

# Speaker: Vietnam Vets Show Great Leadership

Vietnam veterans have shown great leadership "in orchestrating their own recovery" from the war, said a university professor who teaches a course on Vietnam.

Walter H. Capps, who was the featured speaker Saturday night at the Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Reunion in Omaha, said veterans took it upon themselves to build the Vietnam memorial in Washington and to establish veterans' centers around the country.

Fifteen years after the war ended, Capps said, Vietnam veterans also are making their mark in such areas as politics. Sen. Bob Kerrey, D-Neb., is a strong example of that, he said.

But the healing from the bitterly divisive war is not over, Capps said.

"Many of the vets I've known are still having difficulty coming to

terms with the war," he said. "My sort of program, or pitch, is to show them how many positive things have come from the war because of their efforts."

Capps, who was born in Omaha and graduated from Benson High School, is a professor of philosophy and religious studies at the University of California-Santa Barbara.

He said he teaches the largest university course on the American experience in Vietnam. Kerrey lectured at the school in 1987.

Many veterans, he said, have had "quite a difficult time feeling good about their experience — did it add up to anything significant?"

Some have suffered from "depression with a capital D," Capps said.

He said societal attitudes toward Vietnam veterans are slowly changing for the better.

"Society has to acknowledge that when they went out there they weren't necessarily advocating the policies they were working under," Capps said. "They were being patriotic. They were doing what they felt they had to do."



Capps