

STATEMENT DELIVERED BEFORE THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS  
ON JULY 7, 1981, IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Good morning. My name is Scott Brewer, I am a Vietnam Veteran.

There is no doubt that a memorial to honor those who served in the Vietnam War, and particularly those who died and were injured, is needed, and indeed is long overdue. I strongly support the project to the extent that an appropriate design is adopted and followed through to completion. I do not support the project with the design recently selected by the jury as the design for the memorial, and feel that of the 1420 entries, the selected design least accomplishes the intent of honoring those who served, and again, particularly those Americans who died and were injured.

I see a vital role for the Commission of Fine Arts in this project, in that there is little Federal involvement in what is largely a private effort by well intended but inexperienced individuals, inexperienced in the ways of establishing a memorial to our country's war dead.

The only objective accomplished is that the design is harmonious with the site in that it does not disrupt or conflict with either the Washington Monument or the Lincoln Memorial. There are several problems however: 1) it does pose a hazard due to the submerged elevation, and barriers will be needed to prevent injury, which will themselves interfere with the design; 2) it is not easily accessible to the handicapped; 3) drainage will be a constant problem, again due to the submerged elevation of the design; but most important, the minimalist design accomplishes little. I find it to be abstract, anonymous, inconspicuous and meaningless, and is so unfulfilling as a lasting memorial that no memorial would be a better alternative. The second place entry, however, does express honor and dignity and is identified as a memorial to those who served and died in the Vietnam War. And there were many others that would properly honor the Vietnam Veterans, including the third place entry and numerous honorable mention entries, all of which were on display at Andrews Air Force Base in early May.

Every prior attempt to honor the Vietnam Veterans has

been a rather weak and embarrassing gesture. Unless this project can effectively honor the Vietnam Veterans with dignity, it is hoped that a further minimal acknowledgement of service will not result.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund has stressed that the memorial is not to be political, that its purpose is to honor the service and memory of the war's dead, its missing and its veterans, not the war itself. Therefore, we should remove any current thoughts on the nature of the war, its conduct or results, and honor those who died, and do so in a manner that conveys full honor, dignity and respect.

It is notable that the Americans were the first to build a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, to honor our unidentified or missing war dead, following the Civil War. Many other nations have followed our practice, and some of our European allies have a separate memorial for the dead of both World Wars I and II. I think of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of World War I in England, The Great War as the Europeans refer to it, as one example of the manner in which a grateful nation has honored its war dead. It is located in Westminster Abbey, which is the burial place of England's

Kings, Queens, political leaders and other notable citizens who have served England well. Statistically, the unknown soldier buried there was probably a 19 year old uneducated private, but they buried him in the center of Westminster Abbey among ten centuries of English royalty, and the inscription reads: " He fought and died for England and we buried him among the Kings." That effectively expresses the profound respect and appreciation of a grateful nation.

We can separate current thoughts on the validity of the war from those who served and died, and honor them as heroes, which they were, having paid the last full measure of devotion. To honor them in a less noble manner, in line with the current thinking on the Vietnam War as one to be forgotten, is a disservice to those dead Americans who served with honor because they thought it their duty. Thank you.

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Good Morning , Gentlemen

My name is Robert Doubek. I am the project director for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. I am pleased to have the opportunity to present to you our design concept for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

As you know, this concept is the result of a national competition which we conducted and which was concluded on May 1st. With me to explain the competition and jury proceedings is Paul D. Spreiregen, an architect and planner here in Washington, who served as our Professional Advisor. Also with me is Miss Maya Lin of New Haven, the winning designer, who will explain the design concept.

Before I introduce them, however, I wish to say a few words about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. The Fund is a non-profit foundation, which is tax exempt as a charity. It was founded in April 1979 by Jan C. Scruggs of Columbia, Maryland, who in 1970<sup>at age 19</sup> served in combat in Vietnam as an Army infantryman. The Fund's sole purpose is to establish the national memorial to the veterans and dead of the Vietnam war. Upon completion of the project, the Fund will be dissolved.

The purpose of the memorial is to provide a tangible symbol of this nation's acknowledgement and recognition of the men and women of the Armed Forces who served and died in the war. ~~It~~ <sup>It will honor</sup> their sacrifice and honorable service. It will make no statement regarding the rightness or wrongness of U.S. policy in our national involvement in Vietnam.

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The Fund is directed and largely staffed by Vietnam veterans. Mr. Scruggs is now the president, and Col. Donald Schaet, who retired from the Marine Corps earlier this year, is executive vice president. Our fund raising efforts are directed by an experienced fund raising professional on our staff. Total contributions to date have exceeded \$1.8 million. I myself am a Vietnam veteran and attorney, with experience in corporate, contract and construction law. I am advised by a volunteer committee of Vietnam veterans ~~a committee of volunteers~~ who include a professional engineer and a real estate developer.

1. not all like it
2. - we consulted
3. is not a report
- 4.