# THE FORTY-THIRD HARMON MEMORIAL LECTURE IN MILITARY HISTORY


## Making Experience Count: American POW Narratives from the Colonial Wars to Vietnam

**Robert C. Doyle**
United States Air Force Academy

2000

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The oldest and most prestigious lecture series at the Air Force Academy, the Harmon Memorial Lectures in Military History originated with Lieutenant General Hubert R. Harmon, the Academy's first superintendent (1954-1956) and a serious student of military history. General Harmon believed that history should play a vital role in the new Air Force Academy curriculum. Meeting with the History Department on one occasion, he described General George S. Patton, Jr.'s visit to the West Point library before departing for the North African campaign. In a flurry of activity Patton and the librarians combed the West Point holdings for historical works that might be useful to him in the coming months. Impressed by Patton's regard for history and personally convinced of history's great value, General Harmon believed that cadets should study the subject during each of their four years at the Academy.

General Harmon fell ill with cancer soon after launching the Air Force Academy at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver in 1954. He died in February 1957. He had completed a monumental task over the preceding decade as the chief planner for the new service academy and as its first superintendent. Because of his leadership and the tensions of the cold war, Congress strongly supported the development of a first-rate school and allotted generous appropriations to build and staff the institution.

The Academy's leadership felt greatly indebted to General Harmon and sought to honor his accomplishments in some way. The Department of History considered launching a lecture series to commemorate his efforts, and in 1959 the Harmon Memorial Lecture Series in Military History was born.

The Harmon Lecture series supports two goals: to encourage the interest in contemporary military history and to stimulate in cadets a lifelong interest in the study of the history of the military profession. The lectures are published and distributed to interested individuals and organizations throughout the world and many are used in courses at the Academy. In this way, we continue to honor the memory of General Harmon, who during his lifetime developed a keen interest in military history and greatly contributed to establishing the United States Air Force Academy.

## LIEUTENANT GENERAL HUBERT REILLY HARMON

Lieutenant General Hubert R. Harmon was one of several distinguished Army officers to come from the Harmon family. His father graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1880 and later served as Commandant of Cadets at the Pennsylvania Military Academy. Two older brothers, Kenneth and Millard, were members of the West Point class of 1910 and 1912, respectively. The former served as Chief of the San Francisco Ordnance District during World War II; the latter reached flag rank and was lost over the Pacific during World War II while serving as Commander of the Pacific Area Army Air Forces. Hubert Harmon, born on April 3, 1882, in Chester, Pennsylvania, followed in their footsteps and graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1915. Dwight D. Eisenhower also graduated in this class, and nearly forty years later the two worked together to create the new United States Air Force Academy.

Harmon left West Point with a commission in the Coast Artillery Corps, but he was able to enter the new Army air branch the following year. He won his pilot's wings in 1917 at the Army flying school in San Diego. After several training assignments, he went to France in September 1918 as a pursuit pilot. Between World Wars I and II, Harmon, who was a Major during most of this time, was among that small group of Army air officers who urged Americans to develop a modern, strong air arm.

At the outbreak of World War II, Brigadier General Hubert Harmon was commanding the Gulf Coast Training Center at Randolph Field, Texas. In late 1942 he became a Major General and head of the 6th Air Force in the Caribbean. The following year General Harmon was appointed Deputy Commander for Air in the South Pacific under General Douglas MacArthur, and in January 1944 he assumed command of the 13th Air Force fighting in that theater. After the war General Harmon held several top positions with the Air Force and was promoted to Lieutenant General in 1948.

In December 1949 the Air Force established the Office of Special Assistant for Air Force Academy Matters and appointed General Harmon its head. For more than four years Harmon directed all efforts at securing legislative approval for a U.S. Air Force Academy, planned its building and operation, and served on two commissions that finally selected Colorado Springs, Colorado, as the site for the new institution. On August 14, 1954, he was appointed first Superintendent of the Air Force Academy.

Upon General Harmon's retirement on July 31, 1956, the Secretary of the Air Force presented him with his third Distinguished Service Medal for his work in planning and launching the new service academy and setting its high standards. In a moving, informal talk to the cadets before leaving the Academy, General Harmon told the young airmen that the most important requirements for success in their military careers are integrity and loyalty to subordinates and superiors. "Take your duties seriously, but not yourself," he told the cadets.

General Harmon passed away on February 22, 1957, just a few months before his son Kendrick graduated from West Point. The general's ashes were interred at the Air Force Academy's cemetery on September 2, 1958. On May 31, 1959, the Academy's new administration building was named Harmon Hall in his memory.

# "Making Experience Count"

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Narratives of Americans in captivity began with the tribal captivities during the colonial past but did not end there. Some wars were popular; others were not, and, many, like the Vietnam war for example, left serious political questions in their wake. Regardless of any particular war's political, ideological, legal, moral, or even propaganda value, war breeds captivity for some soldiers. There can be little doubt that the experience itself acts as a watershed event in the life of an individual prisoner of war, and from the time of America's earliest colonial conflicts, former prisoners have narrated the most minute details about it. I wish to address several issues: captivity data and where one discovers it; significant meanings; and, lastly, some discussion of the broad range of materials that have been useful to the understanding of the personal captivity experience.

Origins

Beginning in the sixteenth century with the chronicles of European adventurers captured by Indians, early colonial captivity narratives were relatively simple documents. Narrators specialized in creating ethnological reportage. Such was the case with Alvar de Vaca's The Journey of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca and His Companions from Florida to the Pacific, 1528-1536 (1542) that described Vaca's adventures in Florida and Juan Ortiz's True Relation of the Gentleman of Elvas (1557) that narrated his adventures among the Indians of the American Southeast.[1] In 1549, Hans Staden sailed from Seville with the expedition of Don Diego de Senabria for Rio de la Plata, but the ship was later wrecked off the coast of Brazil and Staden was captured by the Tupi Indians. After a French ship rescued him, Staden returned to Germany and published Wahrhaftige Historia (1557) in Marburg, the first published autobiographical captivity narrative of the New World. In English, the first popular captivity narrative chronicled Captain John Smith's adventures in Virginia and appeared in his General History of Virginia (1624).

Unlike military prisoners in later national wars, most English and German settlers captured by the eastern Woodland tribes were civilians entangled in the wars fought between the European settlers and the neighboring tribes over the land. The tribes had little understanding of the European meaning of restrictive land ownership, and many, upon seeing the process of unlimited European expansion, fought the settlers unsuccessfully. Indeed, the tribes formed alliances, first among themselves, later with the French, and then with the British in order to put a halt to it. Beginning with the war in Virginia in 1622, then in New England with the Puritan-Pequot War in 1637, and ending finally with the Massacre

at Wounded Knee in 1890, there would be continuous series of wars between the native American Indian tribes and the encroaching settlers supported by the army. The captivity experience on both sides was integral to the entire historical epoch, and the amount of research material is nothing short of massive.

The American Revolution

For America's European settlers, international war would take new and somewhat unfamiliar pathways for its prisoners. During and after the American Revolution (1775-1783), the British replaced the French as the public enemies in colonial America. Three major types of captivity narratives result from this experience: soldier narratives of resistance and escape, sailor prison-ship narratives, and narratives (also letters and diaries) of life in British prisons in England. Focusing on physical harshness and political confrontation, the soldier narrative previewed the kind of POW narrative that was to attain acceptance and popularity in nineteenth and twentieth-century America. The first of its kind to appear during and following the Revolution was Ethan Allen's A Narrative of Colonel Ethan Allen's Captivity Containing His Voyages and Travels. Covering the period of his captivity from May 1775 until his release in May 1778, it was the first distinctly American POW narrative of the Revolution to become a best-seller. In 1779, it appeared as a magazine serial then was reprinted as a book in 1780, 1805, 1807, 1814, 1834, 1838, 1845, 1846, 1849, 1852, 1854, and 1930. Imprisoned by the English for three years until his exchange, Allen makes it clear that he was a soldier rather than a simple, unprotected captive. When he resisted his captor's mockery and derision, Allen tested his patriotism more than his religious faith for strength and endurance.

