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June 5, 1970 CR CON

LETTER FROM THE GRAVE

Mr. CHURCH, Mr. President, this month, an Army medical corpsman from Salamanca, N.Y., Keith K. Franklin, was killed in Vietnam. Previously he had sent his parents a letter with instruction not to open it except if he were killed.

The parents opened the letter and there they read their son's poignant writing in which he denounced American military involvement in Vietnam.

I ask unanimous consent that an Associated Press story, containing the contents of the letter, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

LETTER FROM THE GRAVE

SALAMANCA, N.Y.—“The war that has taken my life any many thousands of others before me, is immoral, unlawful, an atrocity unlike any misfit of good sense and justice known to man.”

So wrote Keith K. Franklin, 19, of Salamanca, in a letter he told his parents not to open until after his death. Franklin, an army medic, was killed May 5 in Cambodia.

“If you are reading this letter, you will never see me again,” Franklin wrote. “If you are reading this, it means that I have died.”

“The question now is whether or not my death has been in vain. My answer is yes,” he wrote.

The letter continued:

“However, the powers-to-be handed down the decision that my friends and I should go and fight. We will go and we will fight, and I have died but there is still a blank space in my mind as to why.

“President Nixon and President Johnson before him have told the American public time and time again that it was our obligation to the people of South Vietnam to save them from the surging wave of communism which has plotted to engulf them. This is a lie, the magnitude of which is witnessed only by the hundreds of thousands of GIs in South Vietnam.

“The inhabitants of this bug-infested, backward, God-forsaken hell-on-earth want no part of the American war machine. But they have no choice. . . .

“So as I lie dead, please grant my last request. Help me to inform the American people, the silent majority who have not yet voiced their opinion.

“Help me to let them know that their silence is permitting this atrocity to go on and that my death will not be in vain if by prompting them to act I can in some way help bring an end to the war that brought an end to my life.”

Franklin volunteered for the draft in March, 1969. He was sent to Vietnam Feb. 24. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Franklin, said his body would be returned Wednesday or Thursday.

“We'll have the funeral Sunday, Franklin said. “It won't be military. He wanted a civil funeral.”