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2309 North Glebe Road
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27 January 1984

Dear Jan:

How nice to hear from you again. I haven't had the pleasure of being called a McCarthyite, or been accused of having "undermined" the memorial, since the time you circulated such accusations among prominent media folk a few months ago.

Again, Jan, I find myself in the position of explaining, in detail, my actions and allegations, while you and your cohorts are relying on smear tactics and hiding behind the design issue. When are you going to start explaining, also?

I am getting weary of saying this, but I have never alleged Communist Party involvement in the design debate. I was labelled a McCarthyite by WMF, in writing, after I took the matter privately to Jack Wheeler, as a member of the National Sponsoring Committee, in order that he might investigate it and prepare to respond. How would you feel if you had done this service, and had it whipsaw on you?

Secondly, having already been branded a McCarthyite, and not being stupid, you can imagine what my advice would have been to Mr. Baines had he asked me about the wisdom of hiring Roy Cohn. I will say this again: neither Mr. Perot nor myself had anything to do with Roy Cohn. I do know that Mr. Perot has publicly stated that he will pay for a complete audit of WMF's receipts and disbursements, should the books ever be opened. Perhaps this was the context of Mr. Baines' approach to Mr. Cohn. Again, the person to ask is Mr. Baines. I have indeed known his former assistant, Mr. Stensland, for 15 years, and he feels very close to my book A SENSE OF HONOR. I have known Jack Wheeler for almost five years, and he also is acknowledged in A SENSE OF HONOR. To suggest that I can control the thoughts, opinions, and actions of either is to be both reductionist and paranoid.

In light of your allegation, and in order to fully clarify this matter, I am asking the GAO to include it in their investigation.

Third, with respect to Carlton Sherwood, I assure you that I am going to absolutely no lengths to distance myself from him. As you well know, he is one of the very finest reporters in the country. However,

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your insistence that there was a "conspiracy" that began in the summer of 1981 is pathetic, Jan. I hardly owe you the following explanations, but I am tired of playing "who shot John." For the record:

*** Carlton Sherwood interviewed me for the Academy story in early 1981, which you correctly point out was before the design was even announced. At that time, I was talking with my agent about getting backing for a story in Vietnam. Sherwood expressed an interest in covering me for Gannett if I got the story — in effect, "piggy backing" on my story. Dozens of other Vietnam veterans expressed similar interests, but they hardly had Sherwood's credentials. I sent this suggestion on to my agent, in April. I am sending a copy of that correspondence to GAO. I later sold this idea to Parade magazine, which sent me to Thailand to try and gain entry. I was in Thailand during the famous "first compromise" meeting, and had not spoken to or seen Sherwood for months.

*** I hardly needed Carlton Sherwood to introduce me to David Christian in June, 1981. I had already known Christian for four years by that time, ever since he came to the Labor Department to work on the ill-fated HIRE program under Jimmy Carter.

*** If Jack Wheeler had asked me for prominent Vietnam veterans in the media to cover the unveiling of the sculpture, I would certainly have mentioned Carlton Sherwood, since he is the most respected and successful Vietnam veteran in media. Had I been in contact with Sherwood, I suppose I could have given Wheeler his location and job, or invited him myself. Certainly, if I knew him as a "dedicated enemy," I hardly would have mentioned his name to Wheeler. In any event, I had no idea where Sherwood was working at that time.

*** I don't know who turned Sherwood onto the story in Boston. Your divine inspiration that somehow it was me is again reductionist and paranoid. Wouldn't it be nice if there was indeed a conspiracy, rather than a lot of people with a lot of questions? To be honest with you, I am sick of the whole matter, and was very reluctant to participate at all. I did not agree to an interview until after I had personally talked with DAV officials at their national headquarters to ascertain the truth regarding their offer of financial assistance. I have given the GAO pertinent information on this matter as well.

*** The telegram was genuine. I had changed my home telephone number since 1981, and Sherwood did not have a way to reach me. He called my old publisher, Prentice-Hall, since he did not know I had left for Doubleday. P-H refused to give him my number, and referred

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him to my agent. My agent refused to give him my number, and instead called me and gave me his. Isn't it rather ironic that Jack Wheeler had my unlisted number but Sherwood did not?

I am not responsible for Sherwood's series, and I am not responsible for the information in it. I cooperated fully with him, and have great respect for him. I also cooperated fully with "Sixty Minutes" in their investigation, which you must admit was a hatchet job if ever there was one — Morley Safer pointing to a spot just in front of the wall as the placement position for the sculpture, when you and they both knew that it was already voluntarily agreed that it would be 160 feet away, Jan Scruggs commenting on the racism of the opposition — how much voluntary work have you done in the Vietnamese community, Jan? Compare that with the work of those you labelled racists.

I hope you will understand, Jan, that I consider the design debate to be dead and gone. I am very satisfied with the compromise, and in fact feel that we in the "dissent" have done a valuable service, not only to our country, but to the Memorial as well. Veterans who served now have an inscription in their honor (which VVMF opposed). They have a flag (which VVMF opposed). They will soon have a sculpture (which VVMF opposed). In short, the starkness of the wall now has context. I stated this belief before the Fine Arts Commission (when you will recall I came to you and shook your hand), and I still adhere to it. I worked hard to get the best compromise possible, and I have moved on. I was involved in these sorts of debates dozens of times as a counsel in the Congress, some of them much more emotional for me (although less devious) than this one. The lingering bad taste has nothing to do with the design.

I want you to know also that I have a great admiration for the job you have done. This issue has been the dominant theme of your life for the last five years, and I forgive you if you do not understand that it has been important, but not obsessive, for me. In the time you have spent building the memorial, I have conceived, written and published two novels, promoted them, spent 18 months as a Chief counsel in the Congress, travelled as a journalist to Thailand, Japan (twice), Britain, and Beirut, been shot at, mortared, divorced, remarried, fathered two children (with whom I am obsessed), done lectures at dozens of colleges and military schools on the subject of leadership, the Vietnam war, Beirut, and military manpower, done hundreds of radio and TV shows on those and other topics (none of which have been on the memorial), and in my free time I have fished and hunted. You will recall that I even missed both "compromise" meetings because of professional commitments that took me out of town. It is very much your memorial. I have never

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tried to destroy it (I feel sorry for you if you feel that way), but worked very hard to improve it. I have absolutely no allegations to make against you, except for an occasional loose tongue, and I told this to GAO. I have felt many times that you and others at VVMF have wished to discredit me, and my response has been to cease dealing with you. I participated fully in the National Salute and the dedication. I will continue to participate in events at the memorial. When I see the memorial I will always think of you, and not unkindly.

But there are other issues, and I am happy the GAO is going to resolve them. In the interim, I honestly wish you every success in your book.

Sincerely,



Jim Webb