By Katrina Finkelstein and Derek H. Alderman
University of Tennessee

(THE CONVERSATION) — On Veterans Day, people across America will thank veterans and active-duty military personnel for their service. But many members of the public don’t have a clear understanding of what service means to people in the military. How do they honor their own? What kind of spaces and activities help them reflect and remember—beyond one day a year?

We are cultural geographers who study how people’s emotions and connections with the past are represented physically in landscapes. Recently, our research has focused on commemorative place names in the military—particularly names associated with the Confederacy, which the U.S. armed forces are now reviewing and renaming.

Early this year, one of us (Katrina Finkelstein) visited Camp Pendleton in California to research commemoration on Marine Corps bases and understand how active-duty Marines and veterans interact with those spaces. In addition to official memorials and monuments sanctioned by the military, there are more informal and intimate examples of commemoration.

These ongoing, “living” memorials can be especially meaningful for service members processing their experiences and remembering those they lost, and physically represent the emotional weight they carry every day.

A living memorial

Camp Pendleton, one of the U.S. Marines’ busiest bases, sits between San Diego and Los Angeles on miles of undeveloped coastline. Thirteen hundred feet above the base, more than 30 crosses stand on a hillside—a memorial site established in 2003. Before deployment to Iraq, a group of seven service members—two Marine officers, two enlisted Marines, two Navy corpsmen and one Navy chaplain—carried a cross made of an old telephone pole up to the site. It was an effort to remember a peer they lost and to prepare for the mission ahead of them. Three of the seven were later killed in action.

Today, the hilltop is still used for physical training and events before and after deployments. Meanwhile, its informal commemorations have expanded and changed, as many active-duty military and veterans develop a relationship with the space.

Destroyed in a fire in 2007, the original cross was replaced, and dozens of others added. Some are more intentionally constructed, engraved and carried up the steep hillside, while others might have been made from sticks on the way.

Contributing to the memorials has become an ongoing tradition. In August 2021, for example, after 13 service members were killed in a blast at Kabul airport—including nine Marines and one sailor based at Pendleton—the first Camp Pendleton cross was installed. This living memorial receives frequent attention, despite its isolated location and despite several official memorials throughout the base.

Marines carry personal items to the top of the hillside, contributing to the living memorial. (Photo by Katrina Finkelstein)

You are hereby thanked by the American public for your service.

Thank you for your service.
THERE’S A BETTER APPROACH TO CANCER CARE in Baytown

At Houston Methodist Cancer Center, we treat every aspect of your cancer. Leading oncologists work with our specialists across disciplines to minimize cancer’s effects on major organs. One comprehensive team — dedicated to your individual care — uses the latest research, treatments and technology to stop your cancer. From infusion and clinical trials to surgery and reconstruction, our innovative care is available in Baytown.

That’s the difference between practicing medicine and leading it.
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Carroll F. Burrell
U.S. Air Force

Wiley C. Butler

Connie Marshall Byrd
U.S. Air Force Vietnam Era

Robert Lee Campbell, Spec 4

Charles Chitty
U.S. Marines - Corporal

Adam Christian
U.S. Army, Specialist

Charlon Clarke
U.S. Navy, E-5

Evelyn Powell Collins
U.S. Marine Corps CPL Served in the U.S. Marines from September 1966-1967 with Honorable Discharge

Wesley Frank Currie Sr.
U.S. Navy 1941-1945, WWII Gunners Mate

Lawrence "Jake" Daniel
Army Served 2000-2002

William Richard (Bill) U.S. Navy, 5th Seabees, Flakshooter M4A1 Class, EMIC WWII, Served 30 months of Kancake Bay, Hawaii and Agana Guam till the war's end.

William Richard Findlay
U.S. Air Force 1954-1958 Airman 1st Class

Kevin A. Franta
U.S. Marines

Charlie Franta
Army Stationed in Germany 1954-1956

Ray Dyer Jr.
Served in the United States Air Force 11 months at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii in 1957.

