

SCRIBBS RESPONDS TO CRITICISM

November 4, 1981

H
T
C
A

Dear Sir:

In your recent article on Tom Carhart, the Vietnam veteran who is critical of the proposed Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, an important fact was omitted.

Mr. Carhart was one of the unsuccessful entrants in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund design competition. He withdrew from VVMF as a volunteer specifically to enter and never expressed objection to the composition of the jury prior to his decision.

Mr. Carhart submits that there were two Vietnam Wars, the real one overseas and the political one at home and that the jury, not having experienced the first, necessarily chose a design that represented the second. This thesis is imaginative, but more than anything demonstrates Mr. Carhart's lack of understanding of what the memorial is all about. Its purpose is to express our nation's honor for its Vietnam veterans, nothing more.

The key qualification of the jurors was their ability to interpret design solutions, a talent developed through years of experience. The jury for this design competition was considered the best ever assembled. In fact, the jury was well versed in the experience of war. Four members were veterans; three were in combat; and its foreman won the Purple Heart at Anzio, Italy.

The design unanimously selected by the jury has received widespread praise for achieving our goal. Those acclaiming it range from Paul Goldberger, architecture critic of the New York Times to conservative columnist James J. Kilpatrick. More than 250,000 individuals have contributed so far to its construction.

Mr. Carhart is free not to like the design, but he is wrong when he says it is an insult to Vietnam veterans. On this issue, perhaps the Cleveland Plain Dealer said it best in their October 15 editorial: "We could argue aesthetics forever. Beauty speaks softly into each individual ear. If you don't hear, then you don't, and that which may exist for others is lost to you. Must a war monument be like every other war monument to speak its message of respect and honor."

The answer is obvious. The job now is to construct this fitting tribute.

Sincerely,

Jan C. Scruggs
President

JCS:mah
Enclosure