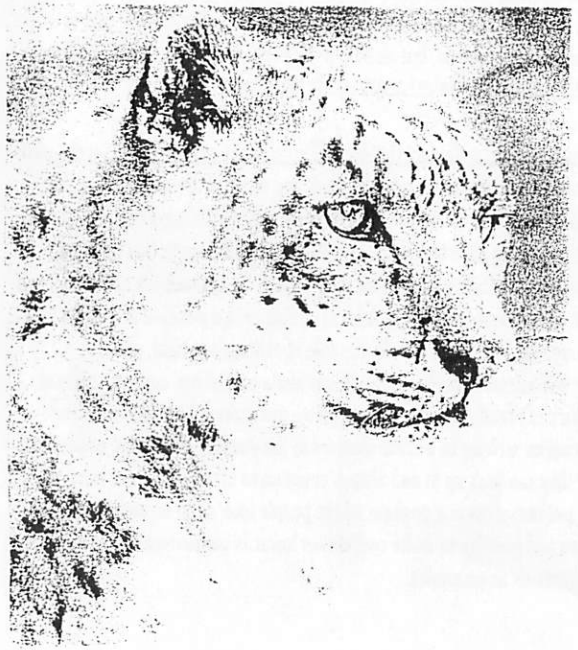
Many of us are familiar with guerrilla culture, as we've studied on this extensively. So we can't forget that when guerrillas are in the midst of a revolutionary struggle to overthrow their oppressors and the powers that be, they not only seek support amongst the people, but they try to win the people over, making it clear that the guerrillas are there to liberate the people. In turn, the people sympathize with the guerrillas and they give them aid along the way, hiding them out, passing comms and messages along for the guerrillas, giving them a place to sleep, food to eat, giving them ammunition, tools, supplies and other resources. There are many important lessons in the example of these guerrillas that we can apply to our own situation, and truth be told, there are indeed people in these gulags who will sympathize with our struggle if we make the right moves, and take the right steps to win them over. I know this for a fact, and can tell you that even former associates from the gang I once belonged to, and from my barrio on the streets respect the hell out of me, they respect the transition I've made into becoming an Anarchist, and they support me to the fullest. They support this guerrilla shit that I'm on now. So that says a lot, and that's the type of support we need. It's not about us, it's about the people, always.

So these are the things that I want my comrades to really think about. I feel that it's on us to help radicalize a portion of the prison population; it's on us to lead those who are still stuck in "RBG mode" into a full transition of becoming the revolutionaries they truly strive to be. It's on us to educate, to agitate, and to be the ones people can come to for help, for upliftment, and for strength. I ask that you, my comrades, really consider all of this, and don't forget the basics of what it means to be a revolutionary: Always be for the people.

= = * * * END * * * = =

- BE AN UNCONQUERABLE SOUL –

(This zine was completed: 9-21-2013)



South Chicago ABC Zine Distro
Box 721, Homewood, IL 60430

AGITATION
EDUCATION

WHILE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY



A ZINE ON SURVIVAL, RESISTANCE, COURAGE AND STRENGTH

* * * *INTRODUCTION* * * *

It is important for comrades of the combatants' collective to study up on all different things, in all different areas. Topics such as psychology, revolution, guerrilla warfare, history, military history, anarchism, and stuff on writing, and becoming a better speaker, stuff on propaganda, on leadership and strategy, and especially any type of knowledge we can apply into our everyday situations while we find ourselves captured behind enemy lines.

Here in the E.S.P. Library there is a book written by Timothy S. Lowry, called: Valor. It's a very good book about bravery in war (Vietnam), and is definitely worth reading for all those who seek to learn about strategy and military history. I have taken the time to copy down chapter 2 in its entirety. "The Unconquerable Soul". This chapter is about a prisoner of war (POW) and his struggle to keep his honor and his sanity while being tortured by his captors and thrown into solitary confinement, because his captors seen him as a leader amongst his comrades, and they feared that, so they had to keep him isolated.

The more they tried to break him, the more he resisted. A very intelligent man, he found ways to get inside of his interrogator's head, instead of letting the interrogator get in his.

I feel it is good to read up on things that have happened in different times and different places, to understand other people's history, while we attempt to create our own. We can draw strength from other people's examples, we can learn from their suffer and their struggles. No matter who it is.

