

WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Ronald Reagan Library

DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
1. memo	from Jim Cicconi to Craig Fuller re: Vietnam Veterans Memorial (1p, partial)	1/28/82	P-5
2. memo	from Danny Boggs to Martin Anderson re: Vietnam Veterans memorial, page 3 (1p, partial)	1/18/82	P-5 CB 10/18/00
COLLECTION: CICCONI, JAMES W.: Files			cas
FILE FOLDER: Vietnam Veterans Memorial OA 9113 Box 14			10/31/95

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P-1 National security classified information [(a)(1) of the PRA].
- P-2 Relating to appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA].
- P-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA].
- P-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA].
- P-5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA].
- P-8 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(8) of the PRA].
- C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- F-1 National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA].
- F-2 Release could disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA].
- F-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA].
- F-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA].
- F-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA].
- F-7 Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA].
- F-8 Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA].
- F-9 Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA].

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February 2, 1982

Dear John:

Thank you for your letter to the President of January 27 expressing your concern over the current design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Please know that your comments have been brought to the immediate attention of the appropriate offices here. I assure you that the thoughts and suggestions which you and your colleagues have expressed in this matter are being thoroughly studied, and we appreciate your interest in contacting us.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Kenneth M. Duberstein
Assistant to the President

The Honorable John H. Ashbrook
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

KMD:CMF:MDB

cc: w/copy of inc to Secretary Watt, Dept of Interior - for
~~DIRECT DEPT~~ response - *(w/copy to K Duberstein)*
cc: w/copy of inc, Marty Anderson - FYI
cc: w/copy of inc, Churchill Robison - FYI
cc: w/copy of inc, Jim Cicconi - FYI
cc: w/copy of inc, Dave Wright - FYI

WH RECORDS MANAGEMENT HAS RETAINED ORIGINAL INCOMING

February 2, 1982

Dear Dave:

Thank you for your recent letters to the President expressing your deep concern in regard to the design for the proposed Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

We appreciated hearing from you and I have taken the liberty of sharing your comments with the appropriate staff members here. I have also transmitted to the Scheduling Office your request for a meeting with the President to discuss this matter. Please be assured that the thoughts and suggestions which you and your colleagues have expressed are receiving thorough study.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Kenneth M. Duberstein
Assistant to the President

The Honorable David O'B. Martin
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

KMD:CMF:MDB

Direct cc: w/copy of inc, Secretary Watt, Dept of Interior - for
~~DRAFT~~ response w/copy to K. Duberstein
cc: w/copy of inc, Greg Newell - for appropriate action re
scheduling request
cc: w/copy of inc, Marty Anderson - FYI
cc: w/copy of inc, Churchill Robison - FYI
cc: w/copy of inc, Jim Cicconi FYI
cc: w/copy of inc, Dave Wright - FYI

WH RECORDS MANAGEMENT WILL RETAIN ORIGINAL INCOMING

D

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

056691

January 18, 1982

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I join with my colleagues in Congress, my fellow veterans of service in America's armed forces, and thousands of American citizens in respectfully urging that you, through Secretary of the Interior James G. Watt, withhold permission for the construction of the proposed Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the Washington Mall.

Having studied the design for the proposed memorial and the controversy surrounding it, I am convinced that it does not begin to reflect the well-deserved honor the American people wish to pay those who fought in Vietnam.

I am equally certain that many of the individuals who have contributed to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, and many of the organizations who have supported the project, would not have done so if they had been familiar with the proposed design.

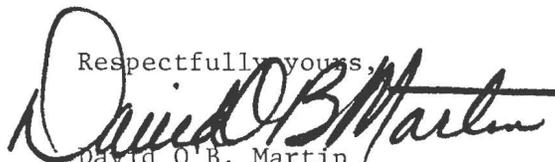
As a Member of Congress, I object to the design's violation of Congress's authorization for a memorial "in honor and recognition of the men and women of the armed forces of the United States who served in the Vietnam war." As originally planned, the memorial would have contained only the names of the American dead in Vietnam. I am sure you would agree that a fitting memorial must honor all those who served and the cause for which they sacrificed -- and that honor must be far more than an afterthought.