Jerry Fallin
U.S. Navy 1st Class Petty Officer

James "Bill" Favore II
U.S. Army/Air Force, Korean War Staff Sergeant

Julian Davis
U.S. Navy

Sue & Chuck Fellman
North Hunterdon, N.J. WWII Army Technical Sergeant. Served in the Asiatic-Pacifie theater. Received the Purple Heart and Bronze Star

Dick Dawson
U.S. Army 1st Lieutenant, U.S. Army, 1st Infantry Division, Vietnam

Carlos De Pau
U.S. Navy AB/E and Army National Guard, PVT 1st

Ray Dyer Sr.
Served in the United States Air Force 1957-1960

Kevin A. Franta

Dwayne Davis
U.S. Army - SSG

James O. Davis

William H. Carroll (Bill) U.S. Navy, 6th Seabees, Flakshooter M4A1 Class, EMIC WWII, Served 30 months of Kancake Bay, Hawaii and Agana Guam till the war's end.

William B. Carroll
U.S. Marine

Robert Lee Carroll
U.S. Air Force Operation Desert Storm

Baytown Mayor Brandon Capetillo
U.S. Air Force Operation Desert Storm

Southwest Asia Service Medal for tour in Saudi Arabia

Corey Chapa
U.S. Army; PVT-E1

Bruce W. Chase
U.S. Navy, Vietnam Era veteran, 3 West-Pacific cruises from August 1967 to December 1970

Jose A. "Champ" Contreras
U.S. Navy - WWII Bugler 1st Class

Martin E. Cooper
U.S. Air Force Corps - Pilot

Stephanie Cook
U.S. Navy

Richard Grenville
U.S. Army Air Corps - Pilot

Thomas D. Coit
U.S. Navy, E-5

Jacob Culum
U.S. Marine Corp - F.P.C. Proud to call you our Marine, Thank you so much.

Steven Colvin
U.S. Marine

Ray Dyer Jr.

Lawrence "Jake" Daniel
Army Served 2000-2002

Jim Dreden

William Richard Findlay
U.S. Air Force 1954-1958 Airman 1st Class

Ren Fitts
Vietnam War era Airman Air Cavalry Combat Helicopter Team Enlisted ‘71 Life member of VVA, VFWS, DAV, and member of American Legion

Captain Delmar "Buck" Dye Jr. Navy Air Corp Born February 18, 1936 Plane crashed in ocean, October 15, 1965 near Okinawa in first month of Vietnam War. The bodies of the crew were never found.

Capt. Delmar "Buck" Dye Jr.

Ray Dyer Jr.

James "Bill" Favore II
U.S. Army/Air Force, Korean War Staff Sergeant

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U.S. Army, E-4  
Vietnam

Donnie Gigout  
U.S. Army  
1968

Rick Gutierrez  
U.S. Army  
M/Sgt – 5th Special Forces

Curtis G. Harrison  
U.S. Navy; Airman  
1949-1956

Morgan Hess  
U.S. Army; Staff Sergeant

Richard Heyen  
U.S. Air Force  
Captains Vietnam

Otis Otha Horton  
U.S. Navy – Aviation CPO

Marvin Hunter  
U.S. Air Force

Earl Fudge  
Special Forces/U.S. Army/SGT. Thank you for proudly serving to help protect and secure the freedom that we all have in this great country.

Javier Garcia  
U.S. Army, Sgt.

E.H. Gregory  
U.S. Army, SFC

Ronald Haddox  
U.S. Army Sp4  
Drafed twice  
Originally Aug '59 served in Korea,  
Sept. '61 - July '62 Berlin Crisis

Donald C. Harrison  
U.S. Navy Aviation  
1982-1990

Robert (Bobby) Hart  
U.S. Marine Corp.  
Vietnam

Lee Holden  
U.S. Army SGT.

Ty S. Guillotte  
1 year, Army/PVT.  
Our Hero! Proud of you son! We love you so much! Mom, Dad and family.

