

the DCM GROUP

A unit of ESD AND COMPANY, INC.

1 December 1982

Mr. Jan Scruggs
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund
1110 Vermont Ave., N.W., Suite 308
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Jan:

This letter contains our observations about the survey questionnaire handed out during the Vietnam Veterans Memorial dedication activities, together with the cover letter from Mr. Copulos.

The accuracy and projectibility of any attitudinal study depends upon many factors. Two of the most important factors are the sample or "survey universe" and the survey questionnaire or instrument.

On the basis of the information provided us, there are a number of items which, in our opinion, are sufficient in weight to cast serious doubt on the validity of projecting results beyond the 900 persons actually interviewed; furthermore, doubt exists to a serious extent as to whether even those interviewed had a clear, informed opportunity to make their views known.

Sample Methodology

1. A presumption that this study represents a cross-section of Vietnam veterans cannot be supported. While it may be true that "veterans ... from all parts of the nation (were) present," it cannot be said with any certainty that veterans from all parts of the nation were interviewed. In fact, it is very likely that a significant and disproportionate percentage of those present were residents of the nearby Middle Atlantic States.
2. The survey had no geo-demographic qualifiers, so there is no assurance that any type of nationwide sample of veterans was reached with respect to residence, age, race, sex -- anything. Such qualifiers are considered a normal part of any valid poll.

3. There is no indication that surveyors were instructed to follow any type of set pattern in selecting respondents, such as picking every nth person. Nor is there any indication that preference was given to individuals who appeared to be veterans or of the correct age group to have participated in the war. It could well be that the survey aides merely haphazardly approached as many individuals as they could. In polling, however, "random" does not mean "haphazard."
4. The size of the sample obtained (reportedly about 900) would be significant only if it were scientifically selected. A smaller sample, if adequately handled, would have represented an adequate cross-section of the crowd (though not of the nationwide universe of veterans because of the concerns noted above). With none of the usual and customary safeguards applied or procedures followed, even a larger sample doesn't really mean very much.
5. While any poll should be taken in a reasonably compact period of time, the extremely short period specified in Mr. Copulos' letter -- 75 minutes from 2:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. -- would seem to be overly restrictive. Due to the size and density of the crowd, such a short time frame would virtually rule out any attempt at true random sampling.
6. The cover letter from Mr. Copulos states that "the purpose of the survey was to attempt to ascertain what "Veterans" sentiment was..." (emphasis added) and he also mentions "veterans and their families" (emphasis added) as target groups. However, the questionnaire allows for responses from "Vietnam era veteran," "Veteran of other war," and "non-veteran" as well. If the intention was to sample veterans and/or their families, the usual procedure would have been to screen other persons in advance. Allowing additional categories of respondents whose opinions are not truly desired requires an additional step in cross-tabulation.

Questionnaire

The wording of Questions 1 through 5 can be described as unbiased. However, clarity, quality and objectivity are sorely lacking in Question 5 and its associated renderings.

1. The most serious deficiency is that none of the three renderings accurately portrays the placement recommended by VVMF. Thus, a major option was completely left out.

2. Drawings "B" and "C" appear to place the flag and/or statue in a stand of trees, with a rather heavy presumption that they would be shielded from view. Such renderings certainly are likely to steer the respondent to Option "A", which depicts both flag and statue in plain view.
3. The renderings are so small and crude and, with the regard to the density of the treeline, inaccurate, as to make it difficult, if not impossible, for persons standing in the middle of a mass of 150,000 people to adequately and intelligently consider the choices presented to them.

Conclusion

In short, the methodology and questionnaire used in this survey raise more questions than they answer. Based on the information available to us, we do not feel it can be used with any degree of validity to represent a cross section or scientific sample of the views of Vietnam veterans concerning the placement of the flag and statue at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

If you have any questions, please call.

With best regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



Richard L. Lobb
Account Supervisor