

tell people you want to build a half-scale replica, they think miniature and model; they don't realize the power of Maya Lin's design." Searching for a way for the work to be completed, they sought contributions of goods and services. If they couldn't get the material donated, they could at least arrange credit terms and discounted pricing.

"We were totally surprised by the reaction of the businesses we approached. I didn't even have a credit card at the time, but when we talked to various companies and explained what we were trying to do, they were very sympathetic. Many took the job on our word." Devitt says, "I knew that once we got started, it would pay for itself...and if it didn't, we were prepared to pay for it ourselves." He was convinced of the need for the Moving Wall.

The first Moving Wall was built of plexiglass, with each name silk-screened onto the panels. The photographic negatives of the names were made available by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the organization responsible for building the Memorial. When new names are added to the Wall, they are also added to the Moving Wall at the end of its season. In its present form, the third generation, the Moving Wall consists of aluminum panels and is a half scale replica of the original.

In the eleven years since the Moving Wall has been in existence, it has been visited by millions of people, in over 410 locations. While the material of the Moving Wall has changed, its impact remains the same.

The Moving Wall was first displayed in 1984 in Texas as part of the Tyler Rose Festival. "We hadn't even put up the fifth panel when a Gold Star Mother placed a beautifully decorated candle at the base of the panel where her son's name was inscribed," Devitt recalls. Just like the Wall in Washington, people began to leave mementoes, so many, in fact, that Devitt decided to have them shipped to the Moving Wall's off season home in San Jose, CA. He hopes to build a museum to display the items, but for now concentrates on making sure the Moving Wall travels to as many cities as possible.

"When you think about it," he says, "two or three million people visit the Wall every year. There are ten or twenty times that many people, who, for whatever reason, will never be able to make the trip to Washington." Scheduling the route of the Wall is a tough job and Devitt tries to be as objective as possible. Dates fill up quickly, almost a year in advance, and there are often schedule conflicts which prevent visits to certain events and locations. "When we started, it was much simpler," he says. "Someone would call and if I wasn't going to be somewhere else at that time, we would load things up and go."

While the costs involved were greater than expected, Devitt was opposed to any kind of charge to visit the Moving Wall. "Originally, we thought we could put out a donation box and that would cover our expenses," he explains. Convinced that there should be no charge to have the Wall come to a community, someone came up with the idea that local host committees be formed to sponsor the Moving Wall's visit. This solution has worked well, and the schedule of the Moving Wall remains crowded as it journeys across the country.

Many people have not heard about Devitt or the Moving Wall; his humble and hard working attitude are partially responsible. "When the Wall comes to a town, it brings people out from all over. We try to play it low key because the Wall speaks for itself." He continues, "This isn't about me. It's not about John Devitt. It's about remembering 58,000 people who died in service to their country."