



Honor Bound: The History of American Prisoners of War in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973

Stuart I. Rochester, Frederick Kiley

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Among the many horrors of the Vietnam War, some of the most brutal and, until now, least documented were the experiences of the American prisoners of war, many of whom endured the longest wartime captivity, of any POWs in U.S. history. With this book, two of the most respected scholars in the field offer a comprehensive, balanced, and authoritative account of what happened to the nearly eight hundred Americans captured in Southeast Asia. The authors were granted unprecedented access to previously unreleased materials and interviewed over a hundred former POWs, enabling them to meticulously reconstruct the captivity record as well as produce an evocative narrative of a once sketchy and misunderstood, yet key chapter of the war. Powerful and moving in its portrayal of how men sought to cope with physical and psychological ordeals under the most adverse conditions, this landmark study separates fact from fiction. Its analysis of the shifting tactics and temperaments of captive and captor as the war evolved skillfully weaves domestic political developments and battlefield action with prison scenes that alternate between Hanoi's concrete cells, South Vietnam's jungle stockades, and mountain camps in Laos. Giving due praise but never shirking from criticism, the authors describe in gripping detail dozens of cases of individual courage and resistance from celebrated heroes like Jim Stockdale, Robinson Risner, Jeremiah Denton, Bud Day, and Nick Rowe to lesser known legends like Major Ray Schrupp and Medal of Honor winner Donald Cook. Along with epic accounts of endurance under torture, breathtaking escape attempts, and remarkable prisoner communication efforts, they also reveal Code of Conduct lapses and instances of outright collaboration with the enemy. Published twenty-five years after Operation Homecoming, which brought home 591 POWs from Vietnam, this tour-de-force history is a compelling and important work that serves as a testament to the courage, faith, and will of Americans in captivity, as well as a reminder of the sometimes impossible demands made on U.S. servicemen under the Code of Conduct in prisoner of war situations. It is vividly illustrated with maps, prisoners' renderings of camps and torture techniques, and dozens of photographs, many never before published. It includes insightful analyses of the circumstances and conditions of captivity and its varying effects on the prisoners, the strategies and tactics of captors and captives, the differences between captivity in North and South Vietnam and between Laos and Vietnam, and analysis of the quality of the source materials for this and other works on the subject.

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