

June 19, 2008

T. Boone Pickens
8117 Preston Road
Dallas, TX 75225

Dear Mr. Pickens:

We are the crew and individual servicemen who served on or with Patrol Craft Fast 94 (PCF-94) in Vietnam in early 1969. All of us are intensely proud of our service. We put our lives on the line for our country without reservation. We fought hard under difficult circumstances. Each of us was a volunteer for the United States military. We are patriotic, concerned veterans and this past Memorial Day – a holiday to honor all those who gave their lives in service to country – we were reminded of a challenge you made publicly in Washington, D.C., regarding the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth (SBVT) and their lies about our service in Vietnam.

Regrettably the lies of the SBVT, which you helped bankroll and apparently still defend, tarnished the sacrifices we made, called into question the medals we were awarded and challenged the very authenticity of our service. In countless radio talk shows, television appearances and ads, newspaper and magazine interviews, not to mention political speeches and group appearances, SBVT lied about our skipper's and our service in Vietnam and in so doing, damaged our reputations and attacked the quality of our service to country. We have children and families who were deeply affected by these lies and we believe you and the SBVT whom you supported owe us and the American people an apology for the tactics you bankrolled.

We are aware of media reports that at a dinner in Washington, D.C. on November 6th, 2007, you made a public challenge that you would give a million dollars to anyone who could show that anything the SBVT said was false. We also know that Senator John Kerry, who was the skipper of PCF-94, contacted you to take you up on that challenge. We are writing to you now as a group to accept your challenge and document how you funded lies and character assassination.

Those of us who served with John Kerry on PCF-94 were personally there, on the boat and with him in the actions for which he was awarded a Silver Star, a Bronze Star and two of his purple hearts. Many of us were decorated for some of these same actions and we are outraged that thirty five years later, for political purposes, people lied so outrageously about what we did, attacking our character and the Navy's integrity—lies told by people who were not there and never bothered to

talk with us. How can your group call itself the Swift Boat Veterans “for Truth” when you never interviewed the PCF-94 boat eyewitnesses?

Mr. Pickens: the lies put forward by SBVT are so plentiful and outrageous, from the significant to the trivial, that we would lose your attention going through all of them. Page after page of the SBVT book, Unfit for Command, is filled with unbelievable falsehoods piled on top of falsehoods. You’ve only challenged us to show one thing was false but this is important enough to all of us that we will do that and more so that you fully comprehend the nature of the people you’ve been dealing with and the consequences of your support for them.

The Silver Star

Perhaps the biggest lie is the one asserted without even any contrived evidence or phony testimony – an assertion out of whole cloth – that tried to smear the events surrounding the award of a Silver Star to John Kerry and in doing so, tarnished the Bronze Stars and Navy and Army Commendation Medals earned by many of the rest of us. In addition, this lie was featured in the very first attack on Senator Kerry in your group’s first and most infamous television advertisement. According to SBVT’s own cover letter and associated materials provided to TV stations in support of the spot, Captain George Elliott’s assertion in that advertisement that “John Kerry has not been honest about what happened in Vietnam,” referred to the alleged fact that “in connection with his Silver Star, I (Elliott) was never informed that he had simply shot a wounded, fleeing Viet Cong in the back”. Captain Elliott knows that LTJG Kerry was awarded the Silver Star not just for chasing down and killing an armed enemy soldier (who was shot in the side not the back) but for his leadership role as Officer in Command of one of the most successful Swift boat raids ever.

So let us examine the events of February 28th, 1969 and what we did and faced, and what John Kerry did and faced, by testing the SBVT claims against our own experience and memories as eyewitnesses there on the scene, against authoritative Navy records, against photographic evidence and against the public testimony of other men present that day.

Navy records: the after action reports submitted based on the verbal debriefing of officers and enlisted men present; a contemporaneous document secured from Navy archives which we possess and can show you; the United States Army advisor’s personal recollections, as well as the individual award citations; photographs taken at the scene when the ambush was over; an independent investigation conducted by ABC TV’s Nightline; and an article written by William B. Rood, Officer in Charge of PCF-23 that day which appeared in the Chicago

Tribune August 22nd, 2004—all confirm that every single event on that day occurred exactly as reported at the time. There is not one piece of evidence to the contrary – not one. This underscores the degree to which SBVT lied about this significant action.

