

HISTORY OF THE CAROLINA FIELD OF HONOR

B-52s were bombing North Vietnam, Marines and Soldiers were on the ground in Vietnam, warships with Sailors aboard loomed offshore. President Johnson met with South Vietnamese Premier Nguyen Cao Ky and his military advisors in Honolulu. American Protestors staged huge Anti-War Rallies.

The year was 1966. Forsyth-Guilford County Commissioners proposed a bond referendum entailing the acquisition of 6,000 acres for a park south of I-40 and north of High Point. Born to meander, this rare venture of Triadism would eventually lead to faux dreams of “The Kernersville Twins”.

Voters rejected the 1966 plan two years later, but plans for a much smaller “wilderness park” surfaced in 1976. Although 3,560 acres remained feasibly available for the park, planners reduced the size of their request to 2,000 acres. By 1977, neither county had funded the request.

The vision of a regional centerpiece for the Piedmont languished for a decade but did not go away – Triad Park would have its day. In 1987, the Triad Regional Planning Conference recommended the identification of 2000-4000 acres suitable for Triad Park.

Guilford voted in 1988, Forsyth in 1989, both counties approving referenda which included Triad Park funding. The first land parcel was purchased in February, 1992, and by December, 1993, seventeen additional parcels had been added, totaling over 400 acres.

The park’s plan was broken down into thirteen phases, with a total estimated cost of over \$12 million. Triad Park opened to the public in October, 1997 – following a thirty-one year odyssey from dream to reality.

Friends of the Triad Park Amphitheater (FOTPA) issued a 2001 vision statement regarding one phase of the Park...”for the development of a regional outdoor entertainment venue and for its programming aimed at enhancing the quality of life of all Triad citizens.”

In 2005, FOTPA received a cost estimate of \$11,665,820 for an amphitheater with concert shell, covered seating for 1500, sound system, and infrastructure. Fund raising efforts were initiated but, four years later, only limited funds were on hand.

While amphitheater interests were waning, Bill Moss and his N.C. War Memorial Foundation saw this as the perfect location for The Carolina Field of Honor, a Veterans’ Memorial honoring veterans of all services – in addition to a parade deck and the possibility of an outdoor amphitheater.

In 2009, FOTPA handed off the Triad Park baton to Moss and his Carolina Field of Honor team. Proving that Triadism still worked, both Forsyth and Guilford Counties promptly approved the new concept. Planning for one of the nation's top veterans' memorials was soon underway.

The Carolina Field of Honor tribute to veterans is estimated to cost \$5 million and fund raising efforts are well underway and exceeding expectations.

As for the 1966 B-52 crews over North Vietnam, the Marines and Soldiers on the ground in Vietnam, and the Sailors offshore, the Carolina Field of Honor is for them. It will also honor and memorialize veterans from WW II through Afghanistan and beyond who answer the call to serve.

Nearly 150,000 veterans reside in the greater Triad area, comprising one of North Carolina's largest concentrations of veterans. It follows that this tribute to heroes of all eras and all services must be timeless, distinctive, unique and honorable.

The Carolina Field of Honor at Triad Park is tasked to surpass that litmus.

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