

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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MEMORANDUM

July 3, 1995

From: Peter C. Rollins, Vice President and Academic Coordinator
for the Vietnam Veterans Institute

To: Members and Friends of the Vietnam Veterans Institute

Subj: 9 November 1996 Conference: McNamara Book and Legacy

On the 10th of November, we will conduct our annual banquet and ball at the Washington Hilton. Please look for information from J.E. Yates, President of VVI, about that exciting event.

On the previous day, 9 November, we will conduct a day-long conference about the McNamara book and the McNamara legacy. The enclosed flyer describes the event in some detail. We know that it will be in the Ballroom of the Army and Navy Club and will go from morning 'till night on 9 November, 1996 and we want you to be apprized of the happening since you are part of our community and can help make it a success.

Indeed, as part of the inner core of the Vietnam Veterans Institute, we need some help from you:

1. We need contact to speakers who were in positions of power during the McNamara years and who can, therefore, speak with authority about the mixed record of the corporate executive turned military expert. They should be able to speak to the record and the portrait of the record given by the book.

We are looking for folks from the military, the department of defense, and the executive branch of government. You may have friends who are hot under the collar about the book and the legacy and who would love to speak.

Help us now with references!

2. We need funding for the conference. I estimate costs of about \$13,000. This estimate includes payment to speakers for travel, for an "I-speaketh-for-money-only" keynote of international reputation, and for the publication to issue from the conference. (The conference will take place with or without the funding.)

Help me now! Tell me which foundations I should contact or contact them for me and get back with instructions about how I should apply to them for help. Need your input!

3. Check with organizations to which you belong in the DC area. Let them know about this meeting.

Our room will take approximately 150 people, but I never underestimate the overpowering force of apathy. We want people to know about this meeting and to attend.

4. Tell me what I forgot to consider!

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I appreciate your time and interest. Please excuse me for writing to you in time for something to happen. (I know how we all love to receive last-minute messages; here is one that came on time!)

Please get back to me with some ideas which will make our McNamara conference a rousing success!

PS: For details on the banquet and ball (10 November), call Jerry Yates, our President, at (410)962-4443.

PRESS RELEASE: CONFERENCE TO CRITIQUE THE McNAMARA "EPIC"
(November 9, 1995 in Washington, DC at the Army and Navy
Club, Farragut Square)

Contact:

Dr. Peter C. Rollins
(918)243-7637

A. Background:

The press coverage of Robert S. McNamara's book entitled In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam (Random House/Times Books, 1995) has scratched the surface of the issues involved. Veterans, civil servants, and citizens are aroused, angry, but have not been given a full critique of the man and his twilight years' retrospection. For the sake of those who served, it is necessary that we put something on the library shelves to confute the many misleading messages of this book-of-the-month-club selection.

On November 9, 1995, the Vietnam Veterans Institute along with other veterans groups, will conduct a day-long conference on the role of Robert S. McNamara in our Vietnam debacle, focusing on his recent book. We will meet in the ballroom of the Army and Navy Club at Farragut Square in Washington, DC (901 17th St NW).

The Military Channel, a cable offering, will videotape the conference for later broadcast to its 9 million viewers. Our panels will reach a broad, popular audience.

B. Preliminary Conference Plan:

Panels now in mind:

1. The role of the "best and brightest" in planning the Vietnam strategy and—alas—the tactics;
2. John F. Kennedy and the doctrine of containment (of Communism—did it exist?);
3. The Tonkin Gulf crisis (were we tricked?);
4. Lyndon Johnson and the advice given him on how to escalate (who knows best—the military or the brightest and best?);
5. McNamara's abilities to analyze political forces and options (number cruncher misplaced in a people-oriented job);
6. The "lessons of Vietnam" (according to R.S.M.);
7. Current law suits against McNamara by the Bolanios brothers and others;

8. Ethics and the McNamara Legacy: Why did he refuse to contribute to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial? Why did he invite Peace Demonstrators to dinner in his home while he was the Secretary of Defense?

We are currently seeking qualified speakers on these issues and solicit your written input.

We are currently seeking funding to sponsor the travel, advertising, and publication of a Proceedings from the conference. Please consider how you can help us fund a conference which will have lasting impact through TV coverage followed by full publication of findings.

Please take an interest and contact either of the two Vice Presidents of the UVI listed below:

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The conference will be conducted in Washington DC on November 9th, 1995, in conjunction with the annual meeting of The Vietnam Veterans Institute. Registration fee to be determined.

What is the Vietnam Veterans Institute?

The Vietnam Veterans Institute is a research group organized to preserve the heritage of Vietnam veterans and to research intellectual and employment issues which affect all veterans. We are the "think tank" of the Vietnam veteran generation and welcome those who are writers, artists, scholars, and concerned veterans of all generations.

Our Trustees include General William C. Westmoreland, Admiral E.R. Zumwalt, Jr., Senator Robert Dole, Mr. Bob Hope, and others. Our Chairman and Founder is J. Eldon Yates (410)494-9381.

The Journal of the Vietnam Veterans Institute has produced collected essays on the Neil Sheehan classic, A Bright Shining Lie, and on Discrimination Against Vietnam Veterans. The forthcoming issue of the journal will focus on Vietnam in Academe. The 1996 issue will contain papers from the McNamara conference described in this flyer. We try to put substantive information into the marketplace of ideas with these publications.

Copies of the journal are available from Dr. Rollins for \$10. This publication is strictly non-profit (perhaps a bit too non-profit), but is worth our effort for the sake of our fellow veterans.