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Mr. Tim Ward
6321 St. Andrews Drive, Apt. #8
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Dear Mr. Ward:

I regret that it has taken me so long to reply to your letters, but I am happy to do so. When the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Design Competition was being formulated, considerable thought was given to the merit of having one or more Vietnam veterans, per se, as members of the design selection jury. This same question arises, in principle, in all design competitions; that is, the question of client or sponsor representation on the jury.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund decided not to have its own representative on the jury and also decided not to have a Vietnam veteran per se. The reason for the first decision was that the organization's primary responsibility was to the conception and overall conduct of the entire competition. The reason for the second was that there was ^{no} one -- or two or even three -- Vietnam veterans whose individual experience would be representative of the total experience of the veterans, of their families, of those who the war affected slightly, or of those who were affected very much.

Beyond this, the question of selecting a proper memorial to the veterans (for the memorial is for them), involves these considerations:

- ability to judge a design in drawing form.
- a mature and broad knowledge of design and esthetics.
- a keen understanding of the relationship between a place, a design, and observer-visitors (if you will, a keen understanding of the psychology of design).

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- knowledge of materials and costs.
- knowledge of the historical continuity of the mall area, its monuments, its future and what would be appropriate for it.
- an ability to examine what is likely to be a very great number of designs, and to understand the meaning of each readily, so that all designs are evaluated fairly.
- ability to judge how future generations, who were not alive during the Vietnam War, will be able to respond to the memorial.


All this -- and more -- requires mature and highly accomplished design jurors; jurors who are experienced in the competition process . That is precisely the nature of the jurors we have appointed.

A further point is the matter of emotional commitments and sympathy on the part of the jurors. When we first contacted the jurors, each of them, to a man, quickly expressed his sympathy and compassion for the Vietnam veteran. Each did this entirely voluntarily, without any prompting, even before the question could be raised. All of the jurors have been affected by war. Some of them have been in intensive combat. They know what war is.

To supplement their personal knowledge, the VVMF requested, and all agreed, that they read the literature written by Vietnam veterans listed in the competition rules booklet as "recommended reading".

The final factor was that the VVMF wanted Vietnam veterans to be involved in the competition as competitors rather than jurors. In this way, no Vietnam veteran would be in a position to judge the work of another. We feel that by putting the matter of selecting the design in the hands of the chosen jury, we will procure the best design possible to recognize and honor the memory of those who served and died in Vietnam.

Yours truly,



Paul D. Spreiregen, FAIA
Professional Advisor