

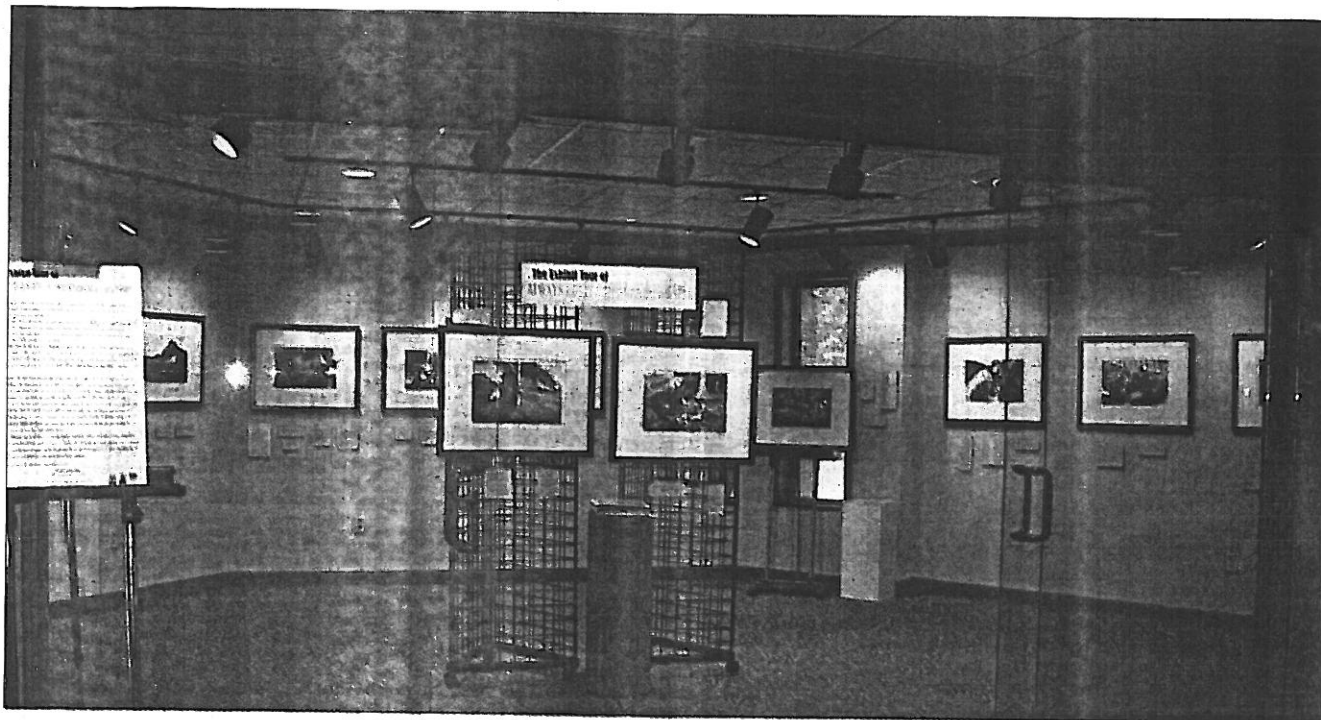
'Always

Lost'



Western Nevada
College's exhibit
of photos, prose
and poems
about war goes
on the road, Pages 4-5

Reno Gazette Journal
Northern Nevada
Life. Sept. 19th 2010



The exhibition, "Always Lost: A Meditation on War," has traveled from Western Nevada College in Carson City, where it was created, to the University of Wisconsin, Marinette, where it's now showing.

PROVIDED BY UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, MARINETTE

Meditations ON WAR

Western Nevada College's exhibit, 'Always Lost,' goes on the road

By Susan Skorupa
sskorupa@rgj.com

Forget what you think and what you think you know about America's war on terror.

Listen to some other voices.

*"War slinks through dunes
Wrapped in dust
Clinging to bloody limbs."*

"Sadness drifts in through the window

*Wearing my soldier's clothes
And settles at the foot of the bed."*

— by Trishia Haahr, from
"Always Lost: A Meditation on War"

"Always Lost: A Meditation on War" started as a class project at Western Nevada College in Carson City and has turned into an exhibition that other colleges want to show. A year ago, the exhibit

was at WNC, and it elicited the greatest audience of any show ever at the college. People came to see the photos, read the poems and commentary about Iraq, Afghanistan and other conflicts and meditate on the faces and names of the more than 5,000 members of the U.S. military killed in action since Sept. 11, 2001.

"Always Lost" now is on the road, at the University of Wisconsin, Marinette. Organizers hope to raise money to keep it traveling around the country to universities and other groups, then eventually return to Carson City. The long-term plan is to keep the project on the road so people all over the U.S. can see it before turning it over to a group, such as a veterans' association.

In 2008, WNC sociology professor Don Carlson was stunned by "rosters of the dead"

SEE ALWAYS LOST, 5 »

From 4

of the 4,000 American military personnel killed in the Mideast wars by that time, exhibition organizers said.

Carlson and English professor Marilee Swirczek, together with Swirczek's creative writing classes devised an exhibit to personalize the Iraq and Afghanistan wars through poems, prose and photos. English instructor and Marine Major Kevin Burns named the resulting exhibit from a line by American writer Gertrude Stein: "War is never fatal but always lost. Always lost," the exhibition organizers said.

Students contributed poetry and short prose, interviews with WNC students who also are veterans, and photos. Other artists and writers in the community contributed.

"The more we were (involved), the more emotionally and spiritually invested we were," said Doug Deacy, a WNC student, writer and photographer.

Deacy, who interviewed and photographed the three Carson City area veterans and WNC students featured in the exhibition, recalled laying out the panels containing individual photos of the war dead in his house. The exhibition organizers had yet to find photos of all those killed in action.