American prisoners captured at sea near North American shores endured a seriously difficult captivity in the British prison ships anchored near the British-controlled coastal cities of America. The British Navy converted former warships no longer capable of any further active service into prison hulks, then towed them to safe spots off shore. Since New York City was a Tory town from the beginning of the war until the end, the Hudson and East Rivers served dutifully as a place for the Whitby, the first prison ship moored at Wallabout Bay (Brooklyn), the Hunter, Good Hope, Scorpion, Prince of Wales, John, Falmouth, Stromboli (a "hospital" ship destroyed by fire) and the infamous "Old" Jersey. [3] Among the prison-hulk accounts that have been preserved, those written by Christopher Hawkins, Andrew Sherburne, Thomas Dring, Thomas Andros, and William Burke became standard fare of the period. One can find Dring, Andros, and Ethan Allen represented in anthologies like Richard Dorson's America Rebels: Narratives of the Patriots (1953). William Burke noted that the guards were forbidden to show any humanity to their charges under pain of severe punishment, and after fourteen months in the Jersey, he damns his captors for neglecting the needs of the distressed, and, in particular, for answering the petitions of the suffering and sick with a foot or the bayonet. [4] Andrew Sherburne's memoir, written and published in 1782, chronicles his life aboard the Jersey and in the hospital ships which he calls "death ships." Other POW narratives discuss the effort made by the British to enlist captured Americans into the British Navy. As in subsequent wars, especially during the Civil War, life in someone else's army or navy seemed to be a reasonable alternative to a high probability of death in captivity.

Civilians captured aboard armed ships received similar treatment to the privateers who sailed them. Such was the case for Philip Freneau, the "poet of the Revolution."

Captured in May, 1780 as a civilian passenger in the armed ship Aurora, Freneau was incarcerated in the prison-ship Scorpion. From his experience, he authored and published the bitter poem, "The British Prison Ship" while the Revolution raged in 1781, and, without a doubt, the poem served as excellent propaganda for the American cause to the end of hostilities.

Sailors in captured American privateers taken on the high seas were regularly incarcerated in English naval prisons: Mill, Forton, Deal Prison in Scotland, and Kinsale Prison in County Cork, Ireland. As a response, Benjamin Franklin maneuvered his political contacts in France and England to negotiate releases or exchanges for Americans in British prison system. William James Morgan's Naval Documents of the Revolution (1986) includes many diplomatic and personal letters to and from Franklin concerning American privateersmen in English jails. One man whose release Franklin continually sought, was the privateer Captain Gustavus Conyngham. Unsuccessful in gaining his release through diplomacy, Conyngham escaped with thirty men from Old Mill Prison in the spring 1779. [5]

The Barbary Wars and the War of 1812

After the Revolution ended, American sailors found themselves in captivity more from acts of piracy than from war. Instead of being in the hands of the British, who treated them as pirates or rebels, American sailors found themselves now in the hands of North African rulers who practiced a long tradition of hostage-taking for ransom. More civilian than military, the corresponding narratives reflected the experiences of merchant seamen taken into captivity off the coast of North Africa during this volatile period, when few naval vessels were available to protect the merchant fleet. There were two ways to become a prisoner in North Africa at the turn of the nineteenth century: capture at sea or shipwreck. The Maria was the first of many American merchant ships taken captive on the high seas by the Barbary powers -- Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Tripoli. In Algiers, the Maria would be accompanied by officers and crews of the Hope from New York, the Minerva from Philadelphia, the President of Philadelphia from Philadelphia, the George from Rhode Island, the Olive Branch from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the schooner Jay of Colchester, the Jane of Haven Hill, and the Polly of Newbury Port.

H. G. Barnby published a diplomatic history of the American-Algerian captivity experience of 1785-1797 in The Prisoners of Algiers (1966), Barnby leaned heavily on Joel Barlow's papers and James Leander Cathcart's memoirs and notes that were transcribed later by his daughter, N. B. Newkirk, and published as The Captives (1899). The adventures of numerous military captives taken in Tripoli and held during this period appear in six volumes of Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers (1942) in which excepts of one captured American naval officer, the USS Philadelphia's surgeon Jonathan Cowdery, appear from his Captives in Tripoli or Dr. Cowdery's Journal (1806). The most recent book on the subject is Paul Baepler, White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives (1999) which treats these stories more as propaganda literature than personal histories.

Early in the War of 1812, the United States House of Representatives commissioned the Report on the Spirit and Manner in Which the War Has Been Waged by the Enemy (1813). Based on letters and sworn affidavits from participants and witnesses of British and Indian atrocities, the Report charged the British with improper treatment of prisoners. [6] On land, the War of 1812 might also be remembered more accurately as a failed attempt to

bring Canada into the American Union. The United States all but gave up its claims on Canada after the American Army suffered two major defeats on the Canadian frontier: Hull's surrender at Detroit and the Battle of Queenston. Winfield Scott, then a very young Lieutenant Colonel in the American regulars, recalled his participation in the battle and his captivity after it as a "Queenston Prisoner" in his personal Memoir (1864), and his biographer, Charles W. Elliot, recorded the captivity in Winfield Scott: The Soldier and the Man (1937).

The most dispassionate British history of American prisoners in England was Francis Abell's Prisoners of War in Britain 1756 to 1815: A Record of Their Lives, Their Romance and Their Sufferings (1914). In America, the work of Professor and retired navy Captain Ira Dye of the University of Virginia cannot go without mention. Cooperating with the British Records Office, he developed two working papers for the HM Dartmoor Staff, "The American Prisoners of War at Dartmoor" and "Deaths of American Prisoners of War at Dartmoor Prison During the War of 1812." His published works on the Dartmoor prisoners include his Introduction to Records Relating to American Prisoners of War 1812-1815 (1980); "American Maritime Prisoners of War 1812-1815" (1987), and "Physical and Social Profiles of American Seafarers, 1812-1815" (1991).

Without a doubt, the most anti-British POW narrative from the period is Charles Andrews, The Prisoners' Memoirs, or Dartmoor Prison (1815). He described Dartmoor in great detail and concentrated on American resistance against the prison warden, Captain Thomas George Shortland, RN. With hatred and contempt for the American agent in London, Reuben Beasley, Andrews made it very clear that the Americans in Dartmoor believed that Beasley neglected POW interests deliberately by ignoring numerous petitions for help, especially after a POW revolt in 1815, months after the war's end, that cost eleven American lives. With fewer anti-British sentiments, Benjamin Waterhouse, M. D. described life in captivity for American sailors imprisoned in England in The Journal of a Young Man Captured by the British (1815). Waterhouse chronicled his adventures as the young privateer surgeon who was captured at sea, kept first in the Halifax prison in Nova Scotia, and later sent to Dartmoor Prison in Devonshire, England. Waterhouse noted the presence of about 300 black prisoners, mostly American privateers. Robin F. A. Fabel's "Self-Help in Dartmoor: Black and White Prisoners in the War of 1812" (1989) tells a similar story in historic rather than narrative terms. First among these prisoners was a man who called himself "King Dick." The "King," whose real name was Richard Crafus, was a seaman on board the American privateer Requin when it was captured on March 6, 1814. He spent some time in the hulks at Chatham before being sent to the dreaded Dartmoor where he spent 249 days. [7] Not only did Crafus hold sway over all the other black prisoners, he acted more like a monarch than a prisoner of war. What remains curious about Waterhouse's description of "King Dick" is the close resemblance it has to James Clavell's fictional American, Sam King, in King Rat (1962). Although the two prisoners, one real and one imaginary, were separated by 150 years and several wars, both men defied rank, used their cunning and natural leadership abilities in combination with basic survival techniques to direct the activities of their peers against their captors.