Jennifer Golindano  
U.S. Army Staff Sergeant

William Haluska  
U.S. Navy Radarman  
2nd Class Served in WWII in the Pacific Theater on LSM 28 in 1943-1946.

Herschel O. Hart  
U.S. Army – WWII

Michael W. Hart  
U.S. Marine Corp.  
Vietnam

Bill Huffman  
Spot loaded 20 and repair parts in Germany. Served during the Cuban missile crisis, building of Berlin wall, and beginning of Vietnam era

E.H. Gregory  
U.S. Army; SFC

Earl George  
U.S. Navy

E.H. Gregory  
U.S. Army; SFC

Jimmie D. Gibson  
U.S. Army & Air Force

Robert (Bobby) Hart  
U.S. Marine Corp.  
Vietnam

Leo D. Holland  
U.S. Army – Sergeant (Retired)

Wayne V. Ingersoll  
United States Army – Air Force/Corporal Bay Stonian Wayne is 99 years old and served in the 9th Air Force as an aircraft mechanic in World War II based in England, France and Belgium.

Henry Gutierrez  
U.S. Army-Air Corp- 
Air Force

Wayne E. (Gene) Harman  
U.S. Air Force; Staff Sergeant; Korea Veteran  
To our favorite Veteran, We love you so much! Thank you for your service. Love, your family

Kristal Smesny Hamilton  
U.S. Air Force  
Private 1st Class

M. T. “Tom” Hebel  
U.S. Navy; USMC  
CWO 3

Robert (Bobby) Hart  
U.S. Marine Corp.  
Vietnam

Andrew Holt  
U.S. Air Force

Cody Holt  
U.S. Navy AK3

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John Gillet  
U.S. Air Force  
Served in Desert Storm

Matthew Gillet  
Sgt. U.S. Army  
Served in Kosovo

E.H. Gregory  
U.S. Army; SFC

John Gillet  
U.S. Air Force

John Ives  
U.S. Marine Corp. Major

Annette Gaitan Jr.  
Active Army/Specialist  
Recently returned from deployment in South Korea.

Angelica Gaitan  
U.S. Army Staff Sergeant

William Joseph Hall  
U.S. Navy Submariner  
Machinist Mate-Aux  
E-2

Herschel O. Hart  
U.S. Army – WWII

Lee Holden  
U.S. Navy Cook

Robert (Bobby) Hart  
U.S. Marine Corp.  
Vietnam

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U.S. Air Force
J.D. Johnson Jr.
Army Air Corps
WWII 1942-1945
Corporal Retired, Texas Eastern.

Jimmy Johnson

Lcpl Matthew C. Kenna
U.S. Marine Corp. Served from 2011-2015
We are so proud of him and the sacrifices he made while serving his country.

Larry Scott

Dennis L King
U.S. Army 1966-1968

Elizabeth (LaValley) Enderl
U.S. Marine Corp S. E. 4

Sarah LaValley
U.S. Marine Corp Cpl

Bert Marshall
U.S. Air Force Sergeant

Mitchell LeDay
SP4 U.S. Army Stinger Missile System 1980-1986

Wayne Kitchel
U.S. Army Korenen War

Rosendo Leal

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Thank you

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U.S. Air Force  
Senior Airman

Derrick D. Wade  
U.S. Navy  
Retired from the Navy after 20 years of service in 2004

Sgt. Bill Walker  
U.S. Army  
1/1 Calvary Vietnam 1967-1968

Marion Wehmeyer  
U.S. Marine Corp  
1965-1969 Sergeant Vietnam

Sgt. Bill Walker  
U.S. Army  
1/3 Calvary Vietnam 1967-1968

James Wendell  
Sgt. 6th Air Command

Derrick White  
U.S. Army  
Staff Sergeant  
I thank my son for serving our country. We love you, mother Rutha, Wife Eunice, daughter McKinlee, and Family

David M. Weber  
U.S. Army  
Served in Vietnam 1967-1968

Alton “Bubba” Williams  
U.S. Army  
Served in Vietnam 1968-1969

James T. Weber  
U.S. Air Force  
He enjoyed what he did.

