

# Vietnam Veterans Memorial First in State



The first and only memorial to the military veterans in Upstate South Carolina who paid the supreme sacrifice in Vietnam was dedicated May 25, 1980. Here, Dr. Don C. Garrison participates in an annual Memorial Day service.

**T**he first memorial to military veterans from Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties who died in Vietnam is located at the main entrance to Tri-County's campus and continues to attract visitors each year.

The College dedicated its Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the first in the State, on May 25, 1980, with the honorable William Jennings Bryan Dorn, former commander of the South Carolina American Legion, addressing the crowd. "This is the most inspirational ceremony I've ever attended," said Dorn.

President Don C. Garrison conceived the idea of the memorial, which is an impressive lighted flag plaza at the main entrance to the campus. It has three 3' x 5' marble markers listing the names of the veterans from the tri-county area who paid the supreme sacrifice in Vietnam.

The flags, poles, monuments, and stonework were provided by contributions from students, faculty, staff, the Veterans Club, the American Legion, and the family and friends of the late Johnny Purser.

Two other monuments memorialize Purser, former coordinator of Tri-County's Veteran's Affairs until his untimely death in an automobile accident on August 4, 1978, and tell the purpose of the plaza. The center monument is engraved with this message: "In Memoriam: This patriotic plaza is dedicated to the memory of the courageous men of Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties who paid the supreme sacrifice in the Vietnam conflict. Their answer to the call of their country distinguishes them as eternal bearers for free people everywhere."



**General William F. Westmoreland, former Army Chief of Staff and commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Plaza at the entrance to the campus.**