On April 20, 1815, 263 Americans left Dartmoor; 5,193 prisoners followed a few days later. By December 1815, Dartmoor military prison was empty, and the naval component of the War of 1812 was over, and the United States and Great Britain would not face each other again as enemies. But following those hostilities well into mid-century,

progressive numbers of POW histories and narratives appeared in the popular press: Josiah Cobb's A Greenhorn's First Cruise . . . Together with a Residence of Five Months in Dartmoor (1841); James Fenimore Cooper's Ned Myers; or, A Life Before the Mast (1843), and Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Papers of an Old Dartmoor Prisoner" published in the U. S. Democratic Review (1846) that became the seeds of Yarn of a Yankee Privateer (1926) later. With a strong shift from narrative to melodrama, other stories appeared in popular, more fiction than fact, "thrilling-adventure" anthologies published in the middle of the nineteenth century, which set the literary stage for the bloody civil war on the immediate horizon.

The Mexican War

The American military superiority in successive battles of the Mexican War (1846-1848) created great numbers of Mexican prisoners, so many that about 10,000 were simply released in the field. General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna of Alamo (February 26 - March 6, 1836) fame and the Goliad massacre of 400 volunteer American soldiers shortly thereafter, declared that any captured Texans were guilty of insurrection and would be executed on the spot. The invading Americans of the 1846-48 war, however, when taken prisoner were treated well. One regiment of volunteers, the Louisville Cavalry, became the war's hard-luck unit and suffered enough embarrassing captures for an anonymous prisoner-author to pen Encarnacion Prisoners (1848) after the war. The most significant event of the Mexican War relative to American prisoners was the formation of the renegade Brigade of Saint Patrick. General Santa Anna aimed a significant amount of proselytizing effort against the anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic sentiments rampant in the United States Army at the time. He offered 320 acres of land and Mexican citizenship to all privates deserting, with higher offers for men holding higher rank. General Santa Anna was successful in recruiting two infantry units and one full artillery battery. Most of the readily available materials concerning the Saint Patrick Brigade appeared in issues of the American Star, a newspaper prepared and published in Mexico City from October 1847 to April 1848 by American occupation forces. Written in English and Spanish, issues of the American Star include eyewitness accounts of imprisonment, sentiments of the time, and news of the ceremonial executions of members of the Saint Patrick's Brigade. [8]

The American Civil War

Captivity in the Civil War (1861-1865) reflected rising military technology, uncertain political status, lack of international or national law on the subject of prisoners, neglect, and an escalating hatred for the enemy on both sides. Beginning with the capture of the Confederate ship Savannah at sea, the surrender of the Federal garrison at Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, the First Battle of Bull Run, and other early engagements, the combat of the Civil War placed over 400,000 Union and Confederate of men and some women into military captivity from 1861 to 1865. This number alone accounts for the relatively high volume of military prison narrative accounts. Official reports and testimonies of captivity are readily available in government publications including eight volumes of the The Congressional Globe (1861-1866); the United States War Department's War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (1880-1901), and a House of Representatives' Report on the Treatment of Prisoners of War by the Rebel Authorities During the War of Rebellion (1869), full of first hand Union soldiers' affidavits and testimonies.

According to William Best Hesseltine's Civil War Prisons (1930), popular newspapers were the first print media to exploit military prison memoirs both in the North and the South. Exaggerated, sometimes fictional, accounts of prison life appeared in the prestigious New York Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, New York Tribune, Richmond Dispatch and Inquirer, Atlanta Constitution, Harper's Weekly, National Intelligencer, and innumerable smaller local newspapers. While the war was fought on the battlefields, newspapers used the structure and often the content of the popular "penny dreadfuls" of colonial Indian captivity as models to describe starvation, torture, and cruel treatment. Not to be confused with prison camp newspapers like the Libby Chronicle and others that were written, printed, and read by the prisoners themselves, popular newspapers raised the level of war psychosis, waved the "bloody shirt," and added a new dimension to an already existing, familiar body of popular thriller-literature.

Confederate accounts are fewer in number than those written by repatriated Union soldiers. One example is Decimus et Ultimus Barziza's book, The Adventures of a Prisoner of War and Life and Scenes in Federal Prisons: Johnson's Island, Fort Delaware, and Point Lookout by an Escaped Prisoner of Hood's Texas Brigade published in Houston, Texas, in 1865 before the war ended. Colonel Buehring H. Jones, CSA, a prisoner of war at Johnson's Island, Ohio, published The Sunny Land (1868) as a collection of prison-camp narratives, poetry, and prose shortly after the war ended. Sir Henry Morton Stanley's captivity appeared in his extremely bitter Autobiography (1913). Former Confederate officers and enlisted men also wrote large numbers of short captivity vignettes. Some appeared in the Southern Historical Papers; others appeared in Confederate Veteran, the popular newsletter of the United Confederate Veterans. There was never any lack of bitterness.

Regional archives and historical societies throughout the South hold large numbers of personal diaries and memoirs that show how the defenders of the South returned home to tell their stories for a Southern rather than a national audience. Repeatedly, they insisted that the starvation and medical neglect inflicted on Union POWs in the South was the direct result of the Union's sea blockade, Confederate military reverses in the field, and, most importantly, of General Grant's decision to halt prisoner exchanges in 1864. Southern apologists have consistently disputed charges made by former Union prisoners that Confederate POW policy was retributive or intentionally murderous. To the Confederate prisoners, Yankee jailers were worse than the stereotyped Indians in the popular thrillers. To the prisoners on both sides, the intent was clear: destroy the POW population to deny its future services to its cause.

One scholarly work among many stands out as the most significant study of Civil War captivity, William Best Hesseltine's Civil War Prisons: A Study in Prison Psychology (1930) and more recently, Lonnie R. Speer's Portals to Hell: Military Prisons of the Civil War (1997). Hesseltine argued that a general war psychosis -- the gradual elevation of hate for the enemy -- erupted on both sides mainly from newspapers and the publication of exaggerated prison narratives that resulted in treatment becoming increasingly worse on both sides as the war progressed. Speer givers a general and much needed overview of every pen that was used as a POW facility during that war but refrains from any historical disputes. Hesseltine analyzed briefly a large number of Northern and some Southern narratives in the bibliographic section at the end of this important book. It is safe to say that there is no American war more closely studied and richer in published materials than the

Civil War. For the researcher in the American captivity experience, the mass of Civil War captivity material is simply staggering.

The Federal government tried to exonerate itself from Southern charges of northern inhumanity against its Confederate prisoners. Published in 1864, the United States Sanitary Commission's Narrative of the Privations and Sufferings of United States Officers and Soldiers while Prisoners of War in the Hands of the Rebel Authorities, Being the Report of a Commission of Inquiry Appointed by the United States Sanitary Commission, With an Appendix Containing the Testimony, was lauded by the press as a truthful account of what was really going on in Dixie. Before the war ended, the Confederate government responded to the allegations made by the United States Sanitary Commission, captivity narratives, and newspaper reports. On March 3, 1865, in its "Report of the Joint Committee of the Confederate Congress Appointed to Investigate the Conditions and Treatment of Prisoners of War," the Confederate Congress declared that the north was totally responsible for the sufferings of the prisoners in the south. Statements, testimonies, and correspondence challenging northern accusations of a deliberate southern policy to mistreat Union prisoners were collected and published as "The Treatment of Prisoners During the War Between the States" by the Southern Historical Society in March and April, 1876, just before nationwide centennial celebration. Included in this work are commentaries from the major Confederate actors: Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, Alexander H. Stevens, Robert Ould, S. P. Moore (Confederate Surgeon General), numerous journalists, clergymen, and senior Confederate officers who addressed the POW issue during and after the war.