James M. Tongate  
U.S. Air Force  
Served 20 years of service in 2004

Walter “Bill” C. Trahan  
Army Japan  
July 13, 1954 - June 22, 1956

Joseph Trigg  
Air Force, MSGT.  
Married to Army Veteran Louise, 4 boys, supervisor over 50-odd maintenance shops at Cannon AFB.

Derrick White  
U.S. Army  
Staff Sergeant  
I thank my son for serving our country.

Weber  
Damian M.  
U.S. Navy  
Very proud of him to serve his country. – David M. Weber, Sr.

George Truman Waters  
WWII PO, Army Aircorp

Robert M. Wooten  
U.S. Army  
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Thursday, November 11, 2021
The Baytown Sun
Remembering fallen comrades
Continued from Page 1B

In an oral history interview, one of the original cross bearers from 2003, Chaplain Scott Radetski, emphasizes the site’s popularity by saying it “exists on the hilltop. Because of its more intimate nature — secluded from the public and requiring an approaching hike to visit — it has become especially meaningful for service members. The crosses are not a public memorial, he said, but “a sacred memorial.”

More than crosses
On the journey to the Pendleton crosses, people carry mementos to leave at the top. At first, they were small rocks, but have evolved to include sandbags, combat knives, mementos, expended Ammunition and kegs, and beers all plod at the base of the crosses.

In times, soldiers have moved from top to top, such as remaining cans of alcohol. But some service members have objected, wanting that these items are deeply meaningful and carefully chosen. For them, these items are cursed to the top of the hill represent not only their comrades, but the emotional weight that veterans carry each day because of their experiences.

“Those mementos represent that suffering, that pain, that anger, whatever it was” that service members needed to leave behind, Radetski said. “You’re not always clean and neat, but he suggests it reflects the memories of war and the traumatic experiences of the veterans who visit the site regularly.”

In October 2021, the battalion that maintained most of the losses at the Kabul airport returned to Camp Pendleton, the group Recycle for Vets, which brings veterans together for cleanups on the West Coast, held an event to provide maintenance of the site. The group removed debris and emptied bottles, but left mementos behind, leaving it ready for more commemorations in the future.

On common ground
While many memorial landscapes can seem “closed,” representing a single moment in a lifetime, the crosses at Camp Pendleton do allow that each space can actually change. The crosses reinforce the idea that public mementos are not static, and rather are spaces dedicated to them, new features are added as others are removed.

The crosses are not without controversy. A decade ago, after the Los Angeles Times wrote about the memorial on Veterans Day, the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers filed a complaint, arguing that their organization is “incompatible with the ‘life’ that exists on the hill” and that “veterans feel a sense of ‘second-class citizenship.’” Base officials reportedly conducted a review and the memorial still stands.

For Matters who support the memorial, however, the site can serve multiple purposes: a destination during physical training, a way to prepare for a deployment, or a journey to come to terms with their experiences upon returning home.

Often, these actives are collective. Veterans organize semiannual hikes, meetings where the site does not become checkered or forgotten. As the site of an ever-expanding memorial, the hillside is an example of how veterans continue to remember their non-combat experiences, a place that Chaplain Radetski called “a common ground,” for rememberance and healing.

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The Baytown Sun
Thursday, November 11, 2021
www.baytownsun.com
Cooling Family group photo:
From left Robert Cooling, Vietnam, Special Forces; Billy Cooling, WWII, U. S. Army; Newell Cooling: WWI, U. S. Army Air Corp; Buddy Cooling, WWII, U. S. Navy; Gen. Norman Cooling, Iraq and Afghanistan, U. S. Marine Corp; Roy Cooling, WWII, Marine Corp.; Cody Cooling, Marine Corp.

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