As one who served my country in Vietnam, I am personally offended by the thought that this proposed black scar on the Mall should be permitted to desecrate the memory of the Americans I saw give their lives in Vietnam and an insult to the survivors whose courage I personally witnessed.

As an American citizen, I protest this attempt to dishonor with a brazen political statement the dedication and patriotism of those whose sense of duty transcended politics.

At the very least, I respectfully request that you postpone any work on the proposed memorial until the truth about it is disseminated to all Americans and especially our veterans. Then, I am confident, our people will insist that we build a truly fitting Vietnam Veterans Memorial. I will provide my full support to that effort.

Respectfully yours,


David O'B. Martin
Member of Congress

DM/dbf

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

January 20, 1982

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

With reference to the growing controversy over the planned Vietnam Veterans Memorial and my letter of January 18, 1982, expressing my strong objections to the proposed design, I respectfully request an opportunity to discuss this matter with you, along with Representative Duncan Hunter and several of our fellow Vietnam veterans in Congress.

We would be deeply grateful for an opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience prior to any regrettable decision to proceed with work on this particular project.

With full appreciation for your own commitment to our Vietnam veterans and the appropriate recognition of their service, I remain

Respectfully yours,



David O'B. Martin
Member of Congress

DM/dbf

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
January 28, 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR JIM CICCONI

FROM:

TOM SHULL 

SUBJECT:

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Design

This memorandum is in response to your request to provide appropriate senior White House staff members with information about the recent meeting held by Senator Warner on the Vietnam Veterans memorial design. After heated discussion, the following compromises were reached:

- the color, elevation and basic design of the currently approved memorial design will not be altered;
- the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) accepts the proposal for incorporating a statue in the existing design;
- the VVMF will provide to the participants in the meeting the opportunity to comment on and participate in the selection of the statuary design;
- the VVMF will seek approval for a flag to be flown at the memorial site;
- the VVMF will strengthen the words in the inscription and ensure that it is prominently displayed, and
- the VVMF will consider an appropriate inscription to be provided at the base of the statue.

Based on this agreement, there is no reason to hold up the plan to break ground by March 1. If there is concern that the VVMF will not aggressively seek to place a statue at the site, dedication of the memorial could be contingent on the completion of both the statuary and the current memorial design.

Attachment

Discussion:

The controversy over the design has included two major elements.

(1) The physical design itself. The memorial will be basically black, recessed into the earth, and the primary motif is a list of the killed and missing.

(2) The inscription and accoutrements. As originally presented, according to some, the memorial would not have mentioned the name of the war involved, contained no flag, no inscription of honor or gratitude.

As the design was revealed, many Vietnam veterans felt that "their" memorial had been hijacked by people of a basically anti-war persuasion. Numerous requests for changes were made. Some of these changes were addressed, but in such a grudging fashion as to reinforce the notion that honoring either the wishes or the persons of the veterans themselves was very far from the thoughts of the VVMF leadership. The opposition is now quite vocal and well organized, as evidenced by the letters cited above, the withdrawal from sponsorship by Ross Perot, James Webb, and other original supporters, and plans for suits by relatives of deceased soldiers to prevent their names from being included in the monument.

On the other hand, many feel that no disrespect has been intended, that the final design is a moving and artistic tribute, and that a political struggle over the meaning of Vietnam is being waged on both sides. Some of the critics have indicated that their concerns could be allayed if the memorial were "white, above ground, and with a flag." It would seem that "above ground" would be the most difficult to alter, while adding a flag would be the easiest.

It does seem to me that a memorial which is taken as offensive by most of those it is designed to honor is both futile and unseemly. At the same time, it is unclear if that is the view of the majority of veterans. Opponents of the current design have offered to have a neutral poll commissioned and to abide by the expressed desire of the majority of veterans. The VVMF has apparently refused. Perot has announced he will fund a poll somewhat along these lines.