As William Marvel shows in his fine book, Andersonville: The Last Depot (1994), no prison experiences were more extensively chronicled than those that took place at CSM Camp Sumter -- Andersonville -- Georgia, in the spring and summer of 1864. After the war, the issue of captivity was kept alive by the formation of active veteran's organizations such as the Andersonville Survivors Association and the Grand Army of the Republic. Defiantly, in 1905, the Georgia Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy started a fund to erect a monument to Captain Henry Wirz, CSA, the executed Interior Commandant at Andersonville. On one side of the Wirz monument appears Grant's letter stating that no further exchanges would be made between the United States Army and the Confederacy; on the other side are inscribed the last words of Jefferson Davis on the subject of prisoners: "When time shall have softened passion and prejudice, when Reason shall have stripped the mask from misrepresentation, then Justice, holding evenly her scales, will require much of past censure and praise to change places." [28] Today, the Andersonville Historic Site serves as a national cemetery and the site selected by the American Ex-Prisoners of War Association and the National Park Service for its national POW memorial and museum. No war in the American experience, including World War II, Korea, or Vietnam combined, has generated such lasting passions.

World War I

The United States and Imperial Germany were at war from April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918. The fighting may have lasted a short time, but it was costly in lives. American forces lost more than 100,000 soldiers to disease, combat, and captures. In all, there were 4,120 American prisoners of war during World War I, of whom only 147 died in captivity; 3,973, were repatriated following the 1918 general armistice. Prior to hostilities against Imperial Germany, the American government had been deeply involved with the

military prison problem. From 1914 through 1917 the United States served as the protecting power for Allied prisoners in Germany under the Hague Convention, a role that required representatives of the United States to visit the camps, interview prisoners, and report their findings to the International Red Cross. One visitor, the former Senator Albert J. Beveridge, kept an eye on Allied POW conditions for the International Red Cross, and after his 1915 visit he commented that feeding these prisoners meant providing of enough food to supply the whole German nation for about three days out of a year.

After the fighting started in 1914, some Americans refused to be left out of the war in spite of the American government's official policy of neutrality. Some Americans joined European armies and flying corps; others departed the United States bound for humanitarian service in the Ambulance Corps. In the Hemingway spirit, the lure of adventure for the American poet, e e cummings, was just too overpowering to ignore. Arriving in France with the dangers of war surrounding him, Cummings discovered that service in the Ambulance Corps was a dirty business, and he preferred Parisian night life to trench warfare on the front. Complaining in letters home that his supervisor acted more like a martinet than a civilian humanitarian, that the French acted more like enemies than allies, and that the war in general was useless, Cummings and a colleague were seized by the French military police for seditious behavior and jailed. Fortunately for Cummings, his father contacted President Wilson and begged him to intercede for his son. Released and deported to the United States, Cummings published The Enormous Room (1922) more as a literary work rather than a simple, unadorned POW narrative. Nevertheless, it remains one of the most reflective and ingeniously descriptive examples of prison life during World War I.

Following World War I, escape narratives came into the public eye, especially stories about the war's darlings -- pilots -- who dared to break out of their captivities and plot their way home. Norman Archibald's book, Heaven High, Hell Deep 1917-1918, appeared in 1935, as did an anthology of escape narratives by H. C. Armstrong, Escape, that includes the daring escapade of Harold B. Willis, an American volunteer pilot who flew with the Lafayette Espadrille. Willis' escape partner in Germany was Lieutenant Edouard Isaacs, USN, the only American naval officer captured at sea during World War I. In recognition of his escape, Isaacs was awarded the Medal of Honor; his captivity narrative appeared shortly after the end of the war as Prisoner of the U-90 (1919). James Norman Hall published his escape narrative as part of his personal memoir, My Island Home: An Autobiography (1952). Less common after World War I were the captivity narratives of common soldiers. Henry Berry's collection of oral histories includes only one military prison narrative, Corporal Mike Shallin's captivity story, "The Guest of the Kaiser," in Make the Kaiser Dance (1978). The narratives of these prisoners tell of capture, internment, hunger, escape, and repatriation. Many address the issue of chivalry between soldiers, especially among the fliers, and the daring escapades of committed escapers like Isaacs, Hall, and Willis.

World War II

In all the theaters of warfare during World War II (1939-1945), approximately 130,200 Americans were captured and interned as POWs. Of that number, 14,072 died in captivity, most in Asia; 78,914 were repatriated at the end of the war, and 78,773 remain listed as Missing in Action. To study the POW experience of World War II, one must be prepared to travel a great deal. The most extensive government source for American POW

materials is the Inventory of Records of World War II American Ex-Prisoners of War (1968) and War Department records from the Office of the Adjutant General held at the National Archives and Records Center. Oral history and archival collections, however, have been established not only by each military service but also by POW veteran's organizations and universities as well. Army materials are kept at the Army Historical Center at the Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania; Naval and Marine Corps oral histories can be found both at the Naval and Marine Historical Centers at the Washington Navy Yard and in the oral history collections at the United States Naval Academy. Since many POWs during World War II were flyers, Air Force oral histories, memoirs, and personal papers can be found at Maxwell Air Force Base, the archives at the Air Force Museum at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and in the special collections section of the Air Force Academy's library in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

After World War II, places like Camp O'Donnell, Billibid, Davao Penal Colony, Palawan, Santo Tomˆs, and Cabanatuan in the Philippines, Changi in Singapore, Mukden Prison in Korea, and Karenko prison in Formosa (Taiwan) found their way into the pages of American military and civilian captivity memoirs, adventure fiction, and feature films. Prisoners of war in these places witnessed unspeakable acts of violence against them. Few prison narratives of Pacific captivity were published before war's end; however, after William E. Dyess escaped from Japanese captivity in the Philippines, The Dyess Story (1944), shocked America when the author described the atrocities committed on the Bataan March and in the Davao Penal Colony. Colonel James P. S. Devereux's The Story of Wake Island (1947) and Colonel Gregory Boyington's Baa Baa Black Sheep (1958) chronicled the personal POW experiences of two Marine officers captured at different times in different circumstances. Along with a narrative published by Wake Island's commanding officer, W. S. Cunningham, Wake Island Command (1961), Devereux's narrative was a detailed description of the surrender of the island and an explanation of how well his marines, navy men, and civilians defended themselves against an overwhelming foe.

Boyington's captivity took up the last third of his wartime memoir, Baa Baa Black Sheep (1958). After his shootdown and capture, like so many other American fliers and submariners, Boyington was carried as missing-in-action because the Japanese refused to report his capture to the International Red Cross. The Marine Corps and America in general thought that Boyington was dead. His repatriation surprised the nation so much that his photo appeared in national newspapers and the Movietone newsreels. He received the Medal of Honor, not for any activities during captivity, but for his remarkably aggressive combat activities against the Japanese. Gregory Boyington had no idea at the time that as "Pappy" Boyington he would became a new American popular hero. His memoir served as the basis for the popular, thoroughly fictional television series, Baa Baa Black Sheep, that starred Robert Conrad as the feisty Boyington, and, naturally, Boyington received credit as the "technical advisor." Hollywood certainly has its own unique way to recreate history. Other narratives of captivities in the Pacific Theater are too numerous to mention here, but in the United States and the Commonwealth countries, they continue to find their way into print regularly.

