

February 24, 1983

**VIETNAM
VETERANS
MEMORIAL
FUND**

The Honorable Larry McDonald
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman McDonald:

I read the recent discussion of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that you entered into the Congressional Record on February 15, 1983. While I disagree with your statements, I certainly don't mind that you took the time to express your feelings about the memorial's design. As a veteran who was wounded and decorated for valor in Vietnam, I will always cherish the principles of our great nation, especially the right to express one's opinion.

There are a couple of facts that you should be aware of, however, and I am glad to have this opportunity to provide you with some information that I am sure you will find to be of interest.

Regarding your discussion on the fine quality of American granite, you are indeed correct and certainly the example that you gave about the great quantity of granite exported to Japan from Elberton, Georgia shows that this is true.

The point that I would like to make is that there are many kinds of granite. The type of granite needed to attain the highly polished, reflective surface that is on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and on the base of the Iwo Jima Memorial is only found in three countries: Sweden, South Africa and India. The Iwo Jima Memorial in Arlington used granite from Sweden. We used granite from India. I was not happy with this situation, but there is simply no granite in this country with the particular qualities that were needed for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. You can be certain, Congressman McDonald, that neither the U.S. Marines who built the Iwo Jima Memorial nor my organization had any unpatriotic motives by not using American granite.

No one appreciates being quoted out of context and I do believe that I was in your remarks. I am certainly proud that I had the opportunity to serve our country in Vietnam. I was not drafted, but rather volunteered for the military and for combat duty. It is unfortunate that you implied otherwise, but I can certainly understand that these things do happen from time to time.

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Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc.

1110 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 308, Washington, D.C. 20005 (202) 659-2490

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You also mentioned that neither our Nation's flag nor the chosen statuary will be in the immediate vicinity of the memorial. This is not the case. Both the flag and statuary will be close to the memorial. I feel strongly that these elements will enhance the memorial greatly.

While I do respect your opinion on the memorial design, I object to your reference to it as the "Black Hole of Calcutta". Vietnam veterans have come from every state to see their memorial and it is well respected. Parents of the war's casualties have come from as far away as Alaska to see their son's name. They are always proud and thankful that this memorial exists.

Probably no memorial design could please everyone. This is a fact that we accepted even during the initial planning for the project.

The existence of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, however, has done a great deal to help those who served feel that their sacrifices are appreciated. The memorial was built with private contributions from individual Americans and with the help of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and nearly every veteran's organization in existence. This has been a difficult project, but we have succeeded because of the help from many patriotic Americans who have freely given of their time and talent to help us succeed.

Again, thank you for expressing your opinion. I would be glad to meet with you anytime at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to discuss your ideas face to face.

Sincerely,

Jan C. Scruggs
President

JCS:kmk