

FINAL REPORT OF THE SCULPTURE PANEL  
TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND

### INTRODUCTION

On April 14, 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) established this sculpture panel, empowering it to select a sculptor, approve his concept and work, place both the sculpture and the flagstaff in relation to the wall, and to determine the sizes of both elements.

The sculpture panel met numerous times over the next several months, and this document comprises its report to the VVMF regarding its final decisions. At all times, two guideposts dominated the panel's deliberations. First was the Congressional mandate, contained in the joint resolution which authorized the Memorial, that such a Memorial should be erected in "honor and recognition of the men and women of the United States Armed Forces who served in the Vietnam war." This, along with similar admonitions issued by the VVMF to the panel, made it imperative that the sculpture complement the memorial wall and provide a clear statement of the nation's acknowledgment of the courage, sacrifice and devotion to duty of those who served, both living and dead. The panel believes that both of these elements are necessary in order for the Memorial to comport with the Congressional intent, and believes also that they should interact, thus creating an artistic and conceptual whole.

The second guidepost which dominated the panel's actions was the wall itself. It was considered essential that the sculpture and the flag be sized and placed in a manner that would cause their interaction with the wall to create the conceptual whole just mentioned. The panel decided against numerous suggestions by some who had participated in the compromise meetings to place the sculpture either directly in front of the wall, overpowering it, or off into the trees, in effect creating two separate memorials. One important consideration against the notion of creating two separate memorials was the recognition by the panel that the sculpture would require very large proportions in order to compete with the size and length of the wall, as a separate entity, while placing the sculpture where it gives context to the wall not only allows it to assume very reasonable proportions, but in the opinion of the panel, greatly enhances the entire design.

### THE SCULPTURE

Upon its formation, the panel reviewed the submissions to the VVMF design competition and then began talks with Frederick Hart, an artist of national acclaim who was the highest ranking sculptor in the competition. Frederick Hart's sculpture which resulted from the numerous talks, negotiations, and meetings that followed is a powerful enhancement of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial now under construction near the Lincoln Memorial.

Like the brooding, thoughtful sculpture of President Lincoln which fills the interior of his memorial, Hart's sculpture adds an essential human element to the existing design.

The sculpture—three young men armed and in combat gear, arrayed in a close supportive stance—communicates the camaraderie of the young Americans who fought the Vietnam War and symbolizes the continued intense fellowship that has characterized the aftermath of the war for the veteran. These characteristics are central to the guidance and direction provided the sculptor by the Sculpture Panel.

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The young men in the sculpture are robust and steadfast, yet mortal. Their countenances are proud and resolute, yet thoughtful. The genius of the sculpture lies in its veracity; its ability to communicate the many nuances of truth rather than to deliver a single rhetorical pronouncement. This, too, is in perfect accordance with the direction provided by the Sculpture Panel.

Like the memorial wall, the sculpture works within the site and, in fact, helps make the most of the site. The three figures appear to be walking along a tree line that roughly parallels the wall at a distance of approximately 150 feet. The figures are approximately eight feet tall, which is appropriate to communicate the message of the sculpture within the medium yet retains the essential human element of the piece. Caught in a moment of time, the figures look toward the memorial wall and beyond to the American flag. Thus, a creative tension is established between the human figures and the abstract symbols of the wall and the flag, drawing all three elements into a harmonious whole.

#### THE FLAG

The American flag will fly on a flagstaff approximately fifty feet in height. The staff will be erected approximately forty feet behind the angle of the wall and approximately eighteen feet west of a line that would bisect the angle.

The size of the flag will be appropriate, under national protocol, to the size of the memorial wall. It will be flown continuously and be continuously lit.

The pedestal at the base of the flag will contain the emblems of the five U.S. military services which fought in Vietnam and will bear the following inscription:

THIS FLAG REPRESENTS THE GIFT OF SERVICE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE  
BY THE VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM WAR. ITS PRESENCE AT THIS SITE  
REAFFIRMS THE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM FOR WHICH THEY FOUGHT. IT  
FLIES CONTINUOUSLY TO HONOR THEIR PRIDE IN HAVING SERVED OUR  
COUNTRY UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES.

#### SUMMARY

The members of the Sculpture Panel present this report with a profound sense of their responsibility to the veterans of the Vietnam War and to the American people as a whole...including those who will follow us and those in whose path we follow. We also express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to have worked with the Memorial Fund and Frederick Hart, whose artistry has given form to the hopes and feelings of hundreds of thousands of veterans.

The Panel stands ready to provide VVMF any assistance necessary in bringing the entire Vietnam Veterans Memorial to completion.

9/16/87  
JH