The records and testimony of everyone involved that day show that John Kerry was serving as Officer in Tactical Command of a three boat unit engaged in inserting Vietnamese regional force troops on a reconnaissance in force mission. As our boats approached the target area we all came under intense fire from the right hand river bank. LTJG Kerry ordered all the boats to turn and attack the banks of the river. Each boat followed his orders instantaneously and the three boats beached in the middle of the ambush, over-running it and routing the enemy. LTJG Kerry subsequently ordered his boat and PCF 23 to investigate gun fire from further up stream. While doing so, we were again taken under fire and a B-40 rocket landed right next to the 94 boat, blowing out the windows on the port side. LTJG Kerry again ordered the boats in to the river bank. When an enemy soldier armed with a loaded B-40 rocket leapt out of a spider hole in front of the boat, initially aimed his weapon and then turned to run, he was taken under fire, wounded by the forward gunner but continued to run for cover towards a hooch to our left. LTJG Kerry, followed closely by one of us (Medeiros, QM2), pursued him ashore and killed him. Despite all the evidence, your group chose to manufacture complete fabrications to smear Kerry and purposefully sought to create doubt where in fact none ever existed from the moment the ambush took place thirty nine years ago and none deserves to exist today.

First falsehood. To begin with, your group chose to characterize the enemy fighter Kerry chased down and killed as “a young Viet Cong in a loincloth” (*Unfit for Command*, p. 82), a description obviously employed to conjure up images of a person too young or primitive to truly endanger Kerry, us, or our boats. This description is completely false. At least four of us—Medeiros; Reese; Sandusky; and Short – (not to mention Tom Belodeau and John Kerry) got good looks at this man with our own eyes. He was holding a loaded B-40 rocket launcher. He – or one of the other ambushers- had just fired on the 94 boat blowing out all the port side windows and as an armed enemy combatant he was capable of killing us all. We observed him to be a man of normal military age, some of us judging him to be in his late teens, others in his twenties. Additionally, we can assure you this man Kerry killed was absolutely not in a “loincloth” but rather was wearing the pajama type pants normally found on VC fighters. (Just for good measure, we note that PCF-23 skipper Bill Rood and his leading petty officer, Jerry Leads, also concur on this point of the VC fighter’s dress and maturity.)

As it turns out, this VC fighter was 26 or 27, according to a Vietnamese eyewitness who knew him and was located in 2004 by the ABC News program “Nightline.” Yet despite all this evidence, your group chose to perpetuate this myth of a “kid” in loin cloth in interviews and advertising, even after your group had been put on public notice on multiple occasions by eyewitnesses that your belittling description—originally lifted from an erroneous sentence in a 2003 newspaper account—was entirely false and incorrect.

While we hope you would not question the truthfulness of four of us, or of Mr. Rood and Mr. Leeds, the fact is photographic evidence also exists and confirms our collective memory. Once the area had been secured and all action was over but prior to departing, the small 8mm camera carried aboard PCF-94 recorded scenes including a look down the trail on which the VC in question had fled and been shot. In this footage, the dead VC is plainly visible wearing black pants, lying on his back with his feet upright. His body lays head toward the hooch, with a wound on the side. Lieutenant Charles Gibson who was assigned to LTJG Kerry’s PCF-94 for indoctrination specifically remembers seeing the exit wound on the side of the VC as well as judging him to be a mature adult guerilla fighter in his late teens or early twenties. Mr. Gibson will confirm this today.

Second falsehood. Your group claims one of our PCF-94 crewmen, Tom Belodeau, “shot the Viet Cong with an M-60 machine gun as he fled” (*Unfit*, p. 83), insinuating that the fleeing VC was already significantly incapacitated when Kerry killed him. In fact, Belodeau has stated publicly, on the record to the *Associated Press*, that even after he fired at the VC: “This man was not lying on the ground. This man was more than capable of destroying that boat and everybody on it.”¹

While Belodeau sadly passed away some years ago and can’t reiterate this point himself, one of us (Short, GM2) had a clear view and vividly recalls Belodeau’s fire striking the VC: the rounds nicked the fleeing VC in the leg but he recovered after an instant and kept on going, just as Tom Belodeau said in 1996. Two others on the boat (Medeiros, QM2 and Sandusky, QM1) did not see Belodeau’s fire strike the VC—they were otherwise occupied—but did see the VC continue to run away from Kerry and our position at a high rate of speed. We note that Mr. Rood and Mr. Leeds are also on the record disputing your group’s insinuation that the VC was significantly wounded prior to being killed by Kerry.

