me then.

I stopped at the museum again a couple of weeks ago, and when I got there, I wanted to kick myself for staying away so long.

Tears came to my eyes for the first time in a long while as I looked at the pictures and read the names of the men and women who had served before me, some who never made it back home, who never saw the fruits of their sacrifice.

As I gazed at the old, sun-faded uniforms, postcards, weapons and souvenirs of campaigns past, it hit me like a ton of bricks.

Dann Spear, the curator and founder of the museum, has painstakingly created an incredible monument to the men and women of our armed forces.

The museum is not just concerned with the Vietnam War, as many people think. It encompasses all recent major American conflicts.

Spear can tell a story about every piece in his museum, every book, patch, uniform, gun and photo. It was much more than I was able to absorb in three hours.

I asked Spear why he did all this, and he said that although he had not been in the military himself, he had a lot of friends who went to Vietnam and he began collecting the uniform patches and other memorabilia to show what they had done.

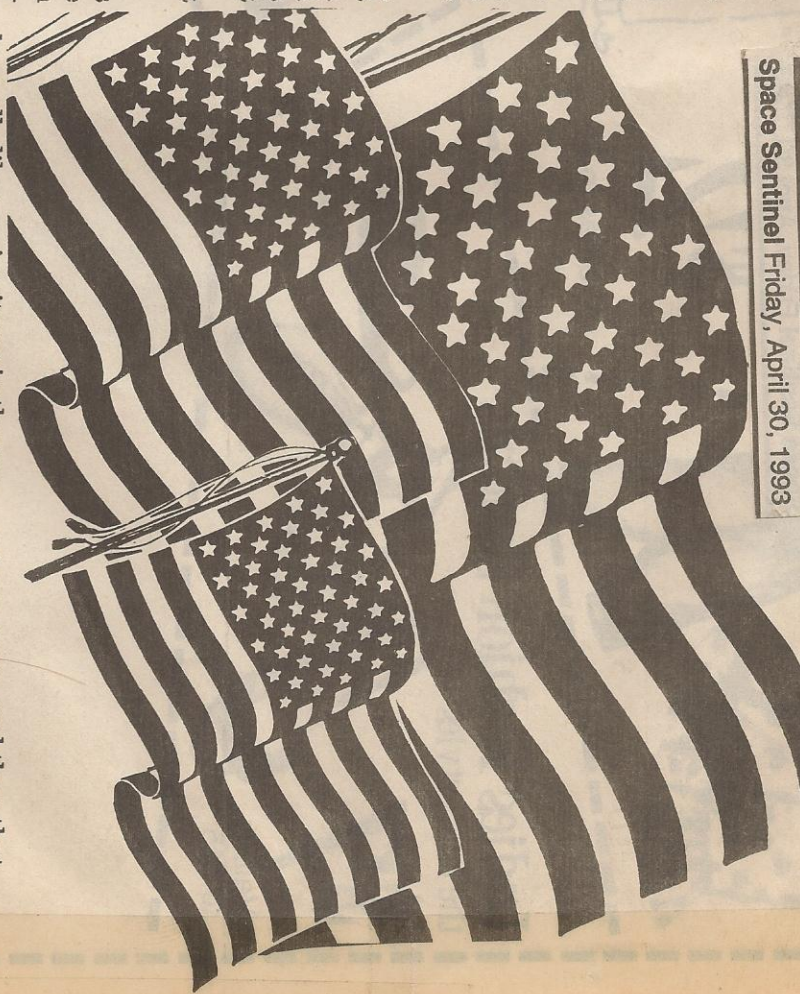
He said he felt it was important that the veterans not be forgotten.

How right he was.

He built the building that houses the museum himself, starting in the late '70s. He has already added on once, and plans to build another addition soon. He accepts no cash donations, only memorabilia. When he told me that, I knew this was one dedicated troop.

I asked Spear what he enjoys most about the museum, and he said it was the people who come to see it. He said

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he really likes seeing items in the museum trigger people's memories, stirring recollections of their time in the service. I know it worked on me.

Finally, I asked him why he keeps on doing this year after year. He said, "It's just to honor the vets." It doesn't

get any more real than that.

The museum is open Thursday evenings, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., and the first Saturday of each month, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Stop in and check it out. Dann will be glad to see you, and you'll be glad you went.