

CHAIRMAN BROWN: We will reconvene the Commission of Fine Arts.

On behalf of the other members of the Commission, I want to thank everyone who came here today, particularly those who testified so eloquently, those who were waiting for their turn so patiently. We understand, I think, the dimensions of this decision. I think that it is not lost on us as human beings or as citizens of the United States the degree, which there is a felt need in this country for healing, and we want to be part of that process, we want to help, we want to be constructive and we want to help heal the wound, and we certainly want to help honor and recognize all of those who served in Vietnam.

The Commission of Fine Arts is a body with a very specific mandate given it by Congress. Its legislation, which was passed in 1910, still is our mission. "It shall be the duty of such Commission to advise upon the location of statues, fountains and monuments in the public squares, streets, and parks in the District of Columbia, and upon the selection of models for statues, fountains and monuments erected under the authority of the United States, and upon the selection of artists for the execution of the same." In other words, they are very much an integral part of this kind of process.

We laud the competition that was held and, as all of you know, we have approved the winner of that competition, the winning design, although we made certain caveats at the beginning of that process which was that it required further development, and that design has, with our interaction, been developed so that many of the practical problems which it posed at the beginning have been overcome. And the result is something, I think, of which this Commission and everyone who had a part in it can be extraordinarily proud.

We have just come back from the site. I wanted my colleagues from out of town to see it now that the grass is beginning to be there. One can visualize what the final effect will be. It is extraordinarily moving. I think the litany of those names is enough to bring enormous emotions to everyone's heart, emotions of pride and of honor in the sacrifices that have been made in serving this country.

We have, however, a mandate to look at these problems in a perspective that is much longer in time than perhaps others have been involved in around this sitting. This Commission was integrally involved in long deliberations that brought about the current reform of the Lincoln Memorial. I was not around in those days, but I do think it validated the idea of having a Fine Arts Commission and the end result

was worth the ^{agony.} ~~set.~~ It is one of the great memorials in the world.

When the Commission was first asked by the Congress to approve a site to be set aside for a Vietnam memorial, this is something that we looked at very hard. Because the Constitution Gardens represents one of the great triumphs in Washington or in any Capital city. And when you think of the blight there for many years in the so-called temporary buildings that block that beautiful sight, when you think of the design that one Administration, one of three Presidents who appointed me, for example, to this Commission was very interested in, was to put a tivoli, an amusement park on that site, I think it is to the Commission's lasting honor that ~~that~~ what was brought, and it was rejected, wiser heads prevailed, and a beautiful design took place because that is sacred soil, that is right next to our dearest and greatest patriotic memorials. And to put anything there is about the highest honor that this country can have. I think none of us should lose sight as we go into the question of refinement of this or that design ^{that} and simply being on the Mall at that site is an extraordinary statement of this country's pride in the people who are being memorialized there.

The current design takes advantage of the patriotism

results that came from that, that we will disapprove them without looking at a single submission. We would have been great heroes in some quarters for doing that, but I think in practical terms we would not have a monument, a memorial there as we now can see it. And I think that for the country's long-term benefit a memorial that has almost been finished on that site is one that will do us all credit.

The question then comes of the specific. One of the areas that we specifically have been asked to comment on for the first time today is the question of a locator for names. This is something that we have urged the proposers to bring to our attention in specific form because the whole concept of the memorial, which is so moving, of listing the names in the order in which they fell has one inherent practical problem which is that the grieving who want to track down a specific name may not have the luck that we heard here earlier this afternoon of being able to find it rather quickly. And a locator becomes essential. We question whether one telephone book is enough, and we question the design of a sheet metal tube that, in our view, does not share the dignity, the sense of permanence in terms that a memorial should have. And we question furthermore the location which is so ^{on axis} (un)access with the arm of the memorial that it becomes almost a little

exclamation point at the end, it becomes somehow integrated in design terms into the memorial. And I am sure that was not the intention that one should think of it as part of the design expression of a memorial. So we urge a different location, one, however, in that vicinity so that it will be handy to the handicapped; so that there will be free access to the vehicular and part of the experience of the memorial. Because no matter how much one relishes the degree in which this memorial has a free form openness which allows people to come upon it from various directions, there is no question but it will over time begin to be perceived as having a front door. That is only human nature. And that front door presumably will be from the side of the great memorial nearest to it, namely the Lincoln Memorial which has an enormous visitation to it every year. People will flow down those steps, they will go over to the Vietnam Memorial, they will probably come to it from tourmobiles in that direction. That will be the first direction. The entrance experience into the memorial presents, and I remind you, as the amount of testimony this afternoon, that Congress indicated that the site for this memorial is the entire area bounded by those ^{WALKS} walls except for the easternmost part where there is an arbitrary line. It is a large area. Part of the memorial will be the trees

themselves. The experience of the sky, of nature and of the view of the other great monuments that one sees from that site wherever one is on it, one is in the hallowed ground dedicated by the will of the United States to lasting [?] [and] honor to all those who served in Vietnam.

So we come then to the other two elements, the flagpole and the sculpture. And I now want to put on the table what I perceive in conversations with my colleagues here to be the consensus of what we all agree to be our recommendation, and then we will open the table to any dissent or see if this might be put in a motion form so that we have a decision for you all today.