In many ways, the things this POW had to go through are very similar to what we are going through now, here at Ely State Prison. Although we have the right to refuse to speak to interrogators and investigators, etc, - and this is a right that all combatants exert to the fullest, knowing that we will never willingly go talk to investigators, interrogators, etc. – the POW's in Vietnam were not afforded the same rights. Torture was an everyday thing, a physical thing and a psychological thing, and to break or cave in meant *death* to their comrades. These men were warriors, loyalty over life, and death before dishonor were the codes they lived by. They would rather suffer and die than to betray their own comrades. And for that you have to admire and respect them.

This is a very good story, and there are some good lessons in this story to be learned for ourselves, and then taught to others. Not only should you read and re-read this chapter, but you should also check this book out from the library and read it all the way through.

Much strength to all the combatants and all comrades in this struggle. Stay focused, stay strong, and stay dangerous.

Solidarity & Respects

True, you can't be "revolutionary but gangsta", you're either one or the other. The only there's an "in between" in this scenario is when one is in the middle of their transitional phase. We can't forget that were once gangstas too, and some of us were stuck in that "RBG mode" for a short time ourselves. So it takes time for some people to make the full transition from gangsta to guerrilla. It should be on us to help facilitate these potential comrades in making that transition. But we have to understand and accept the fact that there are many gangstas who love their way of life, and they're gonna be gangstas till the day they die. So it's not ideal to try to recruit active gang members into our way of life. Those who want to know about Anarchism and who are looking for a better understanding of our revolutionary theories, we can enlighten them, pass them literature, etc, just to give them that understand. Other than that, those who are ready to make that transition, they'll come to us on their own. We don't have to go after them, especially not if they're already active, like I said.

I have nothing against gangsters. It's not my way of life anymore, but I understand it. Truth be told, gangs have become an existant and relevant factor in every community where you will find poor people of color. It doesn't matter who you are, there isn't a person alive who steps foot into a certain neighborhood and not know which gang operates in that area. In many ways gangs are a part of the counter-culture, and offer the urban youth an alternative to dropping out of the culture of mainstream society. Yes, everybody knows that it's a self-destructive way to live, and there's no bright future in being a gang member, not to mention gangs hurt their own communities, rather than help them. But if only gangs were to organize themselves around revolutionary principles, and start fighting for the people in their communities, then they would become a serious, serious threat to the establishment that holds them and the people in their communities down!

Personally, I'd rather work to see more revolutionary prison movements and radical collectives being built and erected within these gulags, movements that reach for real goals, real changes, and towards the upliftment of the people. And all this will come in due time. For now, we have to face the reality of our current situation. We're not here to impose our standards on anyone else, but we are here, and that's all that matters. The gangsters and criminals don't really understand us yet, they don't know what anarchism is, but it's on us to make a place for ourselves in these unfortunate circumstances we find ourselves in. We have to do this in a way where we will not only be understood and recognized, but also respected. We cannot alienate ourselves, 'cuz alienation only leads to destruction. So the idea of co-existence needs to be considered.

Part of the current reality that we find ourselves in, is the fact that we will sometimes encounter prisoners who are so heavily intoxicated with the saturated mentality of authoritarianism, and some of these people might even be lining themselves up to be "shotcallers." I've noticed that's a position that a lot of people in the gang lifestyle strive for, but my many years in this gulag have taught me that those who do assume that position, most of them have always been about themselves, rather than about their people. Sometimes the shots they call are all behind some petty ass shit, or out of personal frustration. A lot of people in that position are drunk with their own power, and so therefore – in my opinion – aren't really capable of making practical, prudent decisions, as they are only motivated by self-interest. So like I said, this is just a part of our current reality in the environment we find ourselves in. We can't really change others, but we can make it our duty to fill the shoes that others aren't capable of walking in; striving to be real mentors to the younger prisoners, positioning ourselves to be like "big brothers" that they can look up to and always count on to lift them up, not bring them down. It should be our responsibility to put ourselves in a position where people look up to us and respect us, so that we can positively use this position and prestige to make real moves towards improvement and towards the upliftment of all those who truly embrace us as comrades.

