

With that, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

Patrick Davis.

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Chairman, members of the Fine Arts Commission, my name is Patrick B. Davis, Jr. I am a practicing architect from Sarasota, Florida, and a member of The American Institute of Architects, the professional association representing this nation's architects, and also I am past president of the Association of Student Chapters of the AIA, the organization representing America's architectural students.

I am also a Vietnam veteran. I served with the U.S. Navy as a 20 millimeter machine gunner aboard a river assault boat operating in the Mekong Delta from July of 1968 to June of 1969. For nearly the entire eleven month period my unit was engaged in continuous combat operation, working with and in support of elements of the U.S. Army's Ninth Infantry Division, ARVN, and Regional Forces and Vietnamese marines.

When I returned home, I realized that this was being fought on two fronts, both Vietnam and the United States. There were no bands to welcome us home -- just stony silence. After we said good-bye to our buddies at the Ton Son Nhut airport, most of us never saw our buddies again or talked about our experiences with anyone. In this country, no one ever

asked us about our experience. No one wanted to know what we had been through or how we felt. Whenever I brought up the subject, I met silence. To me, the whole country was sick, and no one was more heartsick than America's Vietnam veterans.

The announcement of a national competition for a Vietnam Veterans Memorial was, to me, the first sign that our country was finally recovering. It was the first sign that America was ready at last to deal with the traumatic issues of the war and welcome its veterans home. The selection of a site between two of this nation's most powerful symbols, the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument, proved that something new, something hopeful had begun.

I followed the competition closely, and marveled at the awesome simplicity of Ms. Lin's design. I also followed the development of the controversy surrounding the modifications to the design.

I hope that my presence here today as an architect, and as a veteran, at last puts to rest the allegation that the debate over the Vietnam Memorial is a debate between artists and veterans. Nothing could be further from the truth. America's artists and veterans, many of whom are one and the same, are united in our determination to see that there is a memorial that will touch the hearts and inspire the minds of

all of our countrymen, and the generations who will come after us.

Last October the AIA testified before this Commission. At that time we said our views concerning the proposed additions to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. As you are aware, our former president spoke on behalf of our members and on behalf of the many veterans and parents of Vietnam War veterans who supported preserving the integrity of a truly unique memorial. Time and the personal experience of thousands of Americans have, we feel, vindicated this position.

No other memorial in this City speaks so eloquently and so personally, no other memorial in this City makes the visitor so much a part of its message. When we see our images reflected among those who served this nation, when we reach up to touch the names, it is clear that we have been embraced by the meaning, the message, and the art of this remarkable tribute.

This memorial does not exclude anyone or any thought. It brings all of us together. It begins the healing process intended by its sponsors, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. We are aware, however, that passionate and eloquent arguments have been made by those who urged this Commission to approve the addition of a flagpole and statuary to the memorial site.

This Commission has given ear to those voices by deciding that the additional elements would not necessarily be disruptive to the experience of the memorial if sensitively located. Indeed, this Commission has indicated that the total experience might well be enhanced. But before this could happen, all of the elements, the statuary, the directory, the flagpole, and the walls, would demand most careful and thoughtful siting. Anything less than maximum care would, as this Commission clearly recognized, result in a memorial that was episodic and disjointed. The various elements would stumble over one another, and this would be tragic.

This Commission has shown all of us the way out of this dilemma. You have done so by recommending last October a solution that would provide visibility for the site: a strong entrance, and a logical progression of design elements that would reinforce, rather than compete with one another.

Regarding the three proposals before you today, Proposals "A", "B" and "C", the AIA finds only Proposals "A" and "C" to satisfy the Commission's October recommendation, a recommendation that received our public support. Of these two proposals, the Institute prefers the siting arrangement as depicted in site plan "C". We do so for a number of reasons.

First, Plan "C" enhances the memorial's visibility

from the adjacent roadway and surrounding public areas. It, likewise, provides the memorial with a front door. This is important since most visitors to the memorial site will approach it from this direction.

Second, handicapped access to the memorial site is improved by locating the short-term parking and directory off Henry Bacon Drive, near the memorial's entryway. Thus, a dignified entry for a disabled veteran to arrive at the site and become oriented is provided, as spoken for by the gentleman from the PVA.

Thirdly, Plan "C" features more prominently the Hart statue along the walkway to the memorial walls. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, by placing the design elements in a sequential order, for those visiting the memorial, the flag, directories, statute and walls, a more successful composition of the design elements is achieved without any disruption of the existing landscape.

Clearly this proposal allows visitors to the memorial to experience the elements of the site for themselves, as was originally intended: first, this nation's flag, next the image of those who served, and then on to the peaceful area embraced by the two magnificent walls in which the sacrifice of all who served can be contemplated.

It is important to reiterate that while we prefer site plan "C", we believe that both "A" and "C" respond to your October recommendations. Therefore, we are prepared to support either plan.

We applaud those involved who are moving this project along to completion by allowing the decision process as mandated by Public Law 96-297 to proceed in an orderly manner. We are particularly grateful for what Washington sculptor Frederick Hart has described as the "Solomon-like" recommendations made by this Commission last October. This Commission has shown us the way to begin the healing process in earnest. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund has taken us farther along this road today. The AIA is here this afternoon to lend its support to this journey. We urge that this road be taken so that all of us can begin at last to complete this journey that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund has so well begun.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

Next would be Stanley Swain, United Vietnam Veterans Organization.

MR. SWAIN: Sorry to hold you up. I was upstairs.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Could you see it upstairs? How does it work?