Vietnam War Memorial (first published in Out of Line)

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Vietnam War Memorial

Washington, D. C.

When you visit the wall to locate a name, you must know the date of casualty, or else consult a well-used book at the entrance which tells where to look.

When you walk in you read who was the first one to die and, leaving, the last, are slowly immersed as you walk down the path mirrored by dark glass.

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Why not put up a statue? critics objected. Each man did his part, defended his country. Why this headstone dug in the city’s heart?

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Go ask the designer who created a monument, gave us a park, and compiled a body count.

Go ask the mason who chiseled the names of fifty-eight thousand on black granite frames.

Go ask the people who cry over the letters they trace.

Go ask the builder who heaved those stones into place.