During World War II, sixty-seven U. S. Army and sixteen Navy nurses were taken prisoner in the Pacific Theater. The American nurses captured in 1942 along with their male patients at Corregidor were treated as internees, the legal status of which defined them as "protected persons" and "sanitary personnel" rather than prisoners of war. Their stories were

recorded and told by Elizabeth Norman, herself a nurse, in We Band of Angels: The Untold Story of American Nurses Trapped on Bataan by the Japanese (1999). The Japanese Army imprisoned American civilians -- diplomats, workers and their families, medical personnel, and journalists -- as well as military nurses who found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time in camps like Santo Tomˆs (Saint Thomas University in Manila), Cabanatuan, Baguio, Los Ba–os, and many others until 1945.

In Europe, the services were in a position to protect their nurses a little better than they did in the Pacific. One Army nurse, Reba Z. Whittle, was taken prisoner by the Germans in 1944 when her medical evacuation transport was shot down. She was eventually exchanged and returned to the United States under the "Protected Personnel" provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention. In another incident, this time in Albania, several American nurses were rescued by the British SOE and American OSS working in consort after a long evasion. Agnes Jensen Mangerich, one of the rescued nurses, told that story as Albanian Escape: The True Story of U.S. Army Nurses Behind Enemy Lines (1999). [9]

In Europe, life in military captivity for the "Kriegie" -- short for Kriegsgefangene (POW in German) -- was not as docile, organized, nor hunger-free it was pictured in feature films like Stalag 17 (1953), or its spinoff television series, Hogan's Heroes (1965-1971), or, for that matter, in the movie version of Paul Brickhill's description of the committed British, Canadian, Australian, South African, New Zealand, and Allied escapers in The Great Escape (1950). Although some feature films fantasized Allied POWs as feisty escapers and resisters in World War II, in reality, for most "Kriegies," prison life was dull, boring, and dreary. Death was always very close. "Barbed-Wire Disease" -- giving up hope and preferring death to further incarceration -- was always a possibility and unpredictable. [10] The numbered German military compounds, known as Stalags (Stammlager), Oflags (Offizierslager), and Air Force camps known as Stalag Luft, were generally filthy, poorly supplied holding pens for thousands of Allied POWs unfortunate enough to be captured and fortunate enough to outlast a long and dangerous train ride in a cattle car. However, this is not deny that a powerful resistance and escape ethos existed in those camps. At great personal risk to themselves and their fellow POWs, they listened to the BBC and received clandestine intelligence-gathering directives. They dug tunnels with tools they stole, traded much-needed food and personal items with the guards, sometimes held religious services, put on plays, and above all, attempted to maintain prison organizations. In my view, it was this symbiotic relationship between organization and leadership that saved the day.

To their credit, most German captors, except for the Waffen SS, attempted to meet the minimal provisions of the 1929 Geneva Convention regarding captured soldiers of the other signatories. Sadly, as the Malmedy murders showed during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944, rules were broken, and some American GIs were gathered up and shot upon capture. In the east, Russian POWs received brutal treatment from the Germans, in part because of the hatred between the two, the protracted length of combat, and because the Soviet Union refused to sign or ratify the 1929 Geneva Convention. If one accepts the conclusions reached by Rudiger Overmann in Gunter Bischof's and Stephen Ambrose's, Eisenhower and the German POWs: Facts Against Falsehood (1992), Erich Maschke's Die deutsche Kriegsgefangenshaft des Zweiten Weltkriegs (1975), and Stefar Karner's Im Archipel GUPVI: Kriegsgefangenshaft und Internierung in der Sowjetunion 1941-1956 (1995), German soldiers in Russian hands were treated no better. Nevertheless, in spite of the

atrocious nature of the war in Europe, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) inspected the POW camps periodically until the German military infrastructure crumbled in 1945.

Although some former prisoners say that they had more food than the German civilians in 1945, the vast majority of the American "Kriegies" in Europe were always dangerously hungry and in great peril from the first to the last day of captivity. John A. Victor tells his Kriegie resistance and survival story in Time Out: American Airmen at Stalag Luft I (1951). Arthur Durand's Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story (1988) is as complete and historically satisfying as anything ever published on the subject. Excellent Kriegie narratives include Jerry Sage's Sage (1985), Clayton David's They Helped Me Escape: From Amsterdam to Gibraltar in 1944 (1988), and Joe Consolmagno's collection, Through the Eye of the Needle: 68 First-Person Accounts of Combat, Evasion and Capture by World War II Airmen. One should not get the impression that all Kriegie narratives are salutary. Joseph S. Frelinghuysen's Passages to Freedom: A Story of Capture and Escape (1990) recounts the shock of his capture by a unit of the German Afrika Korps and blames his unit's disintegration on the poor state of training in the American Army in North Africa. Shortly after capture, Frelinghuysen was flown to Italy and interned at the Chieti prison camp. His internment became a horror not because his Italian captors were so terrible, but because his fellow-prisoners acted as disgruntled individuals who denied themselves the opportunity to become a resistance-oriented POW community.

Beginning in the 1980's, a new kind of World War II captivity narrative form began to appear in print, collections of first-person interviews, oral histories in which authors piece together the story of a captivity environment from the recollections of several participants, usually members of the same or a similar captive community. One example is Robert S. La Forte and Ronald E. Marcello's study of Americans in the Burma jungles, Building the Railway: The Ordeal of American POWs in Burma, 1942-1945 (1991). After conducting scores of interviews with ex-prisoners and visiting several conventions of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, Donald Knox published a stunning collection of POW experiences in his Death March: The Survivors of Bataan (1981). Whether the topic concerns capture, torture, executions, the Death March, escapes, Hell Ships, slave labor, or liberation, these scholars allowed their informants to narrate their experiences in a natural way. Readers can easily become exhausted from sharing not only the experiences of one prisoner but by immersing themselves into the lives of an entire POW community.

Lastly, some stories are best told as fiction. Most of us know Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., but he also published Fates Worse Than Death: An Autobiographical Collage of the 1980s (1991). In the narrative, Vonnegut identifies his model for Billy Pilgrim in Slaughterhouse Five as PFC Joe Crone who died in captivity of malaise. Another novelist and former inmate in Stalag Luft III, David Westheimer, published Sitting It Out: A World War II POW Memoir (1992) as a fully detailed history of his shootdown and imprisonment in Italy and Germany. Westheimer says that after internment in the Chieti prison camp, the prisoners were moved by train to Sulmona, and it was precisely that train trip that formed the basis for Von Ryan's Express (1964), his only bestseller.

The Korean War

The Korean War (1950-1953) was not the first international flash point when and where an icy Cold War turned hot, but it was America's first coalition war. In 1950, the

majority of American POWs were shocked when their captors discarded the 1949 Geneva Convention as if it never existed. In the British documentary, The Unknown War (1990), North Korean officers admitted arrogantly that they executed American prisoners when they resisted in any way or refused to beg for their lives. They forced the Americans to walk north to permanent camps in North Korea in all weather conditions, and the relatively few captivity narratives from that period indicate that about 70% of the early POWs (1950) died in transit.

After the Chinese People's Volunteers entered the war, military captivity took a different turn. Instead of being treated simply as POWs, the Americans and other United Nations' prisoners became "students." An ideological war behind the wire caught unsuspecting, free-thinking Americans by surprise. Only five years separated World War II and Korea, but after hostilities ceased and the prisoners were repatriated in 1953, the popular media made it look as if American POWs in Korea were weak, amoral losers who had betrayed the fundamental values of the American dream. New words crept into the popular consciousness: "brainwashing" was invented by the popular press to describe what the captors called "reeducation"; "reactionaries" were those prisoners who adhered to their soldier's oath and to the precepts of the Geneva Convention; "progressives" were those prisoners who began the process of assimilation into the captor's culture. Hard-resisters opposed assimilators and consistently observed with disdain that the line of least resistance happened among their ranks at all. Anything more than forced cooperation was synonymous with collaboration.

