

# William Norris dies at 68; advocate for Korea vets

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WATERFORD — William T. Norris, founder and president of the Korean War Veterans Association and one of the galvanizing forces behind the creation of the national Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., died Friday.

He was 68 and died in his Middletown Road residence.

In a way, Norris' achievements began at Shenendehowa High School in 1984 when his daughter, Virginia, was assigned to write a term paper on the Korean War. Her inability to find any books on the subject led her to interview her father, a Marine Corps and Army veteran who served in Europe and the during the Korean War before being discharged in 1953 due to injuries suffered in action.

When Norris realized that his own daughter knew almost nothing about the war, he decided to found the Korean War Veterans Association in 1984 to build public awareness of what he called "America's forgotten war."

The group, which once had a membership of more than 16,000, originally was comprised of seven men from the Clifton Park Veterans of Foreign Wars Post, two veterans from Massachusetts and one from Glens Falls.

"What started as a homework assignment, just mushroomed out,"

his daughter said of the association on Friday.

The Korean War Veterans Association led to national efforts to build the memorial.

Irwin Schwartz, 65, of Manhattan, was a combat engineer in Korea in 1953, and formerly was executive director of the New York Korean Veterans Memorial Commission in New York City.

"If any one man was responsible for the memorial in Washington, it was Norris. He started the association, pushed for the construction of the memorial and was the prime mover in getting Congress aware for the need for the memorial," said Schwartz.

The memorial in Washington is located on the west end of the National Mall's reflecting pool.

Norris once estimated the cost of the monument, paid for with donations from veterans groups, at upward of \$17 million.

Norris was born in Troy. He was employed for 41 years at the Norton Co. in Watervliet before retiring in 1990 as a steam plant engineer. His military awards and local associations were many.

In an interview with the *Times Union* two years ago, Norris may have verbalized his legacy without knowing it when he acknowledged the memorial dedication. "Korea is no longer a forgotten war," he said.