Some wonder why it has taken more than 30 years, since the war's end in 1953, for veterans to get together on a memorial. McCarran responded, "When the war was over, all of us came home, picked up where we left off, went back to school, went back to raising families."

The group plans to raise $5 million in private donations for a memorial to be built in Los Angeles. Groundbreaking at Angels Gate Park is scheduled for June 25, the 37th anniversary of the North Korean invasion of the South. Work is expected to take two years.

The memorial will honor the 16 countries from the United Nations whose soldiers fought the North Koreans and Chinese.

The memorial will show 15 soldiers fighting in the snow. The scene was inspired by the battle of the Chosin Reservoir, where 15,000 trapped Marines battled 120,000 Chinese and subzero temperatures to escape to the sea.

Felix de Weldon, the sculptor who created the Iwo Jima Memorial in Washington, D.C., will build the monument.

"It will probably be more dramatic and more moving than any others I have done," de Weldon said in a telephone interview from Newport, R.I.

The memorial, he said, would show "the courage, the determination, the suffering, the power of survival" of those who fought. "It's a monument of honor," he said.

Names of the dead will be in books placed near the memorial. At the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, the names of those who died are listed on walls of polished black granite that form a V-shaped monument.

"In a way, the Vietnam Memorial is a monument to defeat. Half of it is buried. It's black," said de Weldon. "It's sad. The whole Vietnam War was a very sad occasion."

The international memorial is distinct from a $6 million national project to honor America's Korea veterans, authorized by Congress in October. Congress allocated $1 million; another $1 million came from Hyundai Corp., the South Korean automaker.

A 12-member advisory committee hopes to have a site selected by fall, and the design will be selected by a competition, according to Col. William Ryan of the American Battle Monument Commission.

"We're not in conflict or competing with the national monument," McCarran said. "We're honoring all the young people who died from all nations. Frankly, we wanted a memorial erected in our lifetime."