

Jake ~ ~ ~

August 29, 1995

Dear Ruth Coder Fitzgerald,

I am writing in response to your letter of August 11, 1995, concerning the need for an addition to be added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. I too believe as you that something should be placed there honoring all those who have died after returning from the Vietnam War, regardless of the cause of death.

This issue strikes very close to home for me as I recently lost my husband on December 21, 1994 after a very long and painful struggle with a liver problem directly related to his time in Vietnam and his contact with the chemical Agent Orange. I never expected to become a widow at the age of thirty-one and I know my husband did not expect to die at the age of forty-one. We knew of his illness five years prior to our marriage in July of 1993 but I guess like all young people in love, we thought we could conquer anything. My husband fought long and hard to stay alive as I'm sure your late brother did but it was not meant to be. Charlie underwent two liver transplants and several other major operations between September, 1994 until his death in December of that year. We had only been married one year and five months at the time of his death.

What has hurt me and bother me even more is the treatment we received at the local VA hospitals, since my husband was self-employed he had no other health insurance until after we were married, that was the only choice he had for medical treatment. I'm sure he thought as did I that he would only receive the best possible care there since it was set-up for those men and women who have risked everything for their country. We soon found out how very wrong we were. I will also wonder if we had those three years back that we spent in the VA hospital system if my husband's outcome would have been different.

I have been working very closely with the local president of the Vietnam Veterans chapter here in Lapeer County and he is also interested in your idea of a simple reminder to all of the many who have died and who will die because of their service in Vietnam. He also works very closely with Rep. Dale Kildee of Michigan. What Jerry wanted to know was who else have you been in contact with and if you have talked to the Parks Department about placing a plaque near the memorial. He does not feel there would be any problem in raising the money needed for such a plaque. He very much wants to help but thought we would save more time if he knew who you had already talked to about this project so we don't end up talking to the same people twice.

I will be in the Fredericksburg area on the 9th of November to attend the memorial service by Friends of the Vietnam Veterans

Memorial in which my husbands name will be honored along with so many others. I do not know if you plan on attending the service but I would enjoy meeting you if at all possible. My girlfriend and I will be in Fredericksburg on the 9th and through the day on the 10th before taking the train to Washington later that evening.

Please know you have my full support in your plan for the addition and if there is any thing I can do to help please let me know. My heart goes out to you and your brothers family and my thoughts and prayers are with you. I know how hard it is too lose someone you love even more so after nursing them through an extended illness.

God be with you and yours
Sincerely,

Jane Lee Winquest

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48346