



Senator Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510-1502

22 May 2008

Dear Senator Harkin,

Having read your comments regarding John McCain's history of military service and your assertion that such a perspective could be "dangerous," I felt compelled to write. Knowing that you served in the military, I am certain you didn't really mean that comment quite the way it came out – or was interpreted. But I also wanted to assure you that military families and career GIs see the world from much the same perspective as civilians. We don't like war, poverty or ignorance. We laugh at funny movies, worry about the price of oil, donate money to end world hunger – and work toward a better, more peaceful world for our children and grandchildren.

We, at the American Veterans Institute, are dedicated to helping civilians better understand the service and sacrifice of our veterans. We want to help our non-military brethren realize that GIs don't become GIs because they like to kill people and break things. They do so to protect the freedoms so abundant in America that we sometimes take them for granted. They do so to get a good education, to see the world, to learn leadership skills, and to maybe make a positive difference in the lives of others.

I suspect you already know all this, and would likely rephrase your statement about military service if given the chance. But, just in case, I have enclosed some materials that convey the message I have outlined above. First is the book *Naked In Da Nang* (very clean despite the naughty title), which is the story of my own Vietnam tour of duty, and my personal effort to show that Vietnam veterans were just regular guys (and gals), contrary to decades of media misperception. The other two books are prototypes for AVI's *Embracing Freedom* series. This aspect of our AVI education program is devoted to fostering a sense of patriotism in young people, while giving them a better understanding of our nation's history, and an appreciation for the veterans whose service and sacrifice preserved the freedoms we enjoy today. As a career Air Force officer, my goal is to help young people learn from history – so they are not doomed to repeat its mistakes. Far from making me dangerous, I think my military career gave me a strong sense of the importance of a level head and a measured response when dealing with conflict. Some of the most peaceful people I have ever known are people who were tested in the fires of combat. I think there is a definite "cause and effect" at work there.

Please enjoy these books with my compliments. I send them not as a rebuke but as an effort to spread the word about the courage, devotion and achievements (in both the military and civilians sectors) of our nation's veterans. And thank YOU for your service.

Warmest regards,

Mike Jackson, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret)
President