To survive the day to day torments that come with this depravity and isolation, we must learn the ways of resiliency. To be resilient means to be able to bounce back after loss or tragedy, to get back up on your feet after getting knocked down. To be resilient means to be able to fight through the depression, the loneliness, and the agony that comes with living in constant darkness, and to keep striving to reach the light. 18

Comrades, we have to be strong in whatever situations we find ourselves in. We cannot allow our minds to be obstructed by deluded thoughts. No one should be able to effectively use any type of psychological warfare on us, whether the attempts are made by our captors, or by other captives, we have to be stronger than that. This requires great mental strength and focus, that will come to all comrades who stay determined to prevail, no matter what. We have to keep our minds strong comrades, 'cuz a weak mind leads you to your own destruction. Do not allow your mind to get clouded in misery, do not allow your mind to get hung up on petty, irrelevant things. Keep your mind sharp, unafraid, unshakable, undismayed, unfazed, undisturbed, and unchanged, and you will become the master of your own destiny!

= FOREVER A COMBATANT =
August 11th, 2013
E.S.P. Nevada



ONE MORE AGAIN:

To be revolutionary means to be for the people. Not for ourselves, not just for our cause, or for other Anarchists, but also for non-anarchists too. In our case, prisoners are the people. We have to build bridges, not burn them. Gangsters have their cause, and we have ours, but just 'cuz we have two different causes doesn't mean that there won't be times that we will need to find common ground, while we find ourselves in the same fucked up situations together, under the same gun, against the same enemy. The basic element of being a revolutionary is to be for the people. Raising consciousness is also a basic element, and an activity necessary to all revolutionaries, because without the people on our side, there can't be a revolution. So don't forget the basics.

NOTES: CHAPTER TWO
FROM THE BOOK: Valor, by Timothy S. Lowry

CHAPTER 2: The Unconquerable Soul

It was cloudy and cool – typical weather for Northern California in the Fall – as the middle-aged educator and his guest strolled across the Stanford University campus. They had just eaten lunch at the faculty lounge where they had discussed history, humanities, philosophy, and yes, the war.

Both had served in Vietnam, but the older man had been there from the beginning to end. He flew to the aid of the U.S.S. *Maddox* after it was attacked by North Vietnamese PT boats. Two days later, when she and the U.S.S. *Turner Joy* were "attacked" by sonar echoes, this aviator again flew to the rescue. These two incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that bestowed unprecedented war powers upon President Lyndon Johnson.

A little over a year later this former Navy pilot was shot down over North Vietnam.

The visitor had many questions to ask this educator, but the approach of a student interrupted the discussion.

"Hi Jim," the young man said to the teacher. "How's it going?"

"Fine, just fine," replied the retired Navy vice admiral. "Busy as usual. How are you doing?"

The young man rolled his eyes and said, "Midterms coming up, and you know how that is."

The teacher knew well the strain of college from his undergraduate days at Annapolis after World War II and his graduate studies at Stanford. "If you have the time and ever need someone to listen," he said, "you know where my office is." The student nodded and rushed off.

"I knew his dad in the Navy," the professor said to the visitor. About the departing student he added, "A real nice young man."

The visitor thought to himself, "Does the student know how you got that limp or how your arm was mangled? Does he know about the torture or the years of solitary confinement? Does he know about the sacrifice you offered for your prison mates?"

Possibly not; college students today – as always – have so many other things on their minds.

"I thank God for the other Americans I was imprisoned with," the former pilot said as they continued across campus. "The respect one develops for others in a POW situation is really indescribable.

"I think it might be best illustrated with a story of something that happened once when I was in solitary and under extremely close surveillance. I was in dire need of a morale boost when two other POW's, Dave Hatcher and Jerry Coffee, sent me a note at great risk to themselves.

"I opened it and found written the complete poem 'Invictus'.

'Out of the night that covers me
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be,
For my unconquerable soul."

JAMES BOND STOCKDALE

RANK: Vice Admiral (Ret.) (then captain) DATE: September 4, 1969
UNIT: U.S. Navy PLACE: Hoa Lo Prison, North Vietnam
BORN: Abingdon, Illinois, December 23, 1923

The war – the air war over North Vietnam, anyway – began August 2, 1964 when American and North Vietnamese naval vessels clashed in the Gulf of Tonkin.

