Stone01 - Vietnamese
Although we have at times been strong,
At times weak,
We have at no time lacked heroes.

From a poem by Nguyen Trai, "Binh Ngo Dai Cao" (1428). Many nations sent soldiers to fight in the wars for Indochina. This Quotestone honors all the unremembered heroes.

Stone02 - English
...And you will hear
The wailing of the wounded and the whisper of death.

From a sign at Malinta Tunnel hospital on Corregidor, from the early days of World War II. These words are also fitting for the Philippine contingent in Vietnam - Operation Brotherhood and PHILCAGV, Medical and Civic Action Teams.

Stone03 - Lao
The gnat lives as best it can
On what nature provides.
But how can a great white elephant
Be interested in a little bamboo shoot like me?

From a teasing, courtship dance between young lovers. This little song speaks volumes about the gentle Lao way of life. Vietnam War belligerents were interested in Laos only because of its strategic importance and the access it gave to the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Laos became a reluctant participant and suffered greatly.
Stone04 - Chinese
Sacrifice the plum tree for the peach tree.

One of the 36 ancient Chinese stratagems. Sacrifices are made in all wars. A squad is thrown into a suicidal assault so that the company may succeed elsewhere, or escape with minimal losses.

Stone05 - Lao
When buffaloes fight it is the grass that suffers.

The Lao people were caught between the West's anti-communist crusade and the North Vietnamese revolution. The French, U.S. and North Vietnamese "buffaloes" laid bare the "grass" of Laos. Laos and her people were unwilling participants and paid a horrible price.

Stone06 - Vietnamese
When dreams and wishes fail and don't come true, they turn to stones and just sit there, stock-still.
They weigh so heavy on my brain, my heart - I want to shrug them off but often can't.

From a collection of poems, "Flowers from Hell" by Nguyen Chi Thien, composed during his imprisonment in North Vietnamese re-education camps. Many thousands of ARVN soldiers and political prisoners went through years of the war's ugly aftermath.
Let us once again be what we were...something which no longer exists...and will never return.

Tribal minorities in Indochina faced wrenching changes in their way of life after the U.S. left Southeast Asia. Because many of them were closely allied with the U.S. effort and their cultures were in conflict with the more modern societies of the lowland people, they lost everything.

And how can men die better
Than facing fearful odds
For the ashes of their fathers,
And the temples of their Gods?


My regiment, my home
My mother I have never known
My father fell early on in the field
I am alone in the world.

From a French Foreign Legion song. The French Foreign Legion served in Indochina during 1883-1891 and again from 1946-1954. Many Legionnaires died fighting France's wars in Indochina.
Stone10 - Nepali
It's a bullet, a bullet
Hear it ricochet by your ear
It's beckoning war...

From a well-known Gurka soldier's poem. British, Indian, and Gurkha troops occupied Indochina immediately after World War II. The Gurkhas played a major part in suppressing the Vietnamese until the arrival of French forces in 1946.

Stone11 - Vietnamese
Winds howl and growl at ghosts of those war' killed -
on soldiers' faces shines the stalking moon.
O men, alive or dead, has anyone portrayed your faces or invoked your souls?

From the 18th Century poem "Song of a Soldier's Wife" by Dang Tran Con (c. 1710-1745), originally written in Chinese. The themes of the poem - war and the sorrows caused by war - are appropriate for so many periods in history.

Stone12 - Arabic
We come from the Sultan
May God forgive our sins.

From a marching chant of the Moroccan Tirailleurs. This Quotestone is in honor of Arab North African soldiers who made up part of the French Union Forces in Indochina.
It is Written...

This phrase begins many passages in the Koran, and can be interpreted to mean "It is the Law." Philosophically, Islam looks at everything as predestined... whatever will be is the will of Allah. Hence, Arab soldiers serving in Vietnam was the will of Allah. The Armée d' Afrique, France's army of North-West Africa, served with distinction in the Indochina War. Their numbers reached high levels especially in the 1950s, as the French struggled to maintain control of the region.

"Left behind in the Tonkin Delta."
"Died for France?"
"Yes, died for France."

