

On the Cover

The Three Servicemen statue (also known as *The Three Soldiers*) on the cover of this issue is located in a grove of trees not far from and facing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. The three soldiers' eyes all stare off vacantly into the distance; it is as though they have just emerged from a Southeast Asian jungle to find the names of fallen comrades in front of them. Some call this the *thousand-yard stare* typical of men in combat.

This sculpture was conceived to honor the courage and bravery of Vietnam veterans, in the tradition of heroic monuments. Its sculptor, Frederick Hart, had come in third in the competition to design the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. He lost out to Maya Lin, a Yale undergraduate architecture major who designed the now-famous wall of names. Lin's design was considered by some as too abstract and more like an enormous black tombstone than an appropriate depiction of the heroes of the war that lasted from 1965 to 1975. As a result of the ensuing controversy, Hart, a skilled representational artist, was selected to create a more traditional work to be added as an integral part of the memorial. President Ronald Reagan and 1,000 veterans attended when *The Three Servicemen* was unveiled on Veteran's Day in 1984, two years after the wall was dedicated. Maya Lin refused to attend.

Hart sought to sculpt a powerful and evocative representation of Vietnam service. In his eyes, the wall was a kind of ocean, whereas his figures stand on the shore, keeping vigil, representing the wall's human face and heart. In his own words (see <http://www.vvmf.org/ThreeServicemen>),

The portrayal of the figures is consistent with history. They wear the uniform and carry the equipment of war; they are young. The contrast between the innocence of their youth and the weapons of war underscores the poignancy of their sacrifice. There is about them the physical contact and sense of unity that bespeaks the bonds of love and sacrifice that is the nature of men at war. And yet they are each alone. Their strength and their vulnerability are both evident. Their true heroism lies in these bonds of loyalty in the face of their aloneness and their vulnerability.

Frederick E. Hart (1943–1999) was eulogized by Tom Wolfe in a *New York Times* obituary (see <http://www.jeanstephengalleries.com/hart-wolfe.html>). Wolfe described him as the artist the art world could not see because contemporary art in the mid-20th century was so totally nonrepresentational. Wolfe claimed that the more art did not represent anything at all, the more highly regarded it seemed to be—at least in the rarified world of the art critic. Hart's genius was inborn: He pulled figures from stone quickly and skillfully. He dropped out of school in the

ninth grade and lasted only six months in college. But he was passionate about his art and articulate in describing what motivated him:

I believe that art has a moral responsibility, that it must pursue something higher than itself. Art must be a part of life. It must exist in the domain of the common man. It must be an enriching, ennobling, and vital partner in the public pursuit of civilization. It should be a majestic presence in everyday life just as it was in the past. (<http://www.jeanstephengalleries.com/hart-bio.html>)

Although not recognized by the art world, Hart's resilience in the face of adversity and perseverance as an artist earned him the National Medal of the Arts, the U.S. Government's highest award given to artists. President George W. Bush signed the award proclamation on November 17, 2004: "For his important body of work—including the Washington National Cathedral's Creation Sculptures and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's *Three Soldiers*—which heralded a new age for contemporary public art." Only the most distinguished American artists receive this award. Although Hart was recognized for his whole body of work, the award may have been particularly in tribute to his patriotic sculpture commemorating an unpopular war.

The military is charged with protecting the peace. Ironically, at times this means waging war. Even in times of war, the goal of peace is at the core of the endeavor. According to General George W. Casey Jr., U.S. Army Chief of Staff, the Army has recognized that soldiers' psychological fitness needs to be at the same level as their physical fitness (see his introduction to this special issue). The men and women of the U.S. Army stand to benefit from the military resiliency training and Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program adapted from the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Program. The goal of resiliency training is to build the strengths of the individual soldiers so that their chances of experiencing positive growth from their Army service are increased. In this era of almost persistent conflict, it becomes increasingly important to understand the capacity that individuals have for dealing with change and adversity and the processes they can avail themselves of to survive and/or flourish.

The goals of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program are to promote the well-being of individual soldiers and their families. The fortitude, determination, and heroism of these very real people are echoed by the servicemen depicted in Hart's powerful sculpture.

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