The U.S.S. *Maddox*, according to an intelligence briefing for pilots aboard the aircraft carrier *Ticonderoga* that morning, was moving up the coast of North Vietnam its right to passage international waters. As it steamed about thirty miles off the coast, three North Vietnamese PT boards closed on the American destroyer and fired a couple of torpedoes at the *Maddox*, as well as a couple of bursts of machine gun fire.

When the *Maddox* notified the *Ticonderoga* that she was being shadowed by torpedo boats, four crusaders, led by then-Commander James Bond Stockdale converged on the destroyer about three hundred miles away.

By the time the crusaders soared over the *Maddox*, the North Vietnamese had broken off the attack and were sailing away. The jets attacked the fleeing PT boats and the North Vietnamese had broken off the attack and were sailing away. The jets attacked the fleeing PT boats and the North Vietnamese returned fire. After several strafing runs, Commander Stockdale radioed the *Maddox*. "All boats hit, two still underway to the coast, one dead in the water and burning."

After the attack, the U.S.S. *Turner Joy* joined the *Maddox*, and they patrolled together. Sometime after nine P.M., Tuesday, August 4th, the two ships reported radar contact five miles away.

For the next couple of hours there were confusing radio reports and the destroyers conducted evasive manoeuvers. However, the *Turner Joy* was firing on "targets" the *Maddox* could not track on radar, and the *Maddox* was dodging "torpedoes" the *Turner Joy* could not hear on sonar. Neither ship was able to detect any enemy radio or emissions in the area.

Also, at the end, Jim Stockdale says there's no room for hate, I agree. We don't have to hate our captors, just as long as we never forget that they are our enemies, and we are in an ongoing struggle, a never-ending war.

I don't promote joining a capitalistic army; I'm on the side of those who protested against the Vietnam War, yet I still believe we can learn things from all situations, and we can find strength and example anywhere. That's why I decided to use the example of these POWs in this zine that I have created for you. I hope it inspires you, as it has inspired me.

With Resistance and Courage,
Viva la Revolucion!
The Combatants' Collective



ONE MORE THOUGHT:

Keep the fire of resistance burning comrades, use that fire to ignite the minds of the shackled and caged prisoners around you. Talk to them about struggle, and give them reasons on why you think they should take up the struggle and join us in a meaningful cause. Pass out literature, like this right here, and other zines, because these are our real weapons in this fight! Pass out zines like this and then have discussions about these types of scenarios, write short essays on it; what you agree with about the zine, what you disagree with; how you relate to it; what you think you would do in the same situation; and how you feel the lessons in this zine relate and apply to our situations here in these gulags.

These are consciousness-raising activities, and this is how we get people to identify with struggle, and this is how we bring people together around similar ideas, and maybe even towards similar or common goals. This is one of the activities we've been known to do to train our newly embraced comrades, and this is how we bring a revolutionary education to a portion of the prison population.

We use these zines and these materials to hold classes on the tier, to have study sessions, to instill integrity, strength and knowledge in our comrades and fellow prisoners, as we all keep pushing and striving towards meaningful and realistic goals. We are fighting an uphill battle, no doubt, but that means we are continuously going upwards, not down; we are going forward, not backwards. No matter how hard things get, no matter how great the odds, all we can do is stick to our plan, stay solid and strong through it all, and always keep the fire of resistance burning in our hearts.

I remember what Rabbit said to me as he walked out of what became his last-ever interrogation of me. 'You know', he said, 'I am sick of you. I am going to get off this detail. I can't stand you. You are a very clever actor. For four years, all I've done is provide you a stage on which to perform.' That was a great shot in the arm for me, a high compliment.

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I did see him the last day, the day I got out of prison. He was standing at the gate with a clipboard, and he read each guy's name as we were individually marched through the tent. I thought I recognized his voice as I approached the tent – you couldn't see into the tent until you were first in line.

When I marched in he said, 'James Bond Stockdale', with a half glower, a half sneer as I walked out. And as I walked right past him into freedom, I could sense his eyes scanning my face.