Third falsehood. Your group contends Kerry acted to conceal Belodeau’s role in this event, saying Kerry sought to conceal this circumstance, saying “there is no

¹ Associated Press, 10/27/96

indication that Kerry ever reported that the Viet Cong was wounded and fleeing when dispatched.” (*Unfit*, p. 83). Dead wrong. Another lie. This is preposterous and underscores the extremes SBVT resorted to in order to make up anything they wanted to smear Senator Kerry. We say this because the original after action report, filed within hours of the event and maintained in the US Navy archives, reported precisely the following: “forward M-60 gunner wounded man in leg,” destroying your thesis Kerry or anyone else denied credit to Belodeau, and proving the Navy was not misinformed on this point when evaluating Kerry’s actions for possible recognition. If your group cared about the truth they could have easily checked this document on file in the Navy archives, and also available on johnkerry.com. However, they didn’t want to find nor did they care about the truth.

Fourth falsehood. Your group introduces a completely made up claim that the rocket launcher carried by the Viet Cong soldier “may or may not have been loaded” (*Unfit*, p. 82), intentionally creating innuendo around something that has never, ever been in question. Multiple eyewitnesses confirm the launcher to have been loaded, the after action report states it, and photographic images show the loaded rocket launcher. No one who was there recalls it as anything but loaded or ever reported otherwise. The tactic of SBVT to make up anything for their purposes is conduct unbecoming of members of the Navy family and fellow veterans.

Other than John Kerry, three people were best positioned to see whether the VC’s rocket launcher was loaded when we beached the boat: the man who joined Kerry in chasing the VC (Medeiros); the man in the gun tub (Short); and the man on the forward gun (Belodeau). Two of those three are signatories to this letter (Belodeau has passed away) and can assure you the rocket launcher was indeed loaded. In fact, one of us, Fred Short, had the best seat in the house to the four engagements we had that day. Fred has said: “On the second engagement when we charged the bank, I locked eyes with an enemy combatant who stood up from his fighting hole. This was not a ‘teenager in a loincloth’ as John O’Neill claimed in 2004,² but a fully grown man with a B40 rocket-propelled grenade that was designed to take out armor. I was so close I could see his wispy moustache.”

The fourth eyewitness, the late Tommy Belodeau, also weighed in on this point, having said in 1996: "The soldier that Senator John Kerry shot was standing on both feet with a loaded rocket launcher, about to fire it on the boat from which (Kerry) had just left, which still had four men aboard"³ Bill Rood has written

² ABC News, “Nightline,” 10/14/04

³ Associated Press, 10/27/96

publicly that he, too, observed the rocket launcher to have been loaded, and a photograph taken after the action shows Mr. Rood standing next to Kerry, who is seen holding this loaded weapon. In the after action, many others saw this loaded rocket launcher which was ultimately disarmed by a Navy Seal.

Fifth falsehood. In hopes of diminishing Kerry's (and our) achievement still further, your group asserts that not only was the VC killed by Kerry a "lone, wounded, fleeing young Viet Cong" (*Unfit*, p. 84) but no sizeable enemy force was present beyond this supposedly pathetic individual and the environment was one of "little or no fire." As eyewitnesses, all of us signed below can tell you this is categorically false. Among our collective observations: multiple VC scrambling to get away and a half dozen or so enemy KIA at the site of the first beaching (Hirschler, who went ashore there); and a rocket attack and fire from both banks (Thorson and others) at the site of the second. We note also that Bill Rood wrote in the article cited above that there were multiple VC at the site where Kerry and one of us (Medeiros) got off the boat and chased the VC with the rocket launcher: "It was not the work of just one attacker."

You do not need to take our word for it, however. Incredibly, the only member of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth who was there on 28 February, 1969 has testified the exact opposite of what you allege. Larry Lee, a crewman on PCF-23, has publicly said: "I have no problems with [Kerry] getting the Silver Star," because he recognizes the courage shown by Kerry in the event.⁴ Then there are the Vietnamese eyewitnesses located by Nightline. "Tam," a VC commander during the war, says at least twenty Vietcong were in the village, including an elite 12-man squad sent specifically to target Swift boats. According to the villagers, seven of their local men died fighting our forces that day.