Following World War II, a large number of the soldiers introduced into Indochina as part of the French Union Forces were ex-German soldiers recruited from Allied POW camps. Later, as fighting in the region escalated in 1950, General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny was installed as the French military commander in Indochina. Though he inspired his forces to inflict heavy defeats on the Vietminh, these successes were only temporary.
Stone 15 -
Upper half - English
And how can men die better
Than facing fearful odds
For the ashes of their fathers,
And the temples of their Gods?


Lower half - Hmong
Sho, hey! You have left for good,
You come to the mountain in the burning sky,
The mountain wide open to the winds where the wild wind howls.

From the Hmong chant for initiation of the dead, Kr'ua Ke, or Showing the Way.

This stone is unique in that it is the only stone with two different quotations on it. The quotations are seemingly unrelated.
The quotation on Stone 08 is the same as the upper half of this stone.

Stone 16 - Korean
We know not where we go,
Leaves blown, scattered,
Though fallen from the same tree,
By the first winds of autumn.

The Republic of Korea sent troops to aid South Vietnam, starting in 1964; in all, over 4,000 Korean soldiers died there. The lines here, from the poem "Requiem" by Master Wolmyong (c. 742-765), could well have been written for those Korean soldiers.
It is a worthy thing to fight for one's freedom: it is another sight finer to fight for another man's.

For the Americans who dreamed impossible dreams, who "tried" with noble altruism, to help others less fortunate to achieve a shared vision of freedom with prosperity within their own cultural values ... and for those who endured the agony without losing their integrity and sense of honor.

No high mass will they be chanting, and no kaddish will they say. Nothing will be said or chanted on my own memorial day.

From a German poem by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856). In the years following 1945, the majority of French Foreign Legion recruits were German. This Quotestone is in respect for the Germans who filled the ranks of the Foreign Legion in Indochina.

From the chorus of a marching song. The Moroccan Goums, units of mixed foot and mounted personnel, were frequently made up of tribal scouts from the Atlas Mountains of Algeria and Morocco. These irregulars, as well as regulars, of the Armée d' Afrique were used often in Indochina.
To all who served...

The 20th Indian Division under British General Douglas Gracey was among the first to confront the newly-organized Vietminh army as the Allies sought to take control of Vietnam immediately after World War II.

Stone21 - Vietnamese
Who could say that "Heaven" is blind?
They were from Ouaga, Conakry, and Dakar, Nigeria, Mali, and the Ivory Coast. They were soldiers of France of yesteryear. Who can close his door on one of their children?

From a song written well after the French war in Indochina, about the poor treatment of the veterans of Black Africa who served in La Coloniale, the army formed to garrison French colonies in Africa and elsewhere. The song and this Quotestone are in honor of the Tirailleurs Senegalais, the Senegalese Riflemen. More than ten Tirailleurs Senegalais battalions from French West and Equatorial Africa served in Indochina in the early 1950s.

If my disciples were silenced, the stones themselves would cry out.

This passage from the Bible forms the epigraph of the book "The Stones Cry Out," by Molyda Szymusiak, which describes the horrors of "post-war" Kampuchea under the Khmer Rouge. Many people tied to the old regime were brutally executed.
Those who have gone to the Buddha as refuge will not go to the realms of deprivation. On abandoning the human body, they will fill the company of the gods. From "A Refuge in Awakening," the last recorded sermon of Phra Ajaan Lee. Often, before Thai soldiers were sent into battle, they were blessed by Buddhist monks. Thais were not only involved in Vietnam, but Laos as well. At peak, 18,000 Thais served in Laos in a wide variety of roles. In Vietnam, Thais provided a Royal Thai Contingent which grew from regimental to divisional strength.

I go to a lonely grave... in a land far across the sea...

From a World War II Japanese soldier’s song, sung before soldiers, recovered from battle wounds, were returned to the front. Several hundred Japanese soldiers died in combat under British command after World War II, in efforts to reinstall French authority in Vietnam.
Still in death lies
  Everyone,
And the Battle's
  Lost.

From a weather-worn sign in the
Australian outback.