What would I do if I ran into him in a bar in Paris? Probably buy him a beer. There wasn't much room in a prison underground leader's life for hatred. Hatred tends to take command of you just when you have to keep so many other things in mind."

*

== END ==

—xxx—

NOTE FROM COYOTE:

This man did eight years in a POW prison, the first four of those 8 years were filled with hard, hard times, while having to endure solitary confinement, interrogations, and being "put in the ropes" (torture). Who knows what any of us would do in such an extreme situation? It would take a lot of strength to be able to endure such extreme amount of torture and torment. He found strength and solace in his comrades. They needed to communicate with each other in order to keep their morale up and to survive. They would get together and make plans around what they thought were the best strategies for enduring torture, and what info was "okay" to give up – but not until their captors pushed them to their limit. (This wouldn't be acceptable in our current conditions, but in their conditions it almost makes sense). They made their own tap code, even though they risked severe punishment, they weren't afraid. They would test their interrogators, searching for their captors weaknesses and strengths, trying to figure out what their captors limitations were, how far they could go, and they found ways to get inside their head, ways to manipulate the system. The everyday survival of these POWs depended on learning everything about their captors and about their surroundings and immediate environment.

Just like here at Ely State Prison, they kept the leaders isolated from the rest of the prisoners and called them "troublemakers."

You have to respect these courageous POWs and try to learn from their example. I respect them more than I respect most of these prisoners here in the NDOC, who give the enemy info willingly and freely, against other prisoners at that. Most of the time that info is false and straight lies, but it doesn't stop the enemy from trying to find ways to use it against us.

Jim Stockdale had been flying support, diving on the patches of water immediately after they had come under fire by the destroyers, following up by spraying the area with his 20-mm cannon while trying to *find* enemy boats. For an hour and a half he tried in vain to pick up any sign of a PT boat, or even the wake of one in the highly luminescent water that made the destroyers' wakes glow persistently. Finally, desperately low on fuel, he headed back to his aircraft carrier, convinced that whatever enemy somebody thought was heading out toward the destroyers never showed up.

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"When I went to bed about one o'clock on the *Ticonderoga*," Stockdale recalled in his office at the Hoover Institution, "everybody in the pilots' ready room was in a giddy, silly mood, laughing. At eight-thirty we had been getting messages from the destroyers saying they were expecting to be attacked any minute, and we were rushing to our planes like World War III was beginning. But by midnight even the destroyers were saying that there hadn't been any boats out there after all. We had gone through the complete fire drill, changing emotions like a roller-coaster ride, and fell drained, in total relief into our bunks.

"Over on the destroyer *Maddox*, the same thing. After the captain had announced to the crew that they had not been hearing echoes from torpedo boats or their torpedoes but aberrations caused by aiming the sonar aft while running at thirty knots with the rudder full over, a kind of crazy hilarity had set in, and those not on duty also turned into their bunks, totally relieved that it was all over. This was in a book I read by the medical officer on the destroyer.

In the nineteenth century, before instant worldwide radio communications, that would have been the end of the whole matter. After such an exercise in false signals, seamen would have calmed themselves down with about three swigs of a bottle of booze and hit the sack, writing off the chapter as one big screw-up. But in the twentieth century, those who command at sea have lost the authority to write off screw-ups.

The messages of what was initially thought to be happening in the midst of earlier excitement continue to pour into busy headquarters at distant locations. And the eager beavers who make a profession of drawing word pictures for the commander in chief as messages spill in off the wire eventually have trouble finding words to explain that what they had been screaming at him for hours now turns out to be all bunk, and pretty soon the headquarters machine is running away with itself.

In this case, we now know that the headquarters machine started running away with itself very early that evening, even before my planes took off from the carrier. When the messages that set the wheels moving – the ones that resulted in our launching – were read to the President, the House majority leader, Carl Albert was with him in the Oval Office.

Albert remembered the President's reply and later quoted him as follow: "I not only want retaliation, I want to go all the way into the shore establishments that support these PT boats and bomb them out of existence." When you take into account the fact that he gave that order even before the destroyers issued their first alert messages, well over an hour before the first American gun fired a 'shot in the dark' up in the gulf, you can see what I mean.

