

WILLIAM STEWART  
1540 Franceschi Road  
Santa Barbara, California 93103

10 March 1985

Prof. Walter Capps  
1724 Santa Barbara St.  
Santa Barbara, Ca.

Dear Prof. Capps,

I read with interest about the course you are teaching at UCSB. Enclosed is a letter to Gov. Kerrey which I believe is self explanatory. My experiences as a Vietnam veteran aren't nearly as intense as those of most of your "monitors" but I did see combat intermittently for a year operating out of Pleiku and various bases along the central coast. Courses such as yours are long overdue and you are performing an important service for students and Viet vets. I marched in the parade in 1982 in Washington to dedicate the memorial and in the local parade last year and was distressed to see how few officers showed up at either event. Many of the marchers in each parade were alienated veterans still suffering from physical or emotional wounds. Nearly all were enlisted men who often didn't have a good support group to come home to and who had difficulty finding a job when they left the service. Many were either very young volunteers or, more likely, as the war wore on, draftees who went to Vietnam because they were ordered to do so. I was older than most men in Vietnam(23) had a college education and had done some reading about the people and the culture of Indochina before my arrival although I certainly wasn't prepared for war--who is?

What I am trying to say, in a circuitous way, is that a great variety of men and women went to Vietnam. Their experiences were incredibly varied. Some came back indelibly scarred and some not. A very tiny percentage engaged in hand to hand combat, most did not. Some were ugly Americans and would have been in any country under any circumstance. Most were often bored, sometimes scared, kids who did the best they could under frequently difficult circumstances. It has now become the rage among some vets to proclaim that they went because their country sent them. At least early on there were a lot of volunteers "in country". We were there because we felt the cause was worth it, atleast that's why I was there. I have many, many conflicting emotions and thoughts about my participation in that war. If you feel the need to portray yet another view to your students, I'd be glad to give it a try.

Again, thanks for your interest and assistance in a worthy effort. Also, if you know of any vets who need assistance in getting a job or want some other help, let me know.

Sincerely,

  
William Stewart

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1540 Franceschi Road  
Santa Barbara, California 93103

10 March 1985

Gov. Bob Kerrey  
State Capitol  
Lincoln, Nebraska


Dear Gov. Kerrey,

Thank you for speaking in Santa Barbara recently. I was unable to attend your talk at the Channel City Club or at UCSB but certainly would have had I not been out of town on business. Remarks attributed to you by the Santa Barbara News Press in its March 6 issue leave me a bit perplexed. Perhaps you could clear the matter up as I think its a point of some import. I served in Vietnam for a year as a naval officer spotting gunfire for the army and taught at the Coronado Amphibious Base for a year. In both locations I met many members of the Navy SEALs. All were volunteers. Every SEAL I met knew it was a certainty he would be sent to Vietnam if he graduated from Basic Underwater Demolition School. The newspaper article(see copy attached) indicates that you had been drafted into the service and into the SEALs. I don't see how this can be the case and I assume you must have been misquoted. The SEALs are not only volunteers--they are, as you know far better than I, highly motivated volunteers, who have survived a very rigorous program with an extremely high attrition rate. Because you are in the public eye as a public official and Medal of Honor recipient, I think it is important that you make it clear that you were a volunteer in Vietnam. The public should know that whatever an individual veteran's thoughts about the war now that many of us volunteered to serve. It's not true that all of us were forced into a combat role by the government.

Some non veterans seem to take a much more sympathetic approach to veterans if they believe we were sent to fight against our will. All of us who served in combat oriented units, of which the SEALs and Army Special Forces are the best examples, knew we would wind up in Vietnam. Like you, I have a lot of thoughts about the war and my role in it. It is a complex subject not easily explained. I do feel that it is important for the public to know that many of us volunteered to serve in that conflict or in units that we knew would see combat. If that results in people seeing me in a lesser light, so be it.

Finally, allow me to express to you my admiration for your exemplary service.

Sincerely,

  
William Stewart  
Vietnam 65-66