The flagpole is a wonderful thing to add to this memorial. I think that it is very fitting that this memorial, in particular, have the American flag. I believe it is a dangerous precedent, and this Commission would look very hard at the proliferation of flagpoles everywhere throughout the Mall. There is a ring of them around the Washington Monument. That is the focus for the whole Mall composition. ^{There} It is a very beautiful monument to the signers of the Declaration, and to put a flagpole there would be, in our view, totally inappropriate. But a flagpole, I think, is appropriate here if we can find the right ^{location} direction for it. The general height of 50

feet seems good to us. The design of the base that is designed with that inscription is totally appropriate.

The sculpture, again we approve in principle. We like the maquette as far as we can tell, as far as it goes, because we are experienced enough in sculpture to know that at final scale there are subtle changes that happen, and we naturally will have to reserve the right of final approval until we see the final maquette. But I think it does many of the things which the testimony revealed today. It strikes a chord of recognition in those who care most deeply about their experience there, and we find it acceptable.

The location of it and the flagpole and the locator are problems with the submission in its present form. The problems that I think are inherent in achieving the goals which have been so eloquently stated by the proposers, which is that if the sculpture is allowed to shiver naked out there in the field, to be an episodic element that is not integrated, that somehow relates to a flagpole which is so far away and whose height and silhouette will be cut off as one approaches the existing memorial, cut off at the knees as it were, that they will not combine to have the critical mass and impact which those elements deserve for the honor of those who are being honored. And, therefore, our recommendation would be

that these three elements which threaten to be episodic and disjointed be brought together to help enhance the entrance experience to the memorial, be put up front, as it were, to be put out there so that they are in the foreground and so that people will have a chance to recognize them and derive all the benefits from them as they enter into the precinct. The advantage of doing this not only serves the elements as they have been proposed, but it also accomplishes a goal which was a stated goal of the most recent sculpture commission which was to honor and protect the integrity of the original design. There we come to a crunch issue which is an area in which this Commission is specifically qualified to comment because this is about the artistic integrity of the design that has been submitted to it.

I refer you only to what would happen if today in the testimony people had been in the middle of a sentence allowed to be interrupted by someone with an opposing view, what would happen if, as some of the people brought out, if the Washington Monument were suddenly to have a great bronze sculpture of George crossing the Delaware or sitting at home and surrounded by the children? What would happen, as one of the people who wrote in said, if the eternal flame over the Kennedy grave were to have the added embellishment of a

rocking chair? I think that what one has to recognize is that when one goes to a concert, one allows the full power of a single piece to operate and then there is nothing that says that within the framework of that concert there cannot be another selection, another piece, and that they can relate to each other by key or mood or purpose, or any one of a hundred different ways, but that it is not fair to interrupt Leontyne Price singing the Star Spangled Banner by a little section of country and western just because somebody wants to make sure that everyone in the audience will be pleased. It will not work. The audience will not be pleased. And I think when the morning after comes and all the discussion of compromise that have gone into this discussion, as are behind us, that as the years wear on, all of us would feel somehow that we have been compromised by a design in which the integrity of its elements were not allowed to speak by and for themselves.

Is this something in which we can --

MR. NETSCH: There is no question on my part that we have concurrence with your statement.

We may feel that, as the proper site is developed, that there may be changes which we would be willing to receive in, say, the character of the sculpture, but that we would have to await another submission.

MR. NOVAK: I think we should make a motion.

MR. NETSCH: Yes, I think a motion. So moved, that the statements of the Chairman be given as the statements of the Commission.

MR. STONE: I second that.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: All those in favor?

(Chorus of ayes.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Opposed?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN: So moved.

I know it is late, people want to leave.

VOICE: We didn't hear anything except what you said, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: I am sorry, I didn't realize that I wasn't speaking into this.

The motion was that the statements of the Chairman be adopted as the statements of the full Commission, and it was moved and seconded and unanimously voted.

VOICE: What do the statements of the Chairman mean? You can take them either way.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: The statements, I think, are as I tried to say in English. The sculpture is approved, the idea of the flagpole is approved, the current design of the

locator is disapproved, and the location of all three is disapproved.

Then we would like to work with you, if possible, with all due speed, if you want to come to us with other options, or work towards a design that we think could be ^{approved} improved by the Commission.

MR. NOVAK: Which would be a cluster of the three elements in the area of the entranceway.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Is that mike on?

MR. NETSCH: No, they are not on.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Which would be, as Mr. Novak said, a cluster of the three elements in the area of the entranceway to the western part of the memorial site. There is a very beautiful natural entrance area there which is defined by some beautiful old oaks and which seems to us to be the most logical place to put them there. The exact location would have to be worked out in conjunction with you all.

MR. NETSCH: Mr. Chairman, we are also, I believe, perfectly willing to have a special session if there is action that would, you know, be receptive, that would lead to an approval prior to November 12, if such procedures do work out.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: We do have a scheduled meeting

before the 11th, and if we can work quickly toward an agreement, we might even do it without having to bring everyone here. But at least we don't want to hold you up. That is our idea.

Well, thank you very much for your patience.

VOICE: This is a disapproval upon a new location?
Not a disapproval of -- how can I phrase this properly -- what I am saying is -- you are concurring in what I am saying?

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Pending working out the details of the location.

Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 5:30 p.m., the hearing was
concluded.]

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