

## PROFILE OF A NEWSMAKER

# Woman looks to memorialize war casualties

**In the news:** Jean Risley of Coventry is organizing an effort to construct a memorial for 612 Connecticut residents who died in the Vietnam War, including her brother, Robert Tillquist.

**Background:** Originally from Hartford, Risley volunteered several years to help Capt. Nathan Hale School teacher Thomas Dzicek with a school project known as the "612" project, the first-ever attempt to chronicle those Connecticut residents who died in the Vietnam War. Dzicek's students researched the names of every state service member killed in Vietnam, and when possible, interviewed family members and other veterans of the war. The end result was a book titled "612," a complete listing and biography of every state veteran who died in the war.

Two months ago, Risley approached town officials with the idea of constructing a memorial to honor those who died in the war and began raising money to finance the project. If successful, it will be the only memorial in the state dedicated solely to those who died in Vietnam, listing all 612 names.

**Quote:** "When I started this, someone told me that with the Iraq War going, on no one was going to remember someone from Vietnam. I told them that if someone lost a loved one in Vietnam, they'd remember. I want to do this for my brother and the other 611 who gave their lives in that war. This may be the most important thing I ever do in my life."

**Her brother:** Robert Tillquist joined the U.S. Army in April 1964. He began his tour of duty in Vietnam in August 1965, serving as a combat medic. He was killed Nov. 4, 1965, in the battle of Pleiku and was posthu-



**Jean Risley**

mously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

**The memorial:** Coventry has agreed to help Risley, identifying several properties in town for the memorial. Risley said she has not yet decided on the exact location. She is also pursuing a nonprofit, tax-exemption status for the committee working on the project.

In the two months since beginning the effort, Risley has collected more than \$5,000 in donations. It is estimated the memorial alone will cost about \$28,000 to design and build. She has set no deadline to complete the project, but ideally would like to see the memorial dedicated on Veterans Day 2007. "I'd love to have that dedication next Veterans Day, but I think that might be a little too ambitious," she said.

**How to help:** Anyone interested in making a contribution can do so by sending a donation to CVVMC (Connecticut Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee) in care of Paul Jataowski, treasurer, 91 Upton Dr., Coventry, CT 06238.

—Ray Hackett

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