

Date: Wed, 29 Oct 1997 14:31:27 -0800 (PST)
From: Sylvia Curtis <curtis@humanitas.ucsb.edu>
To: library@ariz.library.ucsb.edu
Subject: Walter Holden Capps, 1934-1997 (fwd from AP, 22:24 EST) (fwd)

...More on Walter Capps.

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Wed, 29 Oct 1997 03:43:06 +0000
From: "J. Shawn Landres" <jshawnl@IX.NETCOM.COM>
Reply-To: UCSB Religious Studies Forum <ANDERE-L@UCSBVM.ucsb.edu>
To: ANDERE-L@UCSBVM.ucsb.edu
Subject: Walter Holden Capps, 1934-1997 (fwd from AP, 22:24 EST)

Filed at 10:24 p.m. EST

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Freshman Rep. Walter Capps, a California Democrat who came to Washington as a rare liberal in a traditionally Republican district, died Tuesday afternoon after being stricken by an apparent heart attack at Dulles International Airport.

Colleagues said Capps, 63, of Santa Barbara, was en route back to Washington as the House prepared to vote on a defense authorization bill and other issues Tuesday afternoon. Word spread quickly and two lawmakers, who spoke on condition of anonymity, confirmed that he had died.

Capps collapsed about 6 p.m. EST at the airport, said longtime friend Marty Stone.

The congressman's press secretary, Lisa Finkel, confirmed that Capps had died but could not provide other details. Congressional staffers said his body would be flown back to California late Tuesday or Wednesday.

In a statement, President Clinton said Capps "brought constant values, a rare perspective and a sense of moral grounding that public life too often lacks, and will sorely miss."

He was taken to Columbia Reston Hospital near the airport after he fell ill. The hospital would not comment on his death.

Capps was a member of the 1996 freshman class, narrowly defeating Republican incumbent Andrea Seastrand to become the first Democrat elected since World War II from what is now California's 22nd House district.

He had been a professor of religious studies at the University of California in Santa Barbara for more than 30 years. He wrote 14 books and was a nationally recognized expert on the issues of American democracy and peace and conflict studies.

After developing a college course dealing with the Vietnam War, Capps had invited Sen. Bob Kerry, D-Neb., a veteran of the conflict, to be a featured lecturer.

It was Kerrey who encouraged Capps, also a native of Nebraska, to make another run for the House after he lost Seastrand by only 1,600 votes in 1994. In the second race, he defeated Seastrand by more than 12,000 votes.

Shortly after being nominated, Capps and his wife were injured when their car was hit by a drunk driver.

He suffered from head and leg injuries which kept him from campaigning most of the summer. "I never want to forget what it's like to go through the world in a wheelchair," Capps

said at

a news conference.

Days before his death, Capps circulated a letter among lawmakers urging Chinese President Jiang Zemin to release political dissident Wei Jingsheng as a "positive confidence-building measure."

Earlier this month, Capps was responding to a deluge of constituent complaints about using federal money to convert Ronald Reagan's ranch into a state park. Capps said he had to cut off his daily jog to respond to the angry calls and letters.

The oldest of four brothers, Capps was raised in Omaha, graduated from Portland State University in Oregon and received a masters and doctors degree from Yale. He also earned a master of sacred theology from Yale Divinity School.

He and his wife have three grown children and one grandchild.

NB: My home address in California is changing -- contact me for details.

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