I had heard of him when he was running for the governor-ship of Nebraska. It was the picture in the paper that captured my attention. There he was, a marathon runner on an artificial leg. He had been the victim of a grenade explosion in Vietnam where he served heroically as a member of the Seal Team.

The first time he lectured at UC Santa Barbara he had prepared a kind of textbook address.

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in Omaha, our hometown.

In September of 1984, I was in Nebraska to preside at a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Nebraska Committee for the Humanities, which meeting was to take place under the Capitol rotunda in Lincoln. Sarah Rosenberg, the executive director of the Nebraska Committee, was able to arrange a meeting for me with Governor Bob Kerrey. She informed his office that I wanted to talk a bit about public humanities programs in the state, but would also welcome an opportunity to have a brief discussion about the war. Sarah was pleased when she telephoned with the governor's acceptance that he had allocated thirty minutes of his time for these purposes.

We met on September 14, 1984 in the governor's office. I told him about the class, then offered a rather quick sketch of events since the end of the war in 1975, mentioning the dedication of the Memorial in Washington and the May 29, 1984 funeral for the Unknown Soldier at Arlington Cemetery. I talked a little about the recovery process that seems to be taking place, specifically that veterans of the war, more and more, are finding themselves in leadership positions throughout the country. He himself is the second Vietnam veteran to be elected governor of a state, the other being Charles Robb of Virginia. I mentioned that I had read such elections are being read by some commentators as being symbolic of the recovery. He smiled and said he was amused because he hadn't seen himself in this light; he didn't know that he had this reputation, he said, elsewhere in the country.

"But, isn't it true," I asked, "that your experience with the Vietnam War influenced your decision to run for governor?"

Mr. Kerrey paused, before responding, "The answer to the question must be 'yes,' but there wasn't any direct causal connection."

He explained that there were other significant factors involved.

Then he briefly described his life before he sought the governorship. He talked of being involved in the anti-war protest movement when he returned from Vietnam, and his effort, motivated by Allard Loewenstein, to have Richard Nixon removed from presidential office. He seemed proud of these undertakings. But he dwelt longest on his hospital stay, attesting that the surgery and the extended recovery period forced him to reflect on the conditions of persons that he might not have considered at all otherwise. He referred to the other patients in the hospitals, and to the hosts of peoples in need. This recognition had as much to do with his wanting to be governor as anything, he said.

Returning to the sequence of events that seems to mark the recovery period, I mentioned that it has taken many veterans nearly a decade or more to find ways to express themselves on the subject of the war. An estimated 500,000 veterans — approximately 20% of the total number — are known or believed to be suffering rather severe emotional and psychological distress. It was in response to this set of facts that Governor Kerrey invoked the authority of Elie Wiesel, the interpreter of the holocaust, with the quotation that was cited earlier: "when an event is unspeakable," he repeated softly, "it takes a while to learn the right words." I told him that, with all due respect, I hadn't expected a governor to talk

as one of the strongest and most trusted supporters of the class in the strongest and most trusted supporters of the class in the Santa Barbara community.

We recognize, of course, that some of the media attention was inspired by the fact that notable persons — at times, national leaders — were coming to Santa Barbara to address the class. In 1982, for example, George McGovern returned to the campus to tell of the very difficult, strained conversations he had with President Lyndon Johnson, in 1966 and 1967, when United States involvement in the war was heightened and intensified. McGovern also described his own reasoning in 1964, when he, together with all but two Senators, voted in favor of Johnson's Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Media personnel were present as the former democratic presidential nominee — who ran under an anti-war banner in 1972 — talked of the agony.

And the reporters returned in significant numbers when Governor Bob Kerrey of Nebraska visited the class. Kerrey visited the class twice, in 1985 and 1986, journeying all the way from Lincoln, Nebraska for this purpose alone. When asked why he did it, he replied that he "may not have accepted an invitation, say, to the State of Minnesota, in late February, but this was California." He added that he had "heard about this incredible class, and wanted to witness it for himself. Besides, it gives me a chance to think about some things that I don't always think about in my workaday world."