Although writers in the popular media called the process of radical political indoctrination "brainwashing," no one's brain was washed at all. Rather, individual POWs were forced under torture, starvation, and very clever forms of intimidation to confess to outrageously false charges of war crimes, the worst being the introduction of germ warfare to the battlefield.

Had Americans "gone soft" in captivity? It looked that way when the foreign presses of the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace published two propaganda books written by, or at least edited by, some of the those men who decided to stay with their captors. Shall Brothers Be (1952) was loaded with claims of favorable treatment made by numerous "progressive" prisoners. Later, in 1955, nearly two years after the Korean armistice and Operation Big Switch, assimilated prisoners edited Thinking Soldiers as a propaganda "peace" text on behalf of the Chinese communists. The Department of Defense responded with POW: The Fight Continues After the Battle. The Report of the Secretary of Defense's Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War (1955) and Communist Interrogation, Indoctrination and Exploitation of Prisoners of War (1956). The real battle, of course, took place at home.

In the popular view, there seemed to be something very wrong with the American prisoners in Korea. Something seemed to distinguish them psychologically from the defenders of Bataan and Corregidor and the "Kriegies" of the German Stalags. Something had to be wrong. The North Koreans were accused of murder; the Chinese communists were accused of brainwashing, and American POWs were accused of mass collaboration. After publishing a series of accusatory articles in New Yorker, Eugene Kinkead's In Every War But One (1959) suggested strongly that American POWs in the Korean War abandoned those traditional military and political values that supported individual and mass resistance. Kinkead was aghast that twenty-one Americans and one Englishman would decide to remain

in communist hands voluntarily after the cessation of hostilities. In Kinkead's view, the idealistic and long-suffering POW communities of the past gave way in North Korea to a synthesis of American creature-comfort materialism, what's-in-it-for-me pragmatism, and to-hell-with-everyone-else-but-me individualism. Looking for a scapegoat, Kinkead blamed not only the prisoners but also the social, economic, and educational system which nurtured them. Journalist Edward Hunter refused to accept Kinkead's analysis and responded with Brainwashing: The Story of the Men Who Defied It (1956). Hunter suggested that the communist Chinese had attempted to utilize Pavlovian stimulus-response principles to reeducate POWs in much the same manner as they politically reeducated resisting members of their own population following the communist seizure of power in China. Hunter argued that the vast majority of American and United Nations POWs resisted the North Koreans even to the death, and that, in most cases, the Chinese communists had failed to reeducate anyone.

More importantly, the former prisoners responded to Kinkead, Hunter, and to the American expatriate renegades in their respective narratives, several of which became reasonably popular in the postwar period. General William F. Dean, the highest ranking American prisoner of war in Korea, told his story first in the Saturday Evening Post and then published it as General Dean's Story (1954). He told his audience how he was separated from his forces and evaded enemy forces for nearly a month. After his capture, General Dean became a prize and received special attention from his captors until his release. The popular General Dean, like General Jonathan M. Wainwright in World War II, received the Medal of Honor. Ward Millar's Valley of the Shadow (1955) and Clay Blair's Beyond Courage (1955) were both laudatory memoirs of committed escapers and evaders. More importantly, both books reinforced the notion that American prisoners did not simply give in, but actively resisted their captors. In the same spirit, Sergeant Lloyd W. Pate narrated his experience of hard-boiled resistance in Reactionary (1956). Walker M. Mahurin's Honest John (1962) told the story of a pilot who was forced to sign a phony germ warfare confession. John W. Thornton's Believed to be Alive (1981), a POW resistance classic which appeared nearly thirty years after his repatriation, related how Thornton, a navy flier, was shot down, and resisted his captors for three years.

Outside the world of narrative, William Lindsay White and Albert D. Biderman began to refute Kinkead's assertion that Americans had "gone soft" in captivity. White published The Captives of Korea (1957), and compared "their treatment of ours and our treatment of theirs." White concluded that, although imperfect from time to time, the United Nations forces treated communist prisoners well within the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention. Albert D. Biderman followed White's lead with March To Calumny: The Story of American POW's in the Korean War (1963). Especially valuable in Biderman's book was the definition of the four types of American and United Nations prisoners in North Korea: the relatively few die-hard resisters or "reactionaries" as the captors called them; the collaborators or "progressives" who cooperated temporarily with their captors; the handful of renegades who decided to cast their lot with the captors, and the vast majority of prisoners, who decided to stay out of the captors' way and "play it cool." By using narrative records, official documents, and cross-references to affidavits from a variety of prisoners, Biderman and White attempt to refute Kinkead's hypothesis that communist reeducation or "brainwashing" was anything more than minimally successful. More importantly, Hunter, Biderman and White corroborate the individual narrative memoir accounts written by the

prisoners themselves and show conclusively that the Americans resisted their captors with the same intensity, if not more, than they had displayed in captivity during previous wars. In the end, however, the Kinkead position seems to have remained the strongest memory in the minds of Americans when they considered what captivity was all about in Korea. Perhaps Richard Condon's popular novel (1959) and John Frankenheimer's popular film, The Manchurian Candidate (1962) might have had something to do with it. With these publications and captivity experiences in mind, we can get a better perspective why the Code of Conduct became the framework for the next POW battlefield, Vietnam.

The Vietnam War

Captivity in Vietnam, like Korea, was political as well as military. After capture, American prisoners were treated as political criminals rather than as soldiers with convention rights as military prisoners in war. Survivors have raised questions about the viability of military discipline in captivity, the validity, if not the legality, of the Code of Conduct (1954), and the uselessness of the 1949 Geneva Convention when one side disregards its provisions. Likewise, they investigate several persistent themes that link them with their forbearers: stoic heroism, hunger and torture, resistance, escape, defiance, and cooperation with the captors. With ethnological and ethnographic precision, the Vietnam War narrators examine functions of the prison community and prison culture much as their predecessors had done before them.

The first American POW taken in North Vietnam was Everett Alvarez, a Navy pilot shot down in 1964 after the Gulf of Tonkin action. He waited sixteen years after his repatriation to publish Chained Eagle (1989). According to Alvarez and the vast majority of other POW narrators, American prisoners in the Vietnam War suffered a very punitive kind of military captivity until Ho Chi Minh's death in 1969, when North Vietnamese policies changed and the torture stopped. Some prisoners languished in solitary confinement for years; a small number became "progressives," or "antiwar" prisoners, either because they considered their captors' political position just, or because the threat, if not the act, of physical torture was too much to endure. As told by many of the POWs themselves in the recent documentary Return With Honor (1998), in Hanoi and the other prison camps in North Vietnam, American prisoners were rigorously tortured for breaking camp regulations, one of which was the uniquely unnatural prohibition against any verbal communication. [11] In 1970, after the unsuccessful American commando raid on the Son Tay camp in western North Vietnam, the Vietnamese closed their outlying camps and placed the Americans into a section of the Hoa Lo Prison the POWs called "Camp Unity." From 1970 until their release and repatriation in 1973, POW activities in Hanoi settled down to the management of boredom and the elimination of hunger. [12]

The first captivity narratives of the Vietnam War were published as point-counterpoint perceptions of the politics of the Vietnam War before the war ended. James N. Rowe's Five Years to Freedom (1971) was a classic military resistance and escape narrative. As a counterpoint to Rowe, George Smith's POW: Two Years with the Vietcong (1971) was as much an antiwar polemic as it was the story of his captivity.

