

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 19, 1977

Dear Jane:

Since our recent conversation, I have thought a great deal about your request that I grant amnesty to all Vietnam war era draft evaders and deserters. I have carefully reviewed my clemency program which enabled individuals to earn clemency discharges and pardons and believe it is a program consistent with America's best traditions of compassion and forgiveness. When I established the program, I did so in the belief that it was very important for the country that the post-Vietnam reconciliation take place in an atmosphere that restored unity and at the same time maintained a respect for the law and for diversity of opinion. Of the more than 21,700 people who applied to the clemency program, approximately 13,500 have received or are in the process of earning pardons, clemency discharges, or other benefits.

I know how firmly and deeply you and Phil and your children have felt about Vietnam amnesty, and I respect that feeling and belief. However, I also have a strong personal belief that earned clemency was the right approach to healing our country's Vietnam wounds and to creating a mutual understanding among all those individuals and families who were personally involved in the Vietnam war, from those who felt they could not serve to those who lost

a child, a husband, or a father.
I thus have decided to maintain my
position on earned clemency and hope
you will understand. Within my
clemency program, however, I have
directed that the other than honorable
discharges received by former service
members who were wounded in combat or
received decorations for valor in combat
in Vietnam each be reviewed and upgraded
to discharges under honorable conditions,
unless there is a compelling reason to
the contrary in any case.

Betty and I want to convey again our
deep condolences to you, your children,
and to the entire Hart family on the
loss of Phil.

Sincerely,

Lyndon B. Johnson

Mrs. Philip A. Hart
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