

Excerpt from "In Defense of Dissent"

By Judy Droz Keyes

Introductory remarks at Faneuil Hall, Boston, April 22, 2006

Thank you. It is such an honor to be here.

Let me ask you to indulge me for a few minutes and go back, not 35 years, but 40 years. For some of you, some of this you may remember -- for others, I ask that you imagine. In June of 1966 -- not quite 40 years ago -- a wonderful young man from Missouri -- full of love for his country, full of hope, full of life -- graduated at the top of his class from the United State Naval Academy. His name was Donald Droz. Two years later, in 1968, my by-then husband Donald Droz went to Vietnam. He was an Officer-in-Charge of a Swift Boat, what later came to be called the "Skipper" of a Swift Boat.

I received many letters from Don from Vietnam; I have all of them today. I got one in the fall of 1968 in which Don wrote about this lieutenant named John Kerry who had just arrived in Vietnam and whom Don described as a "great guy -- despite the fact that he had gone to Yale." A few months later, in March of 1969, I took our then two-month-old daughter and went to Hawaii to spend 5 glorious days with Don on his R&R from Vietnam.

It was then that we had a chance to talk. He told me many things I hadn't heard before. He told me of the Bronze Star -- the award that he had brought with him for me to take back home, that he had earned just a few weeks earlier in a situation in which John Kerry was also involved. Don described to me what had happened that day and told me of his pride in the award and in his and John's and others' service. But he also told me how convinced he was that what we were doing in Vietnam was wrong. That it was misguided. Of the shame he felt sometimes from what he knew we were doing, and what he saw. And he told me of how he and John Kerry had talked late into the night about it, and about their duty when they got back home to tell the truth about what was going on.

Two weeks later, on April 12, 1969, Don was killed in Vietnam. ...