

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

THE VIETNAM CENTER

Box 41045 / Lubbock, Texas 79409 - 1045 / (806) 742-3742, 742-8663 / Fax: (806) 742-8664 / E-Mail vietnam.center@ttu.edu

September 20, 1999

Hon. Sam Johnson
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Johnson:

It was a great honor and pleasure to visit with you in Washington last week. I am now back in Lubbock and back to the myriad of issues which seem to define my life these days.

There was one issue I failed to bring up during our visit, and therefore I am forwarding it to you now. During the Vietnam War, I served one of my two in-country tours of duty on board the 32' fiberglass jet boats known as PBR's. The young men who served on board these boats were a very special breed: daring, irreverent, non-regulation, caring of the Vietnamese people -- particularly the children-- remarkably brave, and incredibly young. The uniqueness of their service was officially recognized by the Navy by authorizing them to wear, in lieu of traditional Navy headgear, the Black Beret.

In early July of this year I traveled to Ft. Mitchell, Kentucky, to meet with this veterans' group as they held their first annual reunion. I didn't see anyone I knew in Vietnam, but in another sense, I had known them all. Now they are in middle-age, very respectable men, family men, and as you would expect given their experiences, exemplary citizens.

I have now been advised by the President of that organization that they are seeking a Congressional Charter for their organization. I advised them that they have a very hard row to hoe to achieve their goal, but they are determined. As far as I am concerned they earned that privilege a quarter-century ago.

The President of the PBR Forces Veterans Association (PBR-FVA) has asked Senator John Ashcroft to assist them toward their goal. The purpose of this letter, therefore, is to urge you also to support their efforts. In my view, no finer bunch of men have ever served our country. And I am exceedingly proud of them all.

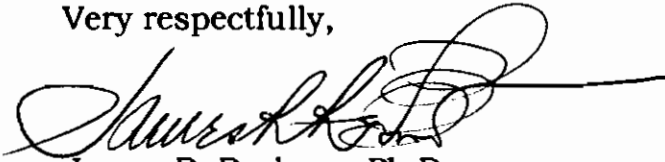
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Texas Tech University
Lubbock, Texas 79409-1041 (806) 742-9010
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Trusting you will see your way clear to add this one additional request to the ones you have already received from me concerning our Vietnam project, I remain,

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James R. Reckner", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James R. Reckner, Ph.D.

Director

encl: Correspondence from PBR-FVA

xc: Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.