Un copain dit au bord d'onde trou
Quelqu' bout d' priere
Deux morceaux d' bois en croix
... un nom
Qu'importe si c' nom
je c'est pas l' bon?
C' t un legionnaire

A friend says at the edge of the grave
a bit of a prayer.
Two pieces of wood in the form of a
  cross
...a name...
Does it matter if the name
  is not the right name?
It's a Legionnaire.

From a Foreign Legion poem. Many
nationalities made up the French
Foreign Legion. Many of these soldiers
were lost in Indochina. It is said that
some 10,500 Legions were killed in
action during the Indochina War, 1946-
1954.

...En mourant,
  afin qu' au moins
l'honneur soits sauf...

Paratrooper volunteers of many
nationalities, including Vietnamese,
jumped into a doomed bastion at Dien
Bien Phu, even though they knew the
end was at hand and captivity or death
a surety.
Stone29 - Bahnar (Montagnard)
In front the snake
Behind the tiger.

The Dega people, more often referred to as Montagnards, have for centuries considered the lowland people, the Vietnamese, to be their natural enemies. To the Dega, who felt they had few friends among the Vietnamese, the "snake" might be the South Vietnamese, the "tiger" the North Vietnamese. During the Indochina wars, the Dega saw the French, and later the Americans, as friends who might help in their struggle for tribal independence. The West saw in the Dega the best of guerrilla soldiers. The Dega ... and the Hmong in northern Laos ... were the backbone of para-military forces arrayed against Ho Chi Minh Trail activity.

Stone30 - English
A people who do not weigh heavy
In the palm of the Mekong;
A people who have, as fortresses,
Only temples in ruins;
Who have, for an army,
Only their Thoughts and Faith.

From a poem by Khmer Poetess Makhali Phal. Fighting between different factions in Cambodia increased in the early 1970s, and on April 17, 1975, Phnompenh fell to the Khmer Rouge, who renamed the country Democratic Kampuchea. Much of Kampuchea's cultural past was destroyed by the Khmer Rouge.
Stone31 - Vietnamese
Better to die in honor than live in disgrace.

Many soldiers fought well and died knowing there was no hope. Many others took their own lives rather than surrender. This Quotestone is for those who made the supreme sacrifice in the last days of the Republic of Vietnam.

Stone32 - Arabic
Every soul will know the taste of death.

This quote from the Koran seems very appropriate for the situation confronted by soldiers of the Armee d’Afrique.
Anguished but not angry,
I arrive in this country,
without brothers or sisters,
like a bewildered, lost dog.

For the Hmong refugees in Ban Vinai, Thailand. This poem expresses their sorrow at a lost way of life and their lost homeland. Their plight is largely the result of their involvement in the U.S. war effort. They were recruited in Laos to help rescue American pilots whose planes crashed or were shot down. It is estimated that a hundred Hmong lives were lost for every American pilot saved. When the U.S. withdrew from the Vietnam War, it also withdrew support for its Hmong allies. Today, in 1995, they continue to suffer as tens of thousands of Hmong languish in Thai border refugee camps.

Words were engraved in the blood of the stone,
They spoke this road:
to know and then to die.

From the poem "The Ravine" by Yves Bonnefoy. Appropriate in honor of the sacrifices of all French Union soldiers in the wars for Indochina.

You soldiers who sleep under the earth so far away,
Whose flowing blood leaves so much regret,
Tell them only, "It's our captain
Who remembers us, and counts his dead."

In 1887, the French formed the Indochinese Union consisting of Tonkin, Annam, Cochin China, and Cambodia. The lines here are from an 1887 poem "Thiebald Striebler" by Captain Vicounte de Borelli, about the battle of Tuyen Quang. The words are as appropriate today as they were then.
Like the fallen leaves of Autumn
in unregimented ranks
Countless unremembered soldiers
...rest...
...eternally...

One soldier's "mourning poem" for so many unremembered dead. This feeling was the basis for, and beginning of, the SOLDIERSTONE Memorial.

While so many fought and died in Vietnam itself, a number of military organizations also operated in Laos during 1960-1975. These organizations included the Forces Armees Royales (the Laotian government’s regular army), Forces Armees Neutralistes, CIA sponsored units, as well as irregular forces.