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16 November 1981

Grady Clay, Editor
Landscape Architecture Magazine
1190 East Broadway
Louisville, Kentucky 40204

Dear Mr. Clay:

Thank you for your letter, which I received today. I am very sorry that you were in any way embarrassed by the events of last week. If you know anything of my reputation I hope you can appreciate that I am not in the habit of spreading rumors, either generally or specifically. In fact, if anyone was defamed in this unfortunate occurrence, it was probably I, and I retain a good deal of anger over it. My communication to Jack Wheeler, in the context of a very long and emotional conversation which dealt completely on other matters, was that he had "better check it out," based on rumors which had been communicated to me and which I found disinclined to believe. It is true that I do not like the winning design; in fact, I feel insulted by it. But I have been operating, by default, as something of a moderating influence on people who are rabidly opposed to it, and who wish to destroy the project altogether. It was in this affirmative context that I was discussing many aspects of the design and the competition which preceded it. I do not believe that personal innuendo is needed in order to discuss the negative merits of the design; nor do I believe it is necessary to destroy the project altogether.

As for the design, I find it to suitably memorialize those who perished, but I see nothing that fits the Congressional mandate to honor and recognize all who served in Vietnam. Perhaps your "bitter opposition" to the war (if the Courier-Journal is correct) provides you with a different view of honor and recognition from that conflict; I wish to make no judgment in that regard. I can only say that I have invested a good deal of my own credibility toward this project, both as a member of the National Sponsoring Committee and as a Counsel in the House of Representatives who worked overtime obtaining cosponsors for

page2

the Resolution, and this negativism is not what I was guaranteeing. We should also remember that we are invading the privacy of those who perished, for all time, by publishing their names on the Memorial, and such an act should not be done except in the most affirmative sense of "honor and recognition." Understatement is not called for when we are dealing with the heroic and honorable loss of life, whether you believed in the cause or not.

I therefore wonder (and I ask this in the hope of obtaining a solution to this controversy) what your reaction would be to seeing this same design, in white instead of black, with an American flag at the juncture of the two walls? This is as far as I can go without withdrawing my name from the National Sponsoring Committee. Is there a reason that it should be black and flagless?

Again, my apology for the incident which we discussed over the telephone. I can assure you that it was neither begun nor furthered by me.

Sincerely,

/s/
James Webb

cc: WMF
Richard Harwood