

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

I understand that the Honorable Don Bailey, Member of Congress, would also like to speak at this point.

MR. BAILEY: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission. I have found it necessary to preface my remarks on this subject by making a request that you bear with me because it is a very emotional issue for me. I want to speak to you not as a Member of Congress who has worked on this issue as much as I speak to you from the viewpoint of a Vietnam veteran who has spent many, many months in very heavy combat in Vietnam, as someone who has been deeply affected by the return to a country I love very much and has been involved in trying to bring together something that no mere issue of aesthetics can take away from this issue, and that is the context of feelings, emotions, history and purpose in which the memorial is going to be built and is going to exist.

One thing that I would like to do away with at the outset was something which is very, very sad. There has never been involved by the people who work on this memorial, on either side, on any side, the multitude of issues that we have faced, any issue of racism. I know that you have a very important decision to make, all of you, and it is very important that you make it in light of a number of ideas, and

I know that you are sensitive to that. It is very unfortunate that the CBS report on this issue conveyed that impression. I had never heard it raised. I made a number of speeches on the floor of the House, I have heard over a thousand, and I reviewed them just this morning, correspondence that never had a single objection to the ethnicity to the design. Anyone who fought in Vietnam knows that we fought along Thai soldiers, Orientals, Koreans, Orientals, both of those groups were terrific fighters. We fought alongside South Vietnamese, some of which were just outstanding. That is not an issue. Please don't believe that. It never has been. It has been created and thrown into this, and it never should have been.

When the whole effort got underway, I had initially objected because of the desire not to invoke any sort of political message or avoid that as a message in itself, that was an objection that I had originally raised.

I think the issue that you are being drawn into, and that is why this room is full today and why you have so much media attention, is not the issue of aesthetics. The issue still remains for the United States of America why the war was fought. As that memorial is built in that clash of ideas, the memorial is being built at a time when the legacy of the war itself turns to the sufferings of the veterans who

sacrificed their lives, and the legacy in this country, and now what exists in Vietnam are all converging, and it is a legacy of someone who is proud of their service, someone who believes strongly in the reasons why that war was fought and still does. But the difficult legacy that is being faced now does not reflect poorly on those who fought there. Out of that strong belief, and it is shared by a great many, there were meetings held. I daresay that the individuals who I think jealously guarded and properly so their initial involvement are good people, well intentioned people who, in a spirit of compromise, compromise agreed with those who objected, but the fair thing to do was to make some alterations in designs. Those alterations cannot and do not violate the aesthetic purity of what has been done. At least not in the opinion of those that care about the message that it conveys. Fundamentally, that message is political whether anyone in this room likes it or not; whether our country likes it or not. It is an issue that you as a Commission are going to have to face if you remove, for example, in a meaningful way the American flag from the recommendation that has been made, it is going to raise a question of the value and message of that memorial.

If you do away with the statue, if you place it too far away or do something with it, I notice the question you

ask, the reason I say this, you asked a question on site, my mind began to work obviously in terms of will it work, that is available to you in that definition. I only ask, and I beg all of you in the most humble way that I can, not as a Member of Congress or not as a legislator with authority to write law, but as a veteran of that war, that you please consider and understand that -- and this is my personal opinion, for the vast majority of American soldiers who fought in Vietnam, who are still tortured, deeply and painfully tortured by the one question that still clouds the entire issue, that question whether or not they fought for a proper reason. Because that is what baits at the pride. That is what carries the message of an insult, that in light of recent history of the boat people, of the incredibly large number of refugees from that country, the greatest political outmigration in recent history -- you see it nowhere in this country in terms of population in this country -- virtual genocide in Cambodia, that you allow us please to carry a message of honor and respect and recognition of the reasons why that war was fought, by allowing us to add in the compromise fashion that has been suggested to you these very basic and surely, from an aesthetic point of view, hopefully minor design changes. But they represent a huge world of difference to us.

Personally I had felt that the most important thing that could be done was the inscription, and I basically lost that battle. Although it would be one that basically the flag policy will make references to at least one issue of ultimate political value. A simple thing called freedom that maybe doesn't mean much in a free and wealthy society. But when your face is dirty and a friend is dead and you haven't bathed in a long time and you are hungry, and you are surrounded, and you don't know if you are going to live or die, there is an issue of pride that keeps you pursuing what you believe in. And when you see newspapers and magazines and letters from home, and you pick up pieces of paper alongside a trail credit- ing North Vietnam, telling you to repatriate yourself and jump President Johnson's dirty imperialistic war, you have to look inside yourself for a degree of persistence that carries you through. As a leader, something that you can reach for that enables you to put your hands on a fellow citizen, there were black citizens, I had superior officers that were black that were fantastic leaders, I had Japanese-Americans, Filipinos, Hispanics from the United States, Hispanic ethnicity, you had to have a reason why you tell a kid something that is going to take his life. That is what that statue is and that is what that flag represents to us.

I really plead with you to give us that. It is not much to ask. I am not a judge of the aesthetic of that wall. I think it is pretty standing by itself, I guess. I just question whether or not the purpose and the intent standing by itself are the reason for the memorial to stand. I hope that in the evaluation of that those things there that you are much better schooled in appreciation of art, I don't know, because I don't have that expertise, that you will consider the message. There is a political message. No matter what is done, I will not change it.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

We now proceed with those who have requested to speak in support of these modifications.

I would remind you that, as published in the Federal Register, our guidelines ask that testimony be limited to a maximum recommended by the Chairman in the circumstances which we would hope would be three to five minutes, and that each speaker try to limit himself as much as possible to new material, new thoughts or arguments that have not already been established in the record. You can understand the reasons for this. There are limits in the number of hours in the day and one could go on ad infinitum, and the case has

been put most eloquently, but we are particularly interested in hearing from representatives of the veterans' community, and we would like to give them priority in this testimony. So that the first would be Cooper T. Holt.

MR. HOLT; Mr. Chairman, members of the Fine Arts Commission, I am Cooper T. Holt, and I am the Director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Washington office.

I appear before you today representing the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars regarding the proposed sculpture and flag staff for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars represent 1.9 million war veterans and 9,500 posts throughout our great Nation. Among its membership, the VFW has over 530,000 veterans who served in the country of Vietnam.

We thank you for the opportunity of presenting our views. In June 1981, our National Commander in Chief asked all of our Post Commanders for 100 percent participation in raising money for this long overdue tribute to those Americans who served in the Vietnam War. At the same time, we ran a photograph of the basic memorial design in an article describing the project in our VFW National Magazine. This article also asked all posts and auxiliaries to sponsor the