Options:

(1) Kill the current design, by Park Service disapproval. This might well kill any national memorial for many years or forever. The fate of the FDR Memorial is instructive. Controversy over design has meant that no memorial has ever been built. At a minimum, new legislation would probably be required, and any future design would probably invite vigorous attack from those who support the current one. This would also cause at least some political furor, as well as undoubtedly drawing the President into expressing, directly or indirectly, some opinion on the design.

(2) Allow the current design to go through. This will undoubtedly also create considerable political discontent. The opponents have indicated that they will go to great lengths to stop construction, including lawsuits, probably attempts at Congressional action, and even various types of direct action.

(3) There has been some indication that the inscription and surrounding trappings could be changed enough to satisfy most of the organized opponents. The VVMF has thus far refused to be responsive. It is at least possible that with sufficient pressure, in the form of threats of non-approval, satisfactory language could be worked out. This is an option that should be seriously explored, as a way out of the all-or-nothing controversy created by a choice of either Options 1 or 2.

Very recently there appears to have been some additional willingness to negotiate on the part of the memorial supporters. For example, in a Wall Street Journal piece last Thursday, Jan Scruggs, the President of the VVMF, indicated "we favor having an American flag flying at the site." This could indicate greater willingness to be accommodating, now that significant opposition has been aroused.

The inscription has also been a point of controversy that opponents indicate could be a part of changes that would allow a suitable resolution. The current language includes a Prologue:

In honor of the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in Vietnam. The names of those who gave their lives, and of those who remain missing, are inscribed in the order they were taken from us.

The Epilogue contains the following words:

Our nation remembers the courage, sacrifice, and devotion to duty of its Vietnam veterans.

This has been criticized as lacking any expression of recognition, gratitude, or true sense of appreciation or honor, that it recognizes only death, not the ideals of "Duty, Honor, Country."

Recommendation:

I would recommend that primary attention be given to Option 3. Watt could meet now with opponents, as he has with the proponents, and attempt to reach some compromise on the wording and trappings. If that fails, Options 1 and 2 can be addressed.

A Memorial Ditch on the Mall

Patrick J. Buchanan

On the first of March, just two months away, ground will be broken on the Mall to construct—purportedly to honor the veterans of Vietnam—a memorial that will be a mockery of the sacrifices of



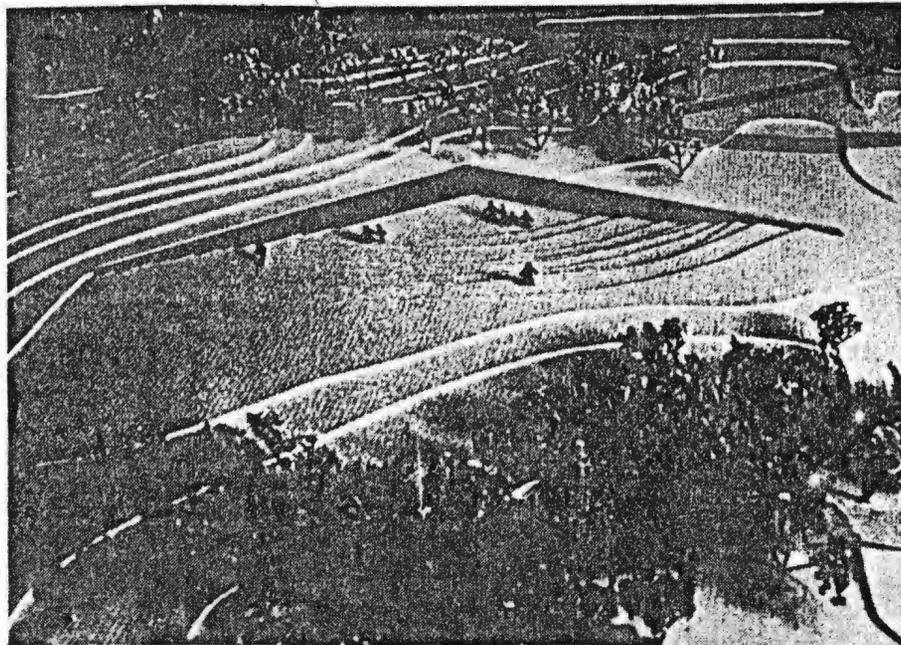
those who served, "a wailing wall for future anti-draft and anti-nuclear demonstrations."