The official Navy records likewise debunk the claim that the enemy consisted of a single combatant. The after action report, based on the debriefing of all present and drafted/submitted by the senior officer on the Coast Guard Cutter, records "heavy small arms fire" preceding the first charge of the bank and three confirmed enemy dead even before the troops were landed and the "enemy was overrun." The second charge of the bank—the one involving Kerry's chase of the VC—came in the face of "heavy small arms fire" and a rocket attack, with "sniper fire" and "small arms fire" also present, per the report. As always, in any military operation, those present were debriefed by a senior officer responsible and the report prepared on that basis. The citations accompanying the Bronze Star Medals awarded Don Droz, Tom Belodeau, and Mike Medeiros speak of their heroic achievement under "a barrage of enemy small arms fire" and "heavy

⁴ Courier-Journal (Louisville), 8/26/04

automatic/semi-automatic weapons fire.” Additionally, there are photographic images of other dead VC taken after the ambush had been suppressed, evidence we will show you. Most importantly, we the men who were there at the time are telling you now, today, that we were under fire from multiple sources and that events happened on 28 February, 1969 exactly as set out in the records.

Sixth falsehood. In addition to lumping together a group of false assertions, as above, your group sought to denigrate our achievement and that of John Kerry through phony allegations about the tactical wisdom of turning the boat into the beach and the circumstances of how it came about. Depending on what serves your purposes, you sometimes claim the operation was reckless and a wanton endangerment of our lives, even as elsewhere you dismiss it as a preplanned operation involving no more than mere ordinary degrees of courage. Your claims contradict each other on this point, so both cannot be true. In reality, neither is.

There was no “plan” to charge the bank that particular day. During their tours, officers and men often had discussions about tactics, real and speculative. For us, some of these included the idea that charging the bank could be an effective—if unorthodox—way to take the fight to the enemy in the face of a small arms ambush. After an ambush preceding this event, LTJG Kerry and several members of our crew inspected “spider holes” on the river bank and saw first hand how the enemy used them to duck down to avoid our return fire. LTJG Kerry did indeed have conversations with the other officers and men on these boats to explore the possibility of employing this new tactic—if the circumstances were right because he was convinced it might be a more effective way of beating the enemy. He proved correct. There was no predetermination as to where or when those right circumstances might present themselves. The choice was in this case totally Lt. Kerry’s discretion. As Officer in Tactical Command, he alone chose to employ the tactic on 28 February, 1969, because he judged the circumstances were right for it. And about this he was also correct.

Seventh falsehood. It would be inappropriate for us personally to show the lie of your group’s assertion that our actions required only an ordinary degree of courage and were militarily insignificant. They really need no further rebuttal in light of the extensive factual discussion above, but we forcefully and happily note that none other than Admiral Zumwalt, Commander of all Naval Forces in Vietnam, differed with you, saying this event “stood out among heroes as acts of total heroism.” And not only did LTJG Kerry’s immediate Commander at the time, George Elliott, praise him for his leadership and tactical thinking, but none other than Captain Roy Hoffmann personally sent a message of congratulations to the officers and men for a “shining example of completely overwhelming enemy forces”, ate breakfast with LTJG Kerry the morning of the awards ceremony and

flew with him together with Admiral Zumwalt to An Thoi to join in the awarding of medals for the accomplishments of PCFs 23, 43, and 94 and their crews. In fact, in Commander Elliott's evaluation of LTJG Kerry, which was publicly available at the time of these smears, he stated:

“In a combat environment often requiring independent, decisive action LTJG Kerry was unsurpassed. He constantly reviewed tactics and lessons learned in river operations and applied his experience at every opportunity. On one occasion while in tactical command of a three boat operation his units were taken under fire from ambush. LTJG Kerry rapidly assessed the situation and ordered his units to turn directly into the ambush. This decision resulted in routing the attackers with several enemy KIA. LTJG Kerry emerges as the acknowledged leader in his peer group...”