His message was straightforward. The question he gets asked most often about the Vietnam War, he said, was "how he could actually kill people, that is, take away someone's life." He said that he had thought about this question more than about any other, and he has

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concluded that "there are some tasks the country asks you to perform that are more difficult than dying for your country." He proposed that "killing for your country is more difficult than dying for your country." He added that there are some situations in life that may justify taking some else's life, the first of these being when one's own life is being threatened, and the second being when one's loved ones are being threatened. He talked about the circle of responsibility becoming larger, so that killing may be justified if our collective life — our life as a nation — is threatened. At this point, he cautioned, we must be exceedingly careful. "Before long," he suggested, "the circle has grown larger, and we are out there killing for ideology, for race, for religion." Without such clarity, he chided, "we'll be out there killing to protect the rights of Burger King in El Salvador." The March 1991 with March 1992 with March 1992

But it is the idealism of the man that is best able to capture the enthusiasm of the students. He talked about being so excited about the prospects for a day that gets up early to await its dawning. He talked of Nebraska farmers who have devoted forty, even fifty years, to the cultivation of their plots of ground, and of how real human achievement cannot be purchased, no matter how much money one has. And yet, the most memorable aspect of his visit was the closing paragraphs in his 1986 lecture. After telling students that he was going to portray the war, he stopped out in front of the lectern, asking if he might do something that "I have never done before except in the shower." With their encouragement, he told of the background of the song, "Waltzing Matilda," then sang a number of verses of it acappela. There he was, an idealistic

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graduate students who were working in the class as Teaching Assistants. And in 1985, the graduate students who were assigned to the class — all doctoral candidates in religious studies at UCSB — were John Simmons, Kay Alexander, Michael Burdick, and B. Keith Naylor. But before going into this topic in more detail, I need to relate two developments that occurred between the 1983-84 and 1984-85 academic years.

I was in San Francisco in July, 1984, for a meeting of the California Council for the Humanities, which, because of several scheduling advantages, took place on one of the days of the national convention of the Democratic Party. Unexpectedly, I met George McGovern in the lobby of the St. Francis Hotel, and he provided me with a ticket to attend the convention. Once inside the convention arena, I found myself down on the floor near the delegates' section, and I began talking with a rather softspoken gentleman -- a man I had not met before -- about what we might expect to take place there later in the evening. It was a conversation that I enjoyed very much. I was impressed by the kindness, graciousness, and perceived integrity of the man. When he walked away, a television reporter came up to me to ask if I knew who it was I had been talking with. I said, "no, it was only a casual conversation; we didn't even introduce ourselves." She said, "Well, that was Bob Kerrey, the Governor of Nebraska." I hadn't known.

I had been reading about Bob Kerrey, who won the governorship on his first try, after having served with the Navy Seals in Vietnam, where he was severely wounded, and had a portion of his leg amputated. I was born in Nebraska, and though I left there in the early 1950s I continue to read the Omaha World Herald from time to time. I feel that I know that paper well, for my brother Roger and I were paper carriers for many years

for the genuineness of her "welcome home" to him. He said that he had never received a note that had touched him as deeply.

She asked me if I thought she should keep the flag. I responded that I knew Murphy wanted her to have it. In response, she and her roommate, May Okihiro, a pre-medical student from Hawaii, prepared a large banner -- WELCOME HOME VETS -- on which the names of all of the veterans who had visited or were sitting in on the class were inscribed. And on the last day of class, they presented this banner to the veterans on behalf of, and in the name of, the class. The banner became the focal point of the first Santa Barbara "Welcome Home" for the Veterans. It still hangs on the wall in the Veterans Memorial Building on Cabrillo Boulevard, and has been a prominent feature of all succeeding commemorations.

By this time, the campus and local press became actively involved. The story about May Okihiro's presentation of the banner to the veterans was carried as an evening news items on KEY NEWS, the regular evening newscast of Television Station KEYT. And the campus newspaper, The Daily Nexus, carried feature stories throughout the quarter on some of the presentations of the guest presentors.

Nevertheless, we were not prepared for the significant increase in student enrollment that occurred when the class was offered during the winter quarter, 1985. Whereas in 1984, approximately 350 students took the course for credit, the pre-enrollment for 1985 was over 700; and when we arrived for the first class, the auditorium of some 850 seats was filled to overflowing. I say when "we" arrived because by this time I had formed a close working relationship with several