I think as the day wore on and the further we got into it, messages about what really happened that morning (Washington time) began coming in, and people were reluctant to go down into the lion's den (LBJ's office) and say, "Hey, boss, you know what we've been saying for the last five hours? Well, that's all been bullshit!"

Now who would want to do that? The President probably would have strangled the guy."

A tinderbox situation prevailed in Southeast Asia and there would be war in due course, but for the long pull it seemed important for Jim Stockdale that the entry of the United States be on more solid footing.

"When you go to war, you have got to do it in a way that will wash, because there will be many times when people will try to discredit your entry into the war. If there is any scandal and it is found out, then it's really inhibiting."

Three days later the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed, and American's slippery slide into Vietnam began in earnest.

"The Tonkin Resolution was the engine of the war. It certainly started the air war in the North and is the closest thing we have to a watershed event in that war. I am somewhat impressed by Barbara Tuchman's statement in *March of Folly* when she said that it was no less significant than Fort Sumter or Pearl Harbor."

Thirteen months later, Jim Stockdale was in the midst of his second combat cruise in Vietnam as air group commander of the aircraft carrier *Oriskany*, flying sorties against North Vietnamese installations. Early on he discovered that enemy targets were being selected in Washington based on the belief that by not targeting key military installations peacemaking signals would be conveyed to the North Vietnamese leadership.

Political restraints employed by the United States government in the Vietnam War were one reason it became so frustrating, painful, and tragic for the men and women who fought under the new rules.

This frustration was apparent in September 1965, when a young crusader photo pilot was killed. A week before he was shot down, the pilot had photographed a Russian cargo vessel unloading guns, ammunition, and Soviet surface-to-air missiles at Haiphong. These munitions could not be bombed because of the stipulations imposed by Washington.

"What a way to fight a war!" Stockdale reported later. "Give communist merchantmen free access to Haiphong docks and watch them peaceably wave to you as they pass your flight deck returning south while you hold a memorial service for a pilot killed by the missiles they delivered."

American lives were being lost attacking worthless targets while U.S. warplanes overflew prohibited targets that were crucial to the North Vietnamese war machine.

The day after the photo pilot was killed, possibly by one of the missiles he had photographed, Jim Stockdale was downed by antiaircraft fire while on "milk run" against low-risk targets between Vinh and Thanh Hoa.

Normally, that is not a smart thing to say, and if I had said it as a matter of rationality, he would have thought that something was funny. Therefore it had to appear spontaneous.

When that picture was being taken, I knew then that there would come a time it could be seeded back and perhaps give my captors second thoughts about releasing other photographs of other prisoners of war.

One time Rabbit went off his rocker.

They were not to tell us anything about their personal lives; they were not to tell us their names, whether they were married or anything about themselves.

But Rabbit was a braggart, and during one of these sessions, he started talking about how I thought I was a scholar, yet didn't know anything about Marxism. I had taken a course here at Stanford – Comparative Marxist Thought – and I did know more about it than he did. I know what Lenin said; I read his books.

Sometimes I would tell Rabbit, 'That's bullshit; Lenin didn't say that and you don't understand the dialectic.'

Well, he would get mad at this, and one time he blurted out, 'I am a party member.'

He wasn't supposed to tell me that, but that was his trump card in this particular argument. I replied – not too cleverly – 'Okay, what are the criteria to get in that party?'

He said, 'There are only four: one, you've got to be seventeen years of age; two, you have to be smart enough to understand the theories; three you have to be selfless, you have to give with no compensation; and four – this is the most important – you have to have the innate ability to influence others.

He spelled this out, and that told me something. It told me that party members, to pick other members, probably had practiced eyes that could detect this innate leadership ability. I had come to realize that those prisoners I valued as the best leaders were seen by the Vietnamese as their worst troublemakers. What are troublemakers to one side in such a standoff as these are leaders to the other?

This explained why we all had so many seemingly pointless hours of interrogation by the political officers. They were trying to separate us out in terms of innate leadership/troublemaking qualities. They had to keep our natural leaders in solitary if they wanted to control the population.

I had been interrogated by Rabbit at least two hundred times, thirty to forty minutes at a stretch. That doesn't mean he put the ropes on me that many times; he didn't. I think he put me in the ropes fifteen times. I had a good idea not only of Rabbit's personality, but also of what sort of acts he was capable of and not capable. And, of course, that was the same data he was gathering on me. 'What sort of threat to our regime is this guy?' That is *the* question Communists concentrated on.

