

‘It Meant A Lot to Us’

A VFW Post in Nevada was chosen to showcase a tribute to fallen Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans last year after a five-year absence

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Heralded as “America’s Patriotic Home” with many streets clothed in the proverbial red, white and blue, Hawthorne, Nevada, provided a fitting backdrop last year for a robust display of patriotism.

For the first time since 2016, the collaboration between Western Nevada College (WNC) and VFW Post 2313 in Hawthorne reintroduced the renowned Always Lost: A Meditation on War exhibit as a public display in September.

The exhibition, which began as a creative writing class project at WNC’s Carson City campus in 2009, had gone dormant after a seven-year barnstorming tour to more than 50 venues across the country.

When approached by WNC’s faculty early in 2021, Post 2313 Commander C.J. Schulz and his fellow members were both humbled and honored to have an opportunity to serve as the exhibit’s long-term host.

“It caught me off guard because they reached out first,” said Schulz, who deployed with the Army’s 2nd Infantry Division to Korea in 1994-95. “It meant a lot to us to be able to bring something to our town that represents the sacrifice many of our younger veterans and their families have made.”

Following a six-month period of legal contracts and a steady stream of conversations, Schulz received the Always Lost: A Meditation on War exhibit in August and decided to unveil it on Sept. 10, 2021.

Like Schulz and other members of Post 2313, the unveiling prompted emotions for many northern Nevada residents who stopped by to see the exhibit. It featured an array of literary works that sit alongside more than 7,000 faces of veterans who perished during the Iraq and

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Afghanistan wars from Sept. 11, 2001, to Dec. 31, 2014.

Along with the literary works by WNC students, veterans and their families, the exhibit also carries a display of combat photographs by a 2004 Pulitzer Prize-winning team from The Dallas Morning News. Other items include original poetry by Army Spc. Noah C. Pierce, who died by suicide after serving two tours in Iraq.

“The whole thing is pretty powerful,” Schulz said. “The poetry on the wall along with the photographs is one of those things that hits very close to home. Many of our Iraq and Afghanistan veterans can’t talk about it. I have a hard time myself because I also have friends on the wall.”

For most of the northern Nevada and Hawthorne residents drawn into the Post’s exhibit room since the opening last year, Schulz believes many are searching for a level of closure in finding loved ones within the 7,000 faces.

“The first day, I remember one of the families that showed up had his big brother on the wall,” Schulz said. “For me, it had been so long since I had seen some of my friends, but I wasn’t sure if I had lost them. It brought me closure to find them.”

The Always Lost: A Meditation on War exhibit is slated to remain at VFW Post 2313, about 315 miles northwest of Las Vegas, for a five-year period with a possibility for renewal, according to Schulz.

Admission is free for all visitors wanting to visit the exhibit, which is showcased daily from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

This article was featured in the 2022 April issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Ismael Rodriguez Jr.](#), senior writer for VFW magazine.