Likewise, then Captain Hoffmann was so pleased with this operation he sent a message up and down the chain of command stating:

1. The extremely successful raid and land sweep conducted along the Rach Dong Cung which demonstrated superb coordination and aggressive tactics stands as a shining example of completely overwhelming the enemy.
2. The tactic of attack and assault thoroughly surprised the enemy in his spider holes and proved to be immensely effective in rousting him into the open. This devastating application of the firepower of the Swifts may be the most efficacious method of dealing with small numbers of ambushers....
3. This operation did unreparable (sic) damage to the enemy in this area. Well done.

It was precisely because of his leadership, direction and coordination of this raid in its entirety that LTJG Kerry was awarded the Silver Star – not simply his courage in chasing an enemy with a loaded rocket launcher and killing him. And it was our execution of his orders and effectiveness at twice charging and overrunning an enemy ambush position – something no other Swift boat crew had done – that earned us our decorations. Captain Hoffmann's message makes clear the immediate high regard this action was held in. More important, the fact that the Admiral in Command of all Naval Forces in Vietnam saw fit to personally intervene and, within days of the ambush, fly to An Thoi solely to make these awards, states in no uncertain terms the significance of the action. You and SBVT recklessly set out to portray this unique tactic and major naval success as

something less than what it was. Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and you should be ashamed for engaging in this indefensible tactic.

Eighth Falsehood. Perhaps your group's single most cynical lie was the deliberate deceit and misuse of Captain George Elliott, who was John Kerry's commander at Coastal Division 11. In Vietnam and at all times up until SBVT's slander in 2004, Captain Elliott expressed praise for John Kerry's performance and service in Vietnam, in both authoritative Navy records and public statements, as detailed above and below. Despite deep disagreement with Senator Kerry over his testimony to Congress in 1971, Captain Elliott always separated Kerry's service and ability as an officer from his views about the war.

Despite all this history, SBVT, without ever interviewing those present or otherwise checking the truth, enlisted Captain Elliott into signing a statement questioning LTJG Kerry's award of the Silver Star by means of false "facts" concerning the nature and circumstances of the VC fighter Kerry personally killed and by falsely treating this encounter as the totality of the action. SBVT then featured this criticism in its first advertisement, as mentioned above. Asked about the total contradiction between SBVT claims and his own past endorsement of LTJG Kerry's medals and service, Captain Elliott acknowledged he had made "a terrible mistake" in signing the affidavit SBVT prepared for him.⁵ He retracted his criticism on the Silver Star, including the false notion LTJG Kerry had shot the VC in the back and that retraction appeared in the press. (In an attempt at damage control, SBVT then crafted a second affidavit for Elliott, purporting to retract his retraction but which, when read closely, actually says nothing.) Captain Elliott is an honorable man highly regarded by the officers and men who served under him, including us and Senator Kerry. He deserved far better than to have been drawn into your group's web of lies and deception for political gain.

Ninth falsehood. Not content to misstate the facts of the action on 28 February, 1969, and mischaracterize its effectiveness, your group next takes aim at the Navy awards process itself. Your group claims "virtually all documentation required for a Silver Star in 1969 is missing... [including] the nomination form for a Silver Star, the required official investigation, or the required statements of two witnesses." (*Unfit*, p. 204-205) You falsely try to assert something wrong when nothing has ever been deemed, or could have been deemed, to be wrong. This particular innuendo is insulting to the United States Navy, to Admiral Elmo Zumwalt who personally made the award and ironically, to Captain Roy Hoffmann who as we said attended and concurred in the award ceremony. Many of those in Coastal Division 11 not on patrol or duty were assembled at the

⁵ Veteran retracts criticism of Kerry," Boston Globe, 8/6/04

ceremony on An Thoi while the crews and officers of PCF-23, PCF-43 and PCF-94 were all personally decorated and congratulated by Admiral Zumwalt, Captain Hoffmann and Commander Elliott. How totally ridiculous and insulting that despite his entire Chain of Command being present for and themselves making the award at a special ceremony at their base in Vietnam, you try to challenge the award for lack of documentation!