That is the hard view of former Marine platoon leader James Webb Jr., author of "Fields of Fire," who resigned from the National Sponsoring Committee of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, to protest the memorial design. It is apparently the view as well of Adm. James Stockdale, one of the three American prisoners of war awarded the Congressional medal of honor, who likewise resigned. It is the view of the Marine Corps League, which has withdrawn its support for the memorial as insulting and denigrating those who came home from Vietnam and those who did not.

Yet, as this is written, funds continue to trickle in to the VVMF. Unless there is some form of national protest, this final national outrage will be perpetrated against the memory of the Vietnam veteran.

Here is how it came about.

In 1980, Congress commissioned a Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to design and build, with private capital, a suitable memorial on the Mall to "honor and recognize the men and women . . . who served in the Vietnam War."



Ross Perot, the Texas businessman who has contributed much to the veterans' cause, came forward with most of the funding, including the funds necessary to conduct a national competition on the memorial design. He was promised that the result, while not glorifying war, would do honor to those who went.

When the competition was completed, many veterans were stunned at the outcome. The winner was Maya Ying Lin, a Yale architectural student, who had designed a memorial not to the veterans, but only to the dead.

Her winning design consists of two walls of over 200 feet each, starting at ground level, and converging at an angle of 135 degrees—10 feet below the ground.

The American flag under which the veterans fought was not to fly over the memorial in the original design; the word Vietnam was nowhere mentioned; the walls would be black granite, not white marble, and upon them would be inscribed the names of the 57,000 who died—in the chronological order of their deaths.

The "purpose" of this memorial, wrote the *New Republic*, is "to impress upon the visitor the sheer human waste, the utter meaninglessness of it all . . . To treat the Vietnam dead like some monstrous traffic accident is more than a disservice to history; it is a disservice to the memory of the 57,000."

Ross Perot took one look at the winning design and washed his hands of it. How did it happen that the VVMF

could settle upon a ditch on the Mall and a black Wall of Shame as fitting memorial to those who served?

Relatively simple. Not a single Vietnam veteran served on the judging panel that selected Miss Lin's design. No Vietnam veteran was *allowed* to serve on a panel which contained several members outspokenly hostile to the national effort to stop North Vietnam's conquest of the South; one member allegedly had a long association with the American Communist Party.

If this trench is dug, and those black granite walls are sunk into the earth of the Mall, those 57,000 war dead, whose names will be inscribed in perpetuity, will be conscripted again and again at rallies on behalf of causes of the self-same people who mocked their sacrifices while they lived and helped to cancel their achievements after they died. That trench would be a permanent political statement endorsing the view of the American left: that the Vietnam veterans fought and died in a worthless cause.

Already, according to Tom Carhart, twice-wounded platoon leader with the 101st Airborne who is mobilizing opposition to this "black gash of sorrow and shame," relatives of the war dead are coming forward to keep the names of their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons off the granite slabs.

The hour is late; but not too late for urgent appeals to Congress and, especially, the President, whose secretary of the Interior must approve the digging. The most persuasive voices that could be raised would surely be those of the veterans themselves, rising in angry protest against this last, final exploitation of their fallen comrades.