They study nature. And they are good at it. To minimize damage to their prison regime, they put the right people in solitary. This became my best American performance indicator: 'Show me a prisoner with over two years in solitary and I'll show you an American leader.'

Initially, Stockdale was worked over all day, including being slapped with a fan belt to the face, but he held out. At the end, though, his tormentor warned that the following day Stockdale would yield the details his interrogator was seeking.

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Stockdale thought about what would happen if he gave up the names the North Vietnamese sought: for his comrades there would be more beatings, more ropes, more deaths.

The imminent interrogation had to be avoided, but how? The year before he had successfully fought off the bat move, but this was different, more extreme. Extreme problems sometimes require extreme solutions.

Again he went on the offensive.

After a roving guard had checked his cell, Jim Stockdale popped out a windowpane and went to work on his wrists with the shattered glass. He slashed, stabbed, punctured the artery. His blood gushed from the self-inflicted wounds, and he waited alone for Death and one final victory.

As he drifted into semi-consciousness, the guards discovered his plot and rushed into his cell. They had arrived in time, and the unconquerable American was saved.

The next day a guard offered Stockdale a cup of tea and asked why he did such a terrible thing.

"I'm tired of being treated like an animal, being followed, questioned, hounded," Stockdale answered. "I'm a prisoner of war and I'm tired of being nagged to death."

He was told that he would be moved, but nothing was said about him being a communicator or about continuing the interrogation. After his wounds had healed, Stockdale was told that the North Vietnamese were investigating the possibility of improving living conditions for the Americans.

The brutality of the previous four years was behind him and he had won.

"Sometimes I could get Rabbit so mad at me, he would start telling me things I knew he wasn't supposed to tell me. I had to do the same thing -- make him believe that I was so angry, that I had lost control and was telling him something I shouldn't. I had to know when he thought I was at that point, so I could say things I wanted to get across.

I remember one time I had been photographed after I had come out of the ropes. When I was talking to Rabbit a couple of years later, I said, 'Do you remember that time about two years ago after you had me in the ropes and you said I pleased you because I gave you all of that propaganda? Well, you get that film out and look at it! See what my right hand is doing? It looked like this!

'Do you know what that means to a Western audience? That means bullshit! Everything I said was bullshit! And that has been spread all over the world! Now, goddamn you, you go back and look at that photograph and think it over!'

The original target was the Thanh Hoa bridge, but because of zero-zero visibility in the bridge area, he ordered the thirty-five airplanes in his formation to split up and proceed in pairs to the secondary targets specified in the contingency briefing aboard the *Oriskany*.

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He broke off and proceeded to his secondary target -- the boxcars on the siding between Vinh and Thanh Hoa. He passed down the middle of the boxcars and dropped his bombs in a neat pattern. As he was pulling up he heard the distinctive *boom-boom-boom* of a 57-mm antiaircraft gun.

As the sounds impacted his Skyhawk, all of his red warning lights went on. The forty-one-year-old commander radioed "Mayday" as he pulled the ejection lever between his legs. His parachute deployed, and as he descended, he heard rifle fire from below. That's when he noticed the bullets cutting into his parachute.

When he landed, Stockdale was set upon by North Vietnamese villagers who pummeled and kicked him until local authorities separated the American from the crowd. It was then that he noticed his left leg had been shattered at the knee. He couldn't lift his left arm, indicating either a broken shoulder or back or both.

Jim Stockdale was crippled and escape for him would be impossible. He would be a POW for the duration. "I thought five years." He chuckled, "That wasn't the only thing I was naïve about going in."

"The North Vietnamese prison where we American pilots were locked up was not a POW camp in the usual sense. It was a political prison.

The conditions under which the American POW's existed [in Vietnam] had changed radically from those in Germany in World War II. It was no longer simply a matter of being shot down, descending in your parachute, going to a reasonably pleasant *Hogan's Heroes* prison camp, and sweating out the end of the war.

At least, it was not that way in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, the American POW did not suddenly find himself on the war's sidelines. Rather, he found himself on one of the major battlefronts -- the propaganda battlefront.

