

ARANT

FBI

FREDERICK E. HART
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10 December 1993

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7-11

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Robert Horton
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
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Dear Mr. Horton:

This is in response to your letter of December 1, 1993 regarding the ammunition on the Three Servicemen Statue at the Vietnam memorial. Please bear in mind this was a matter considered 10-12 years ago, but I will give you my best recollection of the rationale for this (machine gun ammo) positioning as best as I remember it:

- because of the small, isolated nature of the actual combat unit within Vietnam, much diversity and individuality developed in the use of different equipment and clothing in the field. One unit, at a given time in history would do things, wear things, or use things in a totally different way from another unit in a different place at a different time.
- The result for me in trying to dress and equip the figures in the statue was initially considerable confusion because of this great diversity in the combat soldier's habits. As often as not, a veteran interviewed one day would vehemently argue that a particular piece of equipment or clothing was never worn or used in a particular way. Whereas, this information may well have been derived from another veteran source who described it as the way it was always done.
- Eventually, I came to realize that the diversity of usage was so great that the choice I made should, of course, stay within the realm of probably use, but in the final judgment should be made on the basis of artistic judgment.
- In the particular case of the M-60 bandolier, I found as many who argued as vehemently for bullets pointing up as for those who argued that they should be pointing down. The argument began to sound a little bit like the famous Ann Landers battles over which way the toilet paper roll should be placed. Further, I was advised that wearing the bandolier at all was not done since the ammo should be transported only in its case. The exception would be in a combat or near-combat situation where it might be slung over one shoulder to be able to quick-feed it into the gun. The wearing of the bandolier criss-crossed "poncho-villa" style was not particularly desirable or practical. When it was done, it was done more for looks than use.
- It was this "picturesque" use, the sense of bravura, that I wanted to use in illuminating the spirit of the Vietnam infantryman. While I did my utmost to remain faithful to realistic details, my ultimate goal was to capture the spirit of the Vietnam experience.

Given the great diversity of experiences of the many who served in Vietnam, I am sure that I cannot satisfy everyone's view as to the fidelity of detail. I hope, however, that the overall authenticity of spirit, the expression of the figures both facially and in their relationship to each other, and the portrayal of

the youth of the participants will carry forward into future generations the larger truths of the Vietnam veteran's experience.

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As regards to speaking with the rangers and volunteers, I would be happy to do so. I am, at the present time however, recuperating from heart surgery. Perhaps in the spring, we can arrange something with Mr. Goldstein.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. E. Hart', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Frederick E. Hart

FEH:pmf

cc: Mr. Michael Entinghe
Senator John Glenn's Office

A LOOK AT THE WORK AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCULPTOR

FREDERICK E. HART

Details from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: a soldier's boot and two war-weary faces. "The contrast between their youth and the weapons of war," says Hart, "underscores the poignancy of their sacrifice."



PHOTOGRAPHS ABOVE FROM MEMORIAL BY DON HAFPELL

THE PRIVATE VISION

From Hart's public commissions, with the creative heights he can scale, the monumental power he can generate: these works, for all their sublimeness and purpose, were nonetheless created at the insistence of patrons. To glimpse the personal visions flickering inside Hart must turn to the private works of the public artist. Here we find an intimacy removed from the sweeping grandeur

"The concerns of art must be rehumanized, must explore the domestic existence and capture the deep resonance of our commonality. In every sense, art again participate in life."

FREDERICK E. HART

sculpture to interrelate with the pure and powerful minimalist design of the V-shaped wall. True to his creative tenets and with great artistic maturity, Hart chose to burrow into realistic detail for his larger truths. Just as the medieval carvers needed to see the angels to make the vision concrete, so Hart wanted to recall, from boonie hat to bootlaces, exactly what it was like for American foot soldiers to be tenuously alive in a particular place at a particular time.

Hart has said he would put the "folds of those fatigue jackets and pants up against the folds of any (carved) medieval angel you can find." For him, as for architect Mies van der Rohe, God is in the details.

Says Hart: "I see the wall as a kind of ocean, a sea of sacrifice that is overwhelming and nearly incomprehensible in its sweep of names. I place these figures upon the shore of that sea, gazing upon it, standing vigil before it, reflecting the human face of it, the human heart."