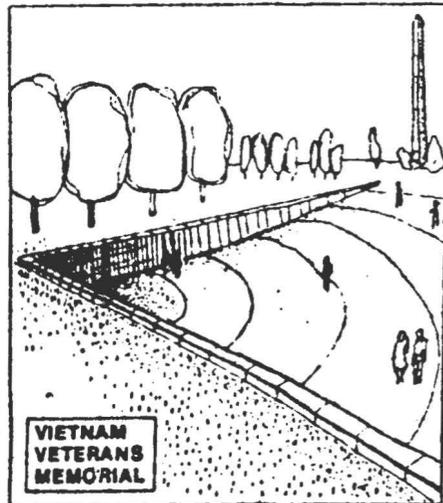
Reassessing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

By JAMES H. WEBB JR.

I, like many Vietnam veterans I have spoken to, face a Hobson's choice with respect to the proposed Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Having served on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's National Sponsoring Committee, and having also worked on Capitol Hill to help gain passage of the authorizing resolution, I want very much to see a memorial on the Mall. On the other hand, I believe the memorial chosen through the recent design competition is, as other detractors have maintained, a nihilistic statement that does not render honor to those who served.

In 1980 the Congress authorized the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) to erect with private funds a memorial that would "honor and recognize the men and women of the armed forces of the United States who served in the Vietnam war." The fund, which was the brainchild of a small group of Washington-based Vietnam veterans, held a nationwide design competition, with jurors selected on the basis of their eminence in the artistic and architectural community.

The winning design, which the fund proposes to build in Constitution Gardens just off the mall in time for Veterans Day 1982,



consists of two black walls, joining at a 135-degree angle, with one wall pointing toward the Lincoln Memorial and one toward the Washington Monument. The top of the memorial will remain at ground level, while the base will recede into the earth to a depth of 10 feet where the two walls join. On the walls will be the names of those who perished in the war, listed chronologically, supposedly in the order they fell. There will be no flag, no images indicative of war. The original design did not carry the word "Vietnam," though now a short inscription is apparently planned where the walls meet. It will be, as writer and Vietnam veteran Al Santoli mentioned to me, "a place to go and be depressed."

What is one to do? Is any memorial better than no memorial? At what point does a piece of architecture cease being a memorial to service and instead become a mockery of that service, a wailing wall for future anti-draft and anti-nuclear demonstrators? And most importantly, how did this travesty, this unwinnable paradox, come about?

It is important to make one clarification. The dissatisfaction with the proposed design is not the product of the far right, which has been panned in some recent articles as wanting to see a Vietnam era update of the Iwo Jima memorial, nor is it the product of a few disgruntled contestants in the design competition. The issue is whether this design meets the congressional mandate to "honor and recognize the men and women . . . who served in the Vietnam war." All this talk of a memorial "suitably capturing the national feeling about Vietnam," whatever that is and whatever else it might be 10 or 100 years from now, is secondary to that mandated purpose. If it does, fine. But it must first honor and recognize those who served.

The present design does neither. First, it is a memorial only to the dead. Maya Lin, its designer, has been very clear on this point, stating that "this memorial is not meant as a memorial to the individual, but rather as a memorial to the men and women who died during the war, as a whole."

The New Republic magazine took umbrage at this conception of the memorial. "Its purpose," the magazine said, "is to impress upon the visitor the sheer human waste, the utter meaninglessness of it all. It is an unfortunate choice of memorial . . . To treat the Vietnam dead like the victims of some monstrous traffic accident is more than a disservice to history; it is a disservice to the memory of the 57,000 . . . It is surely an excess of revisionist zeal."

A memorial devoid of embellishment, which will take up almost 200 yards of the Capitol Mall to list the names of the dead on a long black wall, violates the congressional mandate, and also violates the repeated assurances given early supporters by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. In addition to me, Admiral James B. Stockdale, Medal of Honor winner and the dean of the American prisoners of war, has resigned from the National Sponsoring Committee of the Fund for so long as this design prevails.