Our enemy in Vietnam hoped to win his war with propaganda. It was his main weapon. Our captors told us they never expected to defeat us on the battlefield, but did believe they could defeat us on the propaganda front.

Unlike the World War POW, who was considered a liability, a drain on the enemy's resources and manpower, the American POW in Vietnam was considered a prime political asset. The enemy believed that sooner or later every one of us could be broken and used as ammunition on the propaganda front. Some of us might take more breaking than others, but all of us could be broken.

Thus, for Americans who became POWs in Vietnam, capture meant not that we had been neutralized, but that a different kind of war had begun -- a war of extortion."

This new type of war began for Stockdale when his North Vietnamese captors took him to a hospital in Hanoi to operate on his injuries, so he could get into some sort of prison routine.

After three operations they tried to get military information from him to test his gratitude. He was given an Air Force map and told to draw in-flight refueling areas.

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The Navy didn't have specific in-flight fueling areas, and he told this to the interrogator, named Eagle by the POWs. That was logical and Stockdale believed that Eagle knew it. Nevertheless, Eagle told Stockdale he had to make a mark on the map to show his good attitude. Eagle had to have something to show his superiors.

Stockdale realized that if he drew even fake marks on the map, his captors would try to blackmail him with it later. They were experts on blackmail and shame. He knew he had to fight back. "It took me a while to get a handle on how the game had to be played. At the time, I felt like a bug on the floor, I felt like a beetle upside down being eaten by ants. At that point it came to me.

I said, 'I've got to get up on my feet and fight. I can't just lie around and be a comatose turtle and not say anything, be an oafish grouch. I've got to get up on my feet and fight! I've got to have at that son of a bitch!'

This was a great boon to my morale. I was crippled and I had to have some outlet."

Stockdale refused the North Vietnamese attempt to elicit information, and the enemy responded with torture. It was simple but effective.

First, they knocked the injured American to a sitting position on the ground and spread-eagled his legs. Then a guard called Little Scruffy held his arms back as another guard, Pigeye, began wrapping rope around his upper arms while they screamed at him for his insolence and ingratitude.

As they shouted, Pigeye put his foot in Stockdale's back as he yanked on the rope, pulling his arms and shoulders together, bending him forward at the waist.

He cried out in pain, and they stuffed a gag in his mouth.

Then Pigeye put his foot on the back of his neck and pressed him forward as he continued yanking on the rope until, finally, his head was touching the ground between his legs. This stopped the circulation to his arms and they began to throb.

His guard removed the gag and told him to keep quiet, but in that position he was having trouble breathing. The pain in his shoulders and arms was incredible, and everything was beginning to close in.

As he thought about the possibility of suffocating, he began to get claustrophobic. He thought he was going to die.

"Do you submit, do you submit!" his tormentors shrieked. Finally, he gasped, "Okay! My God! Yeah, I submit, I submit."

After a couple of minutes more, so that Stockdale wouldn't forget, Pigeye got off his back and began loosening the ropes. "What kind of airplane were you flying?"

However, this was a dangerous tactic, because if Rabbit thought for one minute that I had only been acting, he would have put me in the ropes and had me crying like a baby. I had to make him believe I was beyond my limit."

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Another tool in Stockdale's arsenal was disfigurement. Once he was given a razor and told to shave, but he had already learned that there was no such thing as a free shave. A public display was imminent, and he had to sabotage the enemy's plan.

When the guard left, the cagey American lathered his hair and began shaving a swath down the middle of his head, sort of a reverse Mohawk. His hair was dry and matted. In his hurry to get it out before the guard returned, he dug into his scalp with the razor. When the guard returned, he screamed and took the insolent American to Rabbit. As blood ran down his shoulders, Stockdale quietly assumed a sitting position on the floor and waited for the inevitable.

But Rabbit yelled, "No! You don't deserve the ropes."

The North Vietnamese had planned to use him in a propaganda film before his "haircut." Rabbit was pretty cagey too; he said that the movie will be filmed anyway. Stockdale would wear a hat.

He was locked up again and thought about countering their hat move. Time had also become his enemy. He had to do something immediately. The only thing in the room was a small stool