WASHINGTON — The sun was barely up the other morning when more than 40 people gathered before the graves of Hospital Corpsman Edward C. Benfold and Sgt. Nelson V. Britten.

"Forgotten' survivors look to U.S. to create memorial to vets of Korean War

"The group recited the 23d Psalm, 'the graves of Hospital Corpsman Ed-" explained why they were there.

Bill Temple, a disabled veteran from Pennsylvania, led the sunrise services a generation after the war.

It also would be more economical for a budget-minded patriotic administration to allot less than $3 million directly for the purpose than to grant tax write-offs for the many more millions required to finance the project by public fund-raising.

At the ceremonies at which the statue of three soldiers was unveiled last month beside the long honor roll of Vietnam dead, Jan Scruggs was one of the speakers. He is the person who conceived the memorial, pushed it to reality, absorbed the controversy and can be proud of what he did.

That day, he said there was irony in how it all had turned out. "It seems ironic," he said. "Instead of the Vietnam vets building a memorial and giving it to the government, the government should have built a memorial and given it to the vets."

His view is based on experience, too.

"Somewhere in Washington there are a few acres that must become a site for an appropriate memorial. We want our friends remembered. With God's will and some hard work, they will be."

Mr. Temple says was "my No. 1 foxhole prayer." Then he stood and explained why they were there.

"An open wound of anger, bitterness and hurt remains in the minds of hundreds of thousands of Korean War veterans and their families. We are unwilling to let the Korean War remain 'the forgotten war'... it would be an injustice to future generations of Americans, and surely nothing short of a moral betrayal of the dead and sacrificed of that war."

He and a growing number of other Americans have strong feelings about the fact that the war in Korea is now the only American war not commemorated by some kind of memorial in Washington. A fund-raising committee for a monument became ensnarled in controversy, disillusioning Bill Temple and many veterans who thought it might lead to righting that 31-year wrong.

Now he and concerned citizens across the country are convinced that the government itself has an obligation to build a Korean War memorial. That would avoid exorbitant fees to professional fund-raisers and avoid questions about bookkeeping and where all the money goes.

Doing it that way would be a long overdue acknowledgment by the United States that the United States does indeed owe a debt of recognition to the men who fought a war in which about as many were killed as in Vietnam, but in only a third of the time.

It also would be more economical for a budget-minded, patriotic administration to allot less than $3 million directly for the purpose than to grant tax write-offs for the many more millions required to finance the project by public fund-raising.

Not long ago, Americans gathered here to place their final stamp on the Vietnam memorial. Those who died in and those who survived that war also were "forgotten" for almost a decade. And those dedicated men who worked to build that memorial see it now a different way.

At the ceremonies at which the statue of three soldiers was unveiled last month beside the long honor roll of Vietnam dead, Jan Scruggs was one of the speakers. He is the person who conceived the memorial, pushed it to reality, absorbed the controversy and can be proud of what he did.

That day, he said there was irony in how it all had turned out. "It seems ironic," he said. "Instead of the Vietnam vets building a memorial and giving it to the government, the government should have built a memorial and given it to the vets."

His view is based on experience.

Bill Temple, who was a private and given it to the government, the Vietnam vets building a memorial.

In his final remarks, he asked, "What can we do?" and said, "The American, Battle Monuments Commission should be granted responsibility by Congress for building a memorial, from conception to completion."

"Somehow in Washington there are a few acres that must become a site for an appropriate memorial. We want our friends remembered."

Baltimore Sun Dec. 4, 1984