Businessman Ross Perot, who provided nearly all of the funding for the memorial project from its inception in 1979 until the design for this memorial was chosen, including the funds for the design competition itself, quietly withdrew upon seeing the winning design. Mr. Perot, a Naval Academy graduate who has been widely active in projects that recognize the positive achievements of servicemen and veterans, had been repeatedly assured by the Fund's directors that the monument would not glorify war, but would honor the dead while giving primary emphasis to recognizing the heroic service of those who fought and returned. Manifestly, it does not.

Those who support the design argue, on being confronted with such dissent, that sour grapes are inevitable, that the design competition was the most extensive in history, and that the design itself is "neutral," allowing each observer to make his own conclusion about the war and those who died. But this design should not be neutral. We are invading for all time the privacy of those who perished in the war by publishing their names on the memorial, and this should not be done except in the most affirmative sense of honor and recognition.

Architectural understatement is hardly called for when we are dealing with the heroic and honorable loss of life. If citizens and international visitors wish to reach a conclusion regarding the American involvement in Vietnam while studying the memorial, it should begin with that premise. Thus, if there were to be sour grapes, the cries should have been that there was too much honor, if that is possible, rather than not enough.

One of the most unfortunate and moving testimonies to this point came from the widow of a fellow Marine, a man whom I deeply respected and fondly remember. No supporter of the war herself, she likened the blackness, the lack of ornateness, the very emptiness of this design to the reaction she had upon seeing the ovens at Dachau. No honor there, but rather a rubbing of the world's face into the grisly shame of the deaths. "It would be better to not have a memorial at all," she concluded.

How could such a design have prevailed? It is true that there were more entries in this competition than any other in history. But through what filter did they pass? Who decided on the winner? When the winner was announced, I called the memorial fund office and asked whether a Vietnam veteran had been on the judging panel. I was told, astoundingly, that no Vietnam veterans were considered qualified, though it is traditional in such competitions for a layperson directly concerned with the project to sit as a judge, to provide a balance. Later, the VVMF officially stated that "a factor militating against a Vietnam veteran being on the jury was that because of the other jury members' empathy for such a person, they might be swayed too greatly by that person's opinion."

A Desire to Avoid Any Symbol

There have been charges and countercharges regarding the antiwar activities of several members of the jury. At a minimum, it is clear that there were members who had been bitterly opposed to the war, and the winning design seems to reflect a desire to avoid any symbol or statement that would put the war or those who fought it in an affirmative light. It should be remembered that the winning design, when

"Vietnam" on it, nor did it say anything whatsoever about those who had served. From the results of the competition, the judges undoubtedly agreed with William Greider's recent perception in the Washington Post, supporting the proposed design, that "our shared memories of that war do not include any suitably heroic images which a sculptor could convert to stone or bronze."

Most Vietnam veterans who watched the daily sacrifices of their peers in combat would quickly disagree with such a view of the "honor and recognition" that is their due, and the lack of this affirmative viewpoint is demonstrable in the winning design. As the descendant of any man who fought for the Confederacy can assure you, it is not necessary for a nation to have won a war in order for its soldiers to have fought heroically. The Vietnam veteran deserves a memorial that can make this same distinction.

In the interest of compromise, those who oppose the present design have asked that it be made white, above ground, and have a flag at the juncture of the two walls. The VVMF has the power to make such changes, with very little damage to the process by which they arrived at the design itself. Should they not, perhaps the public should reject the design by refusing to pay for it. Since this memorial is to be built with private funds, it should thus reflect the judgment of those who make its construction possible. One hopes that contributors would not hasten in their good intentions to honor those who served, and in the end bankroll a subtle but real denigration.

Mr. Webb was a Marine rifle platoon commander in Vietnam and is the author of two novels, "Fields of Fire" and "A Sense of Honor." Until recently he was minority counsel to the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

HENRY J. HYDE
6TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

COMMITTEES:
JUDICIARY
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Bill Gibbin

1208 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-4561

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

January 12, 1982

Honorable Ronald Reagan
President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We the undersigned respectfully urge you to request that Secretary of Interior James Watt withhold his signature from any documents that provide necessary permission to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, or its designees, to break ground to construct the so-called Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The enclosed article by James H. Webb, Jr. fully expresses our view that the design of this memorial conveys more shame than honor.