Like World War II, there were women in captivity too. By far, the experiences of Monika Schwinn and her male colleague, Bernhard Diehl, who together wrote We Came to Help (1973 in German, 1976 English), became one of the most gripping civilian captivity narratives of the Vietnam War. Schwinn and Diehl told how five members of the

humanitarian West German Aid Service of Malta volunteered for humanitarian medical duties among the South Vietnamese civilian population. Of the five persons seized, three died miserably from beriberi, malaria, and pneumonia. After years in jungle camps, Diehl and Schwinn were transported to Hanoi and kept in close confinement until their repatriation with the Americans in 1973.

Post-war Vietnam POW narratives began to define and clarify what life was like in North and South Vietnam for American POWs. First to appear were the officer-written, religious resistance narratives: J. N. Helsop's From the Shadows of Death (1973) and Jay Roger Jensen's Six Years in Hell (1974); Ralph Gaither's With God in a POW Camp (1973), Norman A. McDaniel's Yet Another Voice (1975), and Eugene B. McDaniel's Before Honor (1975); and Jeremiah Denton's When Hell Was in Session (1976). As representative captivity narratives with messages of trials by ordeal, faith, and redemption, this category resembles the Puritan and French Jesuit accounts written in the seventeenth century. [13] Others, such as Robinson Risner's The Passing of the Night (1973); Charles Plumb's I'm No Hero (1973); Stephen A. Rowan's They Wouldn't Let Us Die (1973); John Dramesi's Code of Honor (1975); James B. and Sybil Stockdale's In Love and War (1984); George E. Day's Return With Honor (1989); Gerald R. Coffee's Beyond Survival (1990), and Larry Guarino's A POW's 2801 Days in Hanoi (1990), focused more on civil values and military resistance rather than religious faith. Although in some cases these narratives featured strong reflections of religious faith, like Ethan Allen before them, patriotism outdistanced religious faith as an organizing principle.

John M. McGrath's Prisoner of War: Six Years in Hanoi (1975) is unusual in the sense that the commentary is minimal, but his powerful sketches speak for themselves. From memory, they include portraits of the guards, scenes of the prison landscape, how the prisoners communicated with one another, and, most importantly, graphic representations of the torture techniques used against the Americans. Practically no book on the Vietnam POW experience appears without Mike McGrath's memorable drawings, including my own. [14]

Each military service debriefed its own POWs during Operation Homecoming in 1973, but these official documents remain closely guarded and classified. Zalin Grant published Survivors (1975) as the first set of oral histories given by nine prisoners of the Vietnam War, seven enlisted POWs, one warrant officer and one medical doctor. Grant's interviews with his informants reported on the antiwar movement in captivity; more importantly, Grant reported on Robert Garwood, the captured Marine Private, and the only POW tried and convicted in a military court of collaboration with the enemy. [15]

By 1978, former Vietnam prisoners along with their biographers were beginning to reflect on their experiences in terms of philosophy and ethics. Not only were some of these officers telling their audiences what happened to them in captivity, they were beginning to question how captivity challenged and possibly changed their individual and collective sense of being. Malcolm McConnell's Into the Mouth of the Cat: The Story of Lance Sijan, Hero of Vietnam (1985) examined the short captivity, escape attempts, and death of Air Force Captain, Lance Sijan, who received the Medal of Honor posthumously. Scott Blakeley's Prisoner at War: The Survival of Commander Richard A. Stratton (1978) tells the fascinating story of Richard Stratton, a navy pilot who broke in torture and wrote bogus war crimes confessions. Stratton's famous bow and his monotone confession pleased his captors at first, but embarrassed them later when they understood finally how and to what degree he

disgraced them in public. Stratton knew that bowing was foreign to American culture. When he bowed not once but several times at an international press conference in Hanoi, he did so with full intent to destroy the event. The western press noticed immediately that his behavior was distinctly foreign to American culture in general, and asked again if the POWs in Hanoi were being "brainwashed" ? The North Vietnamese were then forced to respond to international scrutiny about their treatment of the Americans they held. As a result of Stratton's bow, what looked like a propaganda victory for the North Vietnamese at first, was really an international resistance event and a vital turning point for the politics that affected the Vietnam War in general and the American POWs in Hanoi until 1973. In Blakeley's contemporary reflection on the philosophy of military captivity, Stratton contended that the individual could withstand only so much torture before being made to confess anything. Resisting a torturer to the best of one's ability was the objective, not resisting to a point of total self-sacrifice at any single instance. Stratton suggested that the Cold War prisoner should attempt to save his mind and body in order to continue the fight over the long haul rather than giving in to one's primal instincts to resist at all costs. Most importantly, Stratton, along with many of his prisoner colleagues, maintained that the greatest good for the greatest number of prisoners in a POW community begins with tolerance of failure, endures through forgiveness of others' weaknesses, limits resistance to what is absolutely necessary, and maintains strong links with the captive community at large. Most other narratives agree, at least in spirit, with this captivity philosophy.

There was no broadly accepted, primary sourced, historical examination of the POW experience in the Vietnam War until Stuart I. Rochester and Frederick Kiley published Honor Bound: American Prisoners of War in Southeast Asia 1961-1973 (1998, 1999). For accuracy, strength, and analysis, this book stands alongside Hesseltine's masterful examination of Civil War prisons. Before Honor Bound, John G. Hubbell's A Definitive History of the American Prisoner of War Experience in Vietnam 1964-1973 (1976) served as the first attempt to create a broad-brushed, comprehensive history of Vietnam captivity. Acting as a counterpoint to Hubbell stands Craig Howes's Voices of the Vietnam POWs (1993). Howes, reminiscent of the bad-war-good-soldier position taken by former Confederates after the Civil War, calls Hubbell's popular history the "official story." This might be true, but it is hard to make the case that former POWs will agree with what was said about them in print. Howes points out that powerful ethical dichotomies divided the Vietnam POWs into camps that more or less followed the divisive social dynamics inside the United States during that war. Based on Robert Laffin's thesis of the totalitarian environment that exists in political prisons, Howes compares Hanoi to North Korea where the captors used forms of judicial torture to gain propaganda points and public admissions of guilt.

I wish to close my discussion of Vietnam captivity by pointing to Elliott Gruner's Prisoners of Culture: Representing the Vietnam P.O.W. (1993). This book examines the Vietnam POW experience from a critical perspective; that is, how it was represented and possibly exploited by American popular media. In his analysis of popular culture's treatment of the captivity experience, Gruner criticizes the film Hanoi Hilton as a severe distortion of the actual experience in Hanoi. What Prisoners of Culture really shows is that perhaps the divisive issues of the Vietnam War, like those of the Civil War long before it, will have lasting appeal for scholars long after both the actors and the witnesses have long faded away. 16

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To examine these works is to examine what it means to be human when captors remove the layers of culture from their prisoners by force. On the surface, some narratives of captivity resemble morality plays; the captives are the heroes, and the captors are the villains. In real captivity, however, from capture to repatriation, ethical, moral, and cultural issues remain far more clouded when superficiality as well as predictability disappear. What remains is a world of luck, chaos, desperation, and determination to live, all told in tightly compressed descriptions of days, weeks, months, and years in a cage.

Are captivity narratives true? Are they honest personal histories of time past, or are they simply statements full of antipathies and vindictive diatribes against former captors? If there has to be some assumption here which sets the tone, it is that most POW narratives are perceptually true, as accurate as one person's memory can be over a long period of time. It may be true that a soldier knows only his own foxhole very well, but knowledge about enough foxholes gives us a pretty good view of the battlefield.

