

saying to the members of the Commission once again, if we do have to accept these modifications, please do so in the least obtrusive manner as possible. This would certainly include rejecting out of hand the idea of putting the flag and statue well within and prominently displayed on the memorial itself. To those who insist on attempting to use this memorial to make a political statement, I would conclude by noting that while this memorial is certainly for all Americans, to a large extent it is for those who fought the war. It is primarily a testament to those who died. These 57,000 individuals, they are not conservatives, they are not liberals, they weren't Republicans or Democrats, they weren't for the war, they weren't against the war, they were just in the war. Their only political statement was to answer their country's call, when so many others walked away. I think that is a sufficient statement in and of itself, and we ought to leave well enough alone.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Any others?

MR. SILVER: I would like to think we saved the last for the best or the best for last, but I am not sure of that. I am Steven M. Silver, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's proposal, Proposal "A". I am a psychologist for the United

States Veterans Administration, and a specialist in so-called veteran stress syndrome. I hold a bachelor and master degree in counseling and a doctor's in psychology. I am a combat veteran of the Vietnam War, having served as an officer in the Marine Corps, in fighter squadrons 115 and 122, in 1969 and 1970 in Vietnam. I flew 316 combat missions.

One of my younger brothers is an Army combat veteran of Vietnam. Our father, a Navy pilot, visited Vietnam frequently during his career. Together the three of us are familiar with as wide a cross-section of the names that are carved on the memorial granite as the heart can endure.

I speak to you today, then, as a published historian of Vietnam, and, perhaps most importantly, as a psychologist working with Vietnam veterans and their families since 1972. It is virtually a cliché to state the American people have tried to repress the memory of the Vietnam War. It is also well understood that our people, while in their pain and trauma tried to ignore reminders of the war, including the most obvious reminder, our Vietnam veterans. We are beginning to see an end to this repression. Our gathering here is an example. As repression ends, the very thoughts and feelings come boiling, sometimes exploding, to the surface. Whether taking place at the individual or national level, such surfacing can be painful, terrifying, depleting joys or catharsis.

Most of all, it is necessary. That the memorial helps to solve this problem was demonstrated to me through several events. One of these was my own experience the first morning I walked in front of those polished black slabs to find my friends' names. Another was the reaction of the Vietnam veterans from our program that came down to the dedication. Having endured some of the more severe traumas of the war, and especially the profound after-effects, the memorial served to elicit much buried within them. Our treatment staff, impressed with the results, now regularly brings new groups of Vietnam veterans to view the memorial as a way to help them find their pasts and presents, to help them work out their torments.

The memorial is effective because it does not impose a concept on the viewer, like a Rorschach inkblot test. It provides the minimum amount of structure. The individual projects on to it her or his own feelings, many of which may have been hidden from personal awareness. The memorial is an assembly vessel into which the viewer pours whatever it is he or she carries. The less specific the structure, the easier and fuller an accord. This means that the memorial serves as an emotional lightning rod, and all those associated with it had best be prepared to endure the white hot anger after the

storm of grief. This storm has been built a long time, and I think today makes that paragraph even more relevant.

The memorial structure is sufficient, the names printed -- no denying, no hiding. More specificity would only weaken the meditative quality, as understood by western psychology and Zen, and would lessen the great opportunity to heal.

Perhaps an example would clarify the point, and I make this point with all respect, as a Marine, a former Marine. The Marine Corps memorial based on the flag-raising on Mt. Suribachi in World War II is heroic, glorious, and very powerful, and very incomplete. In capturing the pride of the Corps, the place of glory has been lost. The World War II Marines dominate the other memorial, making it easy to overlook the other battlefields. Further, the figures tend to focus the viewer's attention on the infantry. Other marines, aviators, artillerymen, and women, are omitted. This is not to say the memorial was designed to be limited or exclusionary. The decision was to emphasize a particular part of the Marine Corps experience. This act of specificity leaves little room for much else.

The Vietnam memorial does not try to emphasize one aspect of the experience over another. There is no escaping

what it is about. Those magnificent names guarantee that. There is no limiting or restricting of the viewer's emotional response. To impose figures in front or on top of the Vietnam memorial would do exactly that. On the other hand, to encounter the figures of the three infantrymen while coming to the memorial could be, for some, an addition to the experience and could meet the wishes of those who feel they need specificity. To place them at the apex of the memorial or in the open field before it would lessen the impact of the walls, and would be too specific.

Please recall that not all Vietnam veterans were infantrymen, nor were they all men. As an historian, I find it particularly appropriate these three warriors would be on the path from Lincoln's memorial. Of all of our national leaders, that most compassionate man undoubtedly would have the greatest understanding of the sacrifice made by our nation's newest warriors, and the greatest understanding of the torment of our national fabric which the devices of war make. The symbol of soldiers serving as a link between the Lincoln Memorial and ours is clear in our nation's life.

Finally, let me say to the mothers and sisters of Vietnam veterans, the family members, the issue swirls around the memorial that by its openness the memorial may help us

all come home a bit more healed, and by "all", I mean all Americans, for we all, in a very profound way, are Vietnam veterans. The awful agony endured by our families in some ways surpasses our own. The long heartfelt memory of all mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers, and especially those that waited forever, gives all of us, a most self-critical nation, the title of Vietnam veterans. Let then the memorial be as open as possible for all of our experience, so we all might heal a little more and heal together. This is why I support Proposal "A".

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

Anyone else?

MR. BERG: Mr. Chairman, at the risk of either having no audience or an audience that is already stoned, I will be as brief as I can.

I have asked that a letter I wrote to The Washington Post be passed around to you.

My name is Christian Berg, as the letter states. I am a practicing lawyer in Washington, and a Vietnam veteran of three combat tours in Vietnam. I was there from late '63 to early '66.

I would draw your attention to the second, third, and