This proposed construction has been aptly described by a member of the design selection jury: "In a city of white memorials rising, this will be a dark memorial receding."

We feel this design makes a political statement of shame and dishonor, rather than an expression of our national pride at the courage, patriotism and nobility of all who served.

A new jury ought to be appointed, less intent on perpetuating national humiliation no matter how artistically expressed.

We who voted for enabling legislation to accomplish a Vietnam Veterans Memorial feel betrayed by the ultimate design selected. We share the view that this alleged memorial is "a black ditch that does not recognize or honor those who served" and fervently hope you and Secretary Watt will intercede to prevent this depressing and unedifying memorial from representing our Nation's public statement about men and women who deserve far better from us.

Sincerely,

Henry J. Hyde
Henry J. Hyde

HJH:fw

cc: Honorable James Watt

Philip Crane

PHILIP CRANE, ILLINOIS

Robert J. Lagomarsino

ROBERT LAGOMARSINO, CALIFORNIA

L.A. Skip Bafalis

L.A. (SKIP) BAFALIS, FLORIDA

Bobbi Fiedler

BOBBI FIEDLER, CALIFORNIA

Charles F. Dougherty

CHARLES DOUGHERTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Ed Derwinski

EDWARD DERWINSKI, ILLINOIS

George Wortley

GEORGE WORTLEY, NEW YORK

Bill Goodling

WILLIAM GOODLING, PENNSYLVANIA

Tom Tauke

THOMAS TAUKE, IOWA

Will Dickinson

WILLIAM DICKINSON, ALABAMA

Hank Brown

HANK BROWN, COLORADO

Bill Emerson

BILL EMERSON, MISSOURI

Jerry Lewis

JERRY LEWIS, CALIFORNIA

Gary A. Lee

GARY LEE, NEW YORK

Clair Burgener

CLAIR BURGNER, CALIFORNIA

Doug Berenter

DOUGLAS BERENTER, NEBRASKA

Cal Caldwell Butler

CALDWELL BUTLER, VIRGINIA

Olympia Snowe

OLYMPIA SNOWE, MAINE

Don Ritter

DON RITTER, PENNSYLVANIA

John Hiler

JOHN HILER, INDIANA

Norm Shumway

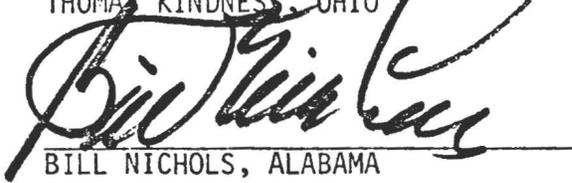
NORMAN SHUMWAY, CALIFORNIA

George M. O'Brien

GEORGE O'BRIEN, ILLINOIS


FRANK WOLF, VIRGINIA

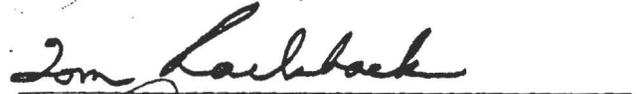

THOMAS KINDNESS, OHIO

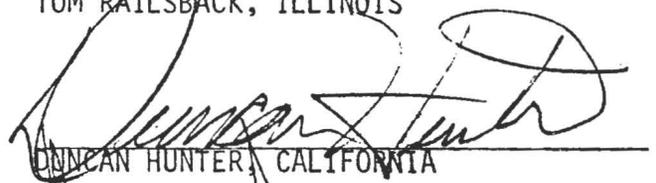

BILL NICHOLS, ALABAMA

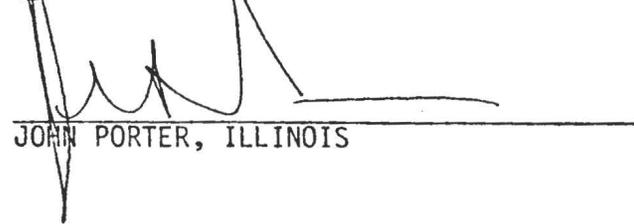

CARROLL CAMPBELL, SOUTH CAROLINA


GERALD SOLOMON, NEW YORK


DAN LUNGREN, CALIFORNIA


TOM RAILSBACK, ILLINOIS


DUNCAN HUNTER, CALIFORNIA


JOHN PORTER, ILLINOIS

In the Eye of the Beholder

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A LONG-FORGOTTEN Irish novelist, Margaret Wolfe Hungerford, is today remembered for a single line in a long-forgotten work called "Molly Bawn." This was the line: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder."

The line comes to mind in contemplating the flap that has arisen over the design for the pending Vietnam Veterans Memorial. I happen to think the design is superb; in my own view, it promises to be the most moving war memori-

By James J. Kilpatrick

al in this country, if not in the world. My brother conservatives of *National Review* think the design is terrible. Many veterans approve it warmly—the American Legion has pledged \$1 million and the Veterans of Foreign Wars have contributed \$250,000 toward its construction.