"After a while, I started getting emotional. I started crying," Deacy said.

He began apologizing to those whose photos were not yet on the panels. He told them they wouldn't be forgotten just because they were unseen.

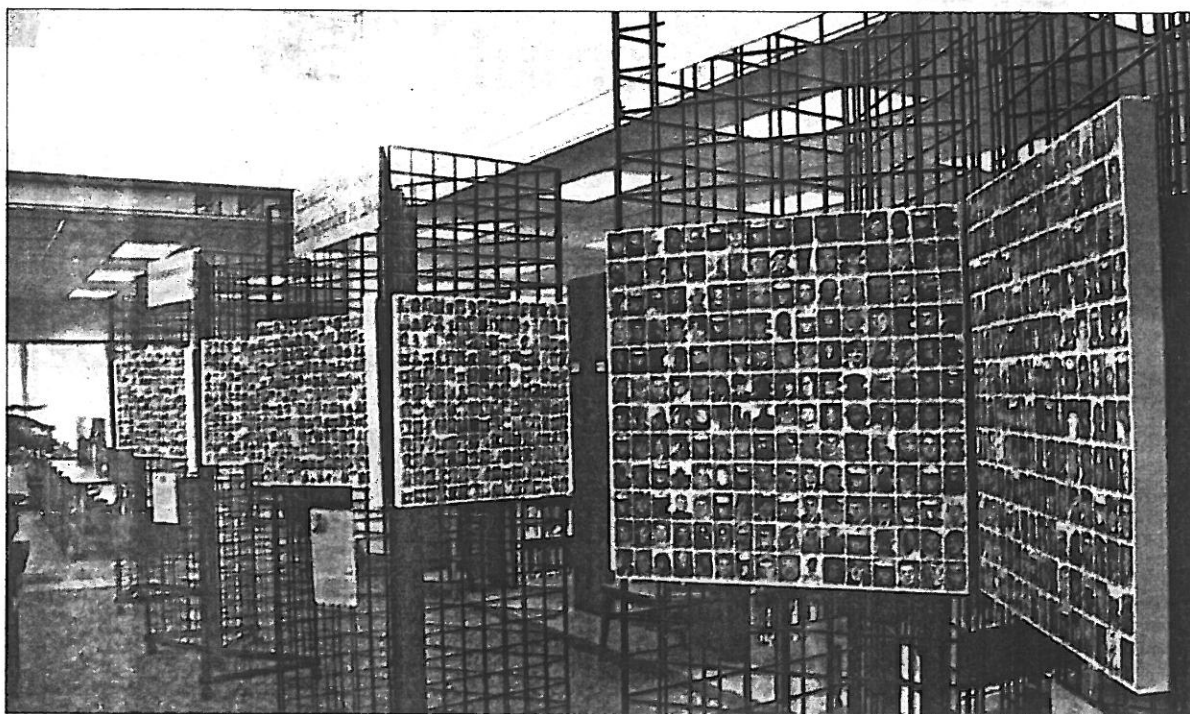
Then he made sure "we had each and every kid," Deacy said.

A Wisconsin woman visiting Carson City saw the exhibition at WNC "and said it has to go on the road so others can see it," Swirczek said. "We started thinking of the possibilities; we started getting inquiries from others who had relatives who had seen it. We realized there was life beyond (WNC)."

Before the exhibition could be offered to other institutions, changes were needed and money had to be raised, Swirczek said.

"We knew we had to get combat photos," she said.

The original combat photos in the project were from places such as the



PROVIDED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, MARINETTE
The photographs of more than 5,000 U.S. military personnel killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001 are included in the Western Nevada College exhibition.

U.S. Department of Defense website. Then the organizers found the Pulitzer Prize-winning photos taken by David Leeson of the Dallas Morning News when he was embedded with troops in Iraq.

"We contacted the Dallas paper," Swirczek said. "They gave us permission to use David's photos. They had won the Pulitzer Prize and they would allow us to use them."

Twenty photos by Leeson and Morning News photographer Cheryl Diaz Meyer went up on the walls. Wall of the Dead photos increased to more than 5,000. Each panel of portraits includes 192 faces.

The mother of Spc. Noah Pierce, a Minnesota veteran of two tours in Iraq who committed suicide shortly after his return stateside, asked that her son's poetry and his story of service be included in the exhibition.

"I realized it was a component we had not included — suicides; other casualties," Swirczek said. "She included photos, we hung them in the show and included some poetry, stories from his hometown paper after he died. Stunning."

*"... Don't want to die
Don't want to live
but should be dead
I'm already in hell
Two Tours in Iraq."*

— From "Two Tours in Iraq" by Spc. Noah Pierce

"Always Lost" exhibited at WNC in summer 2009. Now, revamped and formatted for shipping convenience, a streamlined version is at the UW Marinette campus.

"We hope it will travel to colleges,

universities, museums," Swirczek said.

The schedule now calls for the exhibit to remain in the UW system until October 2011, then move to Alfred State College in New York, Swirczek said.

"We want to bring it home every couple years. ... We've had some inquiries from California. We will keep the Wall of the Dead (updated) as best we can," she said.

Maintenance and upkeep will cost money, she said. Nevada Arts Council has given a matching grant. UW is doing some fundraising while the exhibition is in Wisconsin.

Students at colleges where the exhibition travels will be encouraged to add their student military veterans to the exhibit.

"Wisconsin is adding six," Swirczek said. "We're excited about that — to be personal as it travels, but to accumulate components as it goes."

HOW TO DONATE

To donate to "Always Lost: A Meditation on War," visit www.wnc.edu/foundation or contact the WNC Foundation at 775-445-3240. Reference the "Always Lost" campaign. To find out more about the project, visit www.wnc.edu/always_lost.