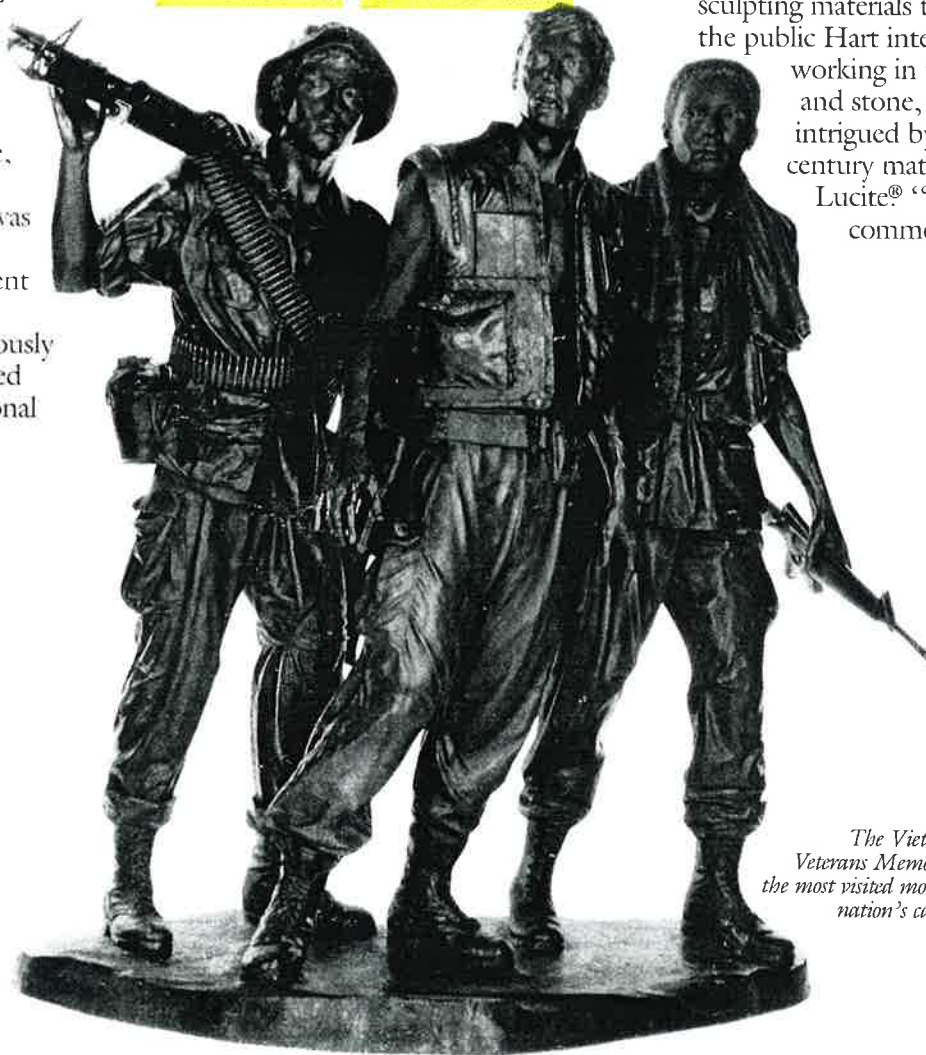
his public sculptures. It is this intimate delicate portrayal of the subtleties of human character, that Hart, left to his creative devices, wishes to explore.

From this deep, personal desire lay bare the inner recesses of the human psyche has come a re-evaluation of the sculpting materials themselves. For with the public Hart intends to keep on working in traditional bronze and stone, the private Hart intrigued by the call of twentieth-century materials, among them Lucite®. "In stone," Hart comments, "the figures

THE VIETNAM MEMORIAL

In 1982 the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial Fund decided to commission a representational sculpture for their monument, and Hart was again the choice. Cast in bronze, this historic sculpture—perhaps America's most famous sculpture—was dedicated in November, 1984, at a major ceremony attended by President Reagan and 100,000 veterans.

Creatively, it was a tremendously difficult assignment. Hart was charged with the task of conceiving a traditional



The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is now the most visited monument in the nation's capital.