The idea for this memorial began to germinate three years ago in the mind of Jan Scruggs, a fairly obscure fellow in an obscure office of the Department of Labor. He is a soft-spoken guy with steel in his spine. He also has steel in his arms and legs—shrapnel left over from his year with the infantry in Vietnam. He came home from the war not only with the shrapnel but also with a decoration for gallantry.

In common with many other veterans of Vietnam, Mr. Scruggs resented the indifference and hostility exhibited by an ungrateful nation toward the men who had fought there. He began to talk up the idea of a memorial. In April, 1979, he formed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. A year or so later Congress donated a site on the mall between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument with the understanding that funds to build the memorial would be privately raised.

Last year, in a conscientious effort to avoid precisely the kind of controversy that recently has arisen, the fund sponsored a design competition and asked a blue-ribbon jury to name a winner from the 1,421 designs that were submitted. The jury chose a design by Maya Ying Lin, a brilliant student of architecture at Yale.

Some of the most noisy critics are contending that the design makes a "political statement." The objection is fatuous. The memorial will consist quite simply of two walls of black granite in which the names of the 57,000 dead of Vietnam will be carved. No Corinthian columns. No frou-frou. No Winged Victories. No temples or arches or obelisks.

These were the dead of Vietnam. We honor them.

That is the poignant statement this memorial would make. I happen to believe the war was just as Ronald Reagan described it in August 1980: It was indeed a "noble cause." In the end the cause was lost, but that tragic fact cannot obscure the motivation nor denigrate the sacrifice. If this contemplative memorial prompts visitors to reflect upon the price of defending freedom, so be it. Like beauty, meaning will lie in the beholder's eye.

One of the most asinine objections came from the left-wing *New Republic*, in which a columnist saw the names as if they were victims of "some monstrous traffic accident." An even more depressing objection came from the right-wing columnist Pat Buchanan: One member of the design jury, unidentified, "allegedly had a long association with the American Communist Party." A cheaper shot has seldom been fired.

Probably the sponsors of the Vietnam Memorial should have expected such pettifogging opposition. Ours is a nation of 225 million critics of art and architecture. After 30 years of proposition and dissension, agreement is yet to be reached on a memorial to Franklin Roosevelt. The best we have done for James Madison is to name a library annex for him. Even so, it is a pity to encounter this divisiveness. The war was divisive enough.

My hope is that the sponsors of this eloquent memorial will not be deterred by the small but passionate opposition to the design. The fund is slowly approaching its \$7 million goal. Ground is to be broken in March. A year hence the memorial could be in being. Viewing it, each of us may remember what he wishes to remember—the cause, the heroism, the blunders, or the waste.