Your group's underhanded tactic was definitively pre-refuted by Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Commander Naval Forces Vietnam. Responding to an earlier campaign smear on Senator Kerry, Zumwalt traveled to Massachusetts in 1996 to tell press and public that he had personally considered and authorized Kerry's award. This is what he said at that time: "My firm recollection of that event is that in Saigon we believed he deserved the Navy Cross. It would have taken a number of months to get it up through the system. I had the authority to award a Silver Star." George Elliott has likewise vouched for the process: "In this particular case and in all cases, there are after action reports. They were read. Men were interviewed who were eyewitnesses... And the award was recommended, the paperwork was filled out and it was forwarded up the chain of command." (Admiral Zumwalt and Commander Elliott's witness is available on videotape, should you doubt our account of it.) Your group's false claims in this regard were additionally reviewed and rejected by the United States Naval Inspector General in 2004, in response to a complaint lodged by one of your conservative allies, "Judicial Watch." The Naval Inspector General wrote, and we quote: "Our examination found that existing documentation regarding the Silver Star, Bronze Star, and Purple Hearts medals indicates the awards approval process was properly followed."

It is no wonder Admiral Zumwalt said of this particular attack on Kerry: it is "a disgrace to the United States Navy that there is any inference that that process was other than totally honest. It is a disgrace to the honor and memory of the people who served there."⁶ Admiral Zumwalt's words have particular meaning to us as the men who were there. Three of us signed below (Langhofer; Medeiros; Hirschler) were awarded Bronze Stars Medals for our actions on 28 February 1969; while four others of us received Navy or Army Commendation Medals (Sandusky, Short, Thorson and Reese). Bill Rood and Don Droz both received Bronze Star Medals, as did Tom Belodeau. Don Droz, a Naval Academy graduate, who was subsequently killed in action in another river on another day, wrote home to his wife how proud he was of what he and his crew did that day with John Kerry. So, your group's attack on Kerry's Silver Star is not only a flagrant, disgraceful assault on the integrity of Admiral Zumwalt and the United States Navy which had previously confirmed the appropriateness of these awards,

⁶ October 1996 press conference

it is also an attack on the courage and honor of all of us who were there, including those who are not alive to defend themselves, and on the decorations we received for our own roles in this same action.

Tenth Falsehood. As shown again and again by records and eyewitnesses as set forth above in *one* through *nine*, your flagrantly false assertion that the Silver Star award “was based on false and incomplete information provided by Kerry himself” and that this event “was nothing out of the ordinary” (Unfit p.81) is an outright lie. First, if it was nothing out of the ordinary, then why the contemporary statements of Captain Hoffman and Admiral Zumwalt to the contrary? Were they not telling the truth in 1969 ? Were they not honorable Navy commanders doing their job according to their oaths?

And as to your ridiculous claim that the information was “false and incomplete,” we tell you unequivocally that not only was there was no relevant information missing from any report, but you have no evidence of anything missing. And far from being based on information “provided by Kerry,” none other than Captain Elliott has said that the Silver Star award came after “men were interviewed who were eyewitnesses.”⁷ You also completely ignore the reality of such an event. After a successful combat action with such consequences, all the men involved, enlisted and officers, talked excitedly and at length amongst one another about the event. In this case, moreover, there was a description of the event copied to all involved (Hoffmann’s congratulatory message), and even a press release! In such a setting, there is simply no reality whatsoever for reports to be filed and awards to be made – given and accepted by all concerned – if the facts were not as set forth. Your attempt thirty five years later to just make things up is beyond disgraceful and beyond credibility.

What we have set forth here documents beyond any possible reasonable doubt SBVT used *ten individual lies* to concoct *one big lie* about one of the most significant events of LTJG Kerry’s tour in Vietnam and his highest military honor: the action leading to the Silver Star Medal. In doing so, we have more than met your standard of showing “anything the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth said in 2004 was false” – the standard set by you in your Washington dinner challenge, as originally reported.

We state for the record, however, that we know your group’s many other major character attacks on Kerry are just as false, lies calculated to damage Senator Kerry and influence an election.

⁷ Statement of Captain Elliott, Charlestown, MA 10/27/96

The attempt to denigrate the circumstances of Kerry's first Purple Heart, for example, is disproved by the two enlisted men, Pat Runyon and Bill Zaladonis, together with Kerry, who state categorically your so-called eyewitness, William Schachte, was not on the skimmer in the action that night. (Responding to this lie, Zaladonis has quipped: "me and Pat aren't the smartest, but we can count to three."⁸) Should William Schachte ever consent to sit in a room with them, which he has thus far refused to do, or to be interviewed publicly with them present, which he has also avoided, they will offer further proof of his lie.

The slander that Kerry acted improperly in not reporting the death of a youth in a sampan is a falsehood directly refuted by the skipper of the accompanying PCF and Officer in Tactical Command of the mission and person responsible for filing the report, LTJG Rich McCann.

The innuendo that Kerry "put himself in" for his Bronze Star Medal on a mission where there was no hostile fire, is completely disproved by the man, Lieutenant James Rassmann, USASF, who, after LTJG Kerry had departed the area and without Kerry's knowledge, personally recommended Kerry for saving his life; by all of the other crew members who were actually on the boat in this ambush; by the original document of recommendation for the Bronze Star by LTJG Kerry's Commanding Officer, Commander Elliott; by the first hand observations of the Psychological Operations Officer, Lt. Jim Russell, riding on PCF 43, who unsolicited wrote a public article in 2004 confirming enemy fire as well as LTJG Kerry's actions; and finally, by the awkward-for-you fact that one of your leading members, OINC of PCF-51, Larry Thurlow, himself received a medal for heroism under fire during the same incident and whose statements are completely contradicted by his own gunnersmate, Robert Lambert. The fact is that the procedures in place in Coastal Division 11 would never have permitted any Officer in Charge of a Swift Boat to "put themselves in" for a medal and surely the senior officers in command who controlled and signed off on such matters would acknowledge this truth.

Finally, the continued insistence that Kerry has not released his full military record is refuted by the Navy, which has publicly certified he has, and by three newspapers which have independently received signed releases and reviewed those records. In fact, all of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's major assertions regarding each of Senator Kerry's medals and his service in Vietnam are false and can be disproven.

⁸ New York Times, 8/20/04

Mr. Pickens: You should know that even some of us on his crew differed with John Kerry when he spoke out against the war. But that has never affected our respect for his leadership as a Naval officer. We also believe that unlike some of his detractors, John Kerry earned the right to speak his mind. As Lt. Jim Russell, the Psychological Operations Officer wrote in a letter of August 20th, 2004 speaking about your group: "If they are against him for his stance against the Vietnam War, that certainly is their right, but to spread lies and malicious innuendos about his time on the rivers of Vietnam is not morally right and does a disservice not only to Kerry, but to all those who served and were wounded or died in that war." (letter attached)

We are prepared now to come to Texas to see you, or meet somewhere else mutually convenient. We are telling you, that we will bring with us a Navy/Pentagon certified copy of Senator Kerry's full military record and his writings and the movie footage you have requested. We will sit with you while you go through them page for page, frame by frame and answer any questions you may have. We know the truth because we were there on the boat. We believe you will find this truth unavoidable and hope you will feel the right thing has been done in keeping your promise to write a check for one million dollars to anyone who can show anything SBVT said was false. We believe it would be appropriate for this money to go to the veteran's charity of our choice.

While our reply to you concerns principally the overwhelming evidence of many falsehoods regarding just the Silver Star events specifically, we will also bring other documentary and eyewitness evidence that prove the breadth of SBVT lies should you be interested in the full measure of your friends' deception.

Please address your reply to us in the care of Del Sandusky, 1040 Main Street #78, Dunedin, FL 34698.

Yours in truth and honor,



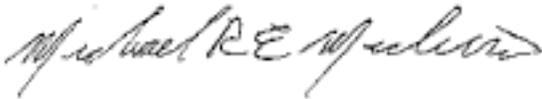
Del Sandusky
Dunedin, FL (QM1, PCF-94)



Fred Short
North Little Rock, AR (GM3, PCF-94)



David Alston
Columbia, SC (GM2, PCF-94)



Michael Medeiros
San Leandro, CA (QM2, PCF-94)



Eugene K. Thorson
Ames, IA (EN2, PCF-94)

WITNESSES IN AGREEMENT



William Hirschler
Alta Loma, CA (US Army, CPT. Participant, 28 Feb 69 mission)

[SIGNED]

Wayne Langhofer
Herrington, KS (USN, PCF-43, Participant, 28 Feb 69 and 13 March 1969 missions)



James Rassmann
Florence, OR (US Army Special Forces. 1st LT. Participant, 13 Mar 69 mission)



Doug Reese
Saigon, Vietnam (US Army, 1st LT. Participant, 28 Feb 69 mission)