Some narratives were created from diaries; others synthesized an author's personal experience with historical facts and recollections from other POWs in the same camp. Former POWs and internees whom I have met and interviewed claim that in captivity one's memory is heightened. This is not to argue that every word in every narrative account was recorded with video-tape accuracy; narratives consist of memory-dependent, complicated event-scenarios that sequentially contextualize the prisoner's point of view. According to Terrence Des Pres in The Survivor (1976), captivity is a watershed experience in a person's life never to be forgotten, and survivors must bear witness to the truth as they know it from experience, not only for their own sake and other living survivors, or even posterity or the historical record, but for the sake of the dead they left behind.

The representative works cited here, as well as hundreds of others not included, have chronicled individual experiences in the most catastrophic human circumstances imaginable. Each major narrative category is represented: religious redemption, stoic resistance, escape, and assimilation. And each represents a continuing tradition in the broad spectrum of American military literature. To the credit of the authors, this body of work presents the captivity experience in terms of the cultural realities which, for the most part, generated individual and community survival: the physical ability to withstand starvation, torture, and sickness; the psychological ability to forgive oneself for surrender; the courage to ignore the captor's wants or demands; and the ethical and moral ability to maintain an unswerving trust in the institutional relationships of family, home, church, community, and country.

In the end, for wars past and most certainly for the wars to come, there seems to be little doubt that military captivity literature functions as a public forum in which former prisoners ask ethical and moral questions about human relationships and institutions that create national, community, and personal culture. There are few mysteries. Shared by prisoners from the Forest Wars to Vietnam, and beyond to hostage narratives and to the POWs during Desert Storm, each voice from captivity shares not only one experience, it represents the permanent bond of shared adversity. In that sense, although prisoners may be separated by centuries of chronological time and contextually by the issues rising in different historical eras, these men and women, unknown to one another personally, have formed a lasting kinship with one another and with the culture that produced them. Individually and collectively, they have made their experience count.

Notes

1 Frances Roe Kestler, The Indian Captivity Narrative: A Woman's View (New York: Garland, 1990), xxii. Concerning the subjects of ethnological reportage one finds in Indian captivities, see Marius Barbeau, "Indian Captivities," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 94 (1950): 522-48. For a fictionalized version of the Ortiz captivity, see Andrew Lytle's 1941 short story, "Ortiz'a Mass" in At the Moon's Inn (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 122-50. Lytle created "Ortiz's Mass" via the report of the U. S. De Soto Commission, appointed by Franklin D. Roosevelt to research the 1539 De Soto Expedition and commemorate it in 1939.

2 See Ray Allen Billington, The Western Movement in the United States (New York: D Van Nostrand, 1959), 9-35; Richard VanDerBeets, The Indian Captivity Narrative: An American Genre (New York: University Press of America,1984); Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark, Puritans Among The Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption 1676-1724 (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1981); J. Norman Heard, White Into Red: A Study of the Assimilation of White Persons Captured by Indians (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1973); R. W. G. Vail, The Voice of the Old Frontier (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949); Emma Lewis Coleman, New England Captives Carried to Canada (Portland, ME: Southgate, 1925); Richard Slotkin, Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973); Marius Barbeau, "Indian Captivities," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 94 (1950): 522-48. For a large collection of 311 Indian captivity narratives in 111 volumes, see William Washburn, The Garland Library of Narratives of North American Indian Captivities (New York: Garland, 1978).

3 Martyrs to the Revolution in British Prison-Ships in the Wallabout Bay (New York: W.H. Arthur, 1855), 9.

4 Martyrs, 19.

5 See Catherine M. Prelinger, "Benjamin Franklin and the American Prisoners of War in England during the American Revolution," William and Mary Quarterly 32 (1975): 261-94. Prelinger points out that Franklin's efforts to help American prisoners in England were humanitarian as well as diplomatic.

6 United States House, Report on the Spirit and Manner in Which the War Has Been Waged by the Enemy 1813 (New York: Garland, 1978), 3-4.

7 Ira Dye, correspondence with the author, November 17, 1992. The only comprehensive work concerning British prisoners in American hands during this period is Anthony G. Dietz, "The Prisoner of War in the United States During the War of 1812," an unpublished doctoral dissertation written at American University, in 1964.

8 Edward S. Wallace, "Deserters in the Mexican War," Hispanic American Historical Review (August 1935), 376. See also Robrt Ryal Miller, Shamrock and Sword: The St. Patrick's Battalion in the U. S. - Mexican War (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), an excellent history of this unusual combat unit.

9 See LTC Mary E. V. Frank, AN, "The Forgotten POW: Second Lieutenant Reba Z. Whittle, AN, (Unpublished Paper at the Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, 1990). See also Lynn Z. Bloom, "Till Death Do Us Part: Men's and Women's Interpretations of Wartime Internment," Women's Studies International Forum 10 (1987):

75-83. For studies of British and Commonwealth women in captivity during World War II, see Lavinia Warner and John Sandilands, Women Beyond the Wire: A Story of Prisoners of the Japanese 1942-45 (London: Michael Joseph, 1982). For Vivian Bulwinkel's story of Australian nurses in captivity, see Katherine Kenny, Captives (Brisbane, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1987). See also Elizabeth Head Vaughn, Community Under Stress: An Internment Camp Culture (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949), and "Adjustment Problems in a Concentration Camp," Sociology and Social Research 32 (September 1947): 513-18.

10 Studies of "prison fever," include A. L. Vischer, Barbed Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of the Prisoner of War (London: John Bale, Sons & Danielsson, 1919); Walter A. Lunden, "Captivity Psychosis Among Prisoners of War," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology 39 (1949): 721-33; George S. Prugh, "Prisoners at War: The POW Battleground," Dickinson Law Review 60:2 (January 1956): 123-38; Robert J. Ursano, "The Viet Nam Era Prisoner of War: Precaptivity Personality and the Development of Psychiatric Illness," American Journal of Psychiatry 138.3 (March 1981): 315-18; and Amia Lieblich, Seasons of Captivity: The Inner World of POWs (New York: New York University Press, 1993). Lieblich's work examines survival and resistance techniques used by Israeli POWs in Egypt.

11 Silence is not a new concept in close confinement. The French colonial prison system used it regularly in the past; the Japanese government still use silence in their civilian prisons today. It was a new weapon however, in a POW compound.

12 Charles Stenger, "Report," in Tom Williams, Post Traumatic Stress Disorders: A Handbook for Clinicians (Cincinnati: Disabled American Veterans, 1987), 131.

13 Only one narrative was written as an apology for a conversion to religious pacifism, James A. Daley's A Hero's Welcome: The Conscience of Sergeant James Daley Versus the United States Army (1975, Reprint 2000). Daley became a Jehovah's Witness in captivity and for religious reasons joined the "Peace Committee" consisting of the "antiwar" prisoners inside the Hanoi Hilton.

14 Major Theodore W. Gostas published his own book of sketches called Prisoner in 1974. It was privately published and is not generally available.

15 Although some resisting officers attempted to bring charges of collaboration against the "antiwar" prisoners and the "Peace Committee," each service decided against that course of action. See Chris Doyle, "Bobby Garwood: Traitor or Victim?" Soldier of Fortune (September 1979): 72-75; David J. Truby, "Turncoats in Action: The Untold Story of Viet Nam's TIA," Military Journal 12 (June 1980): 24-25, and Monika Jensen-Stevenson and William Stevenson's Kiss the Boys Good Bye (1989) for more extensive treatments of the Garwood controversy.

16 See Joe P. Dunn, "The POW Chronicles: A Bibliographic Review," Armed Forces and Society 9:3 (Spring 1983): 495 and "The Vietnam War POW/MIAs: An Annotated Bibliography," Bulletin of Bibliography 45.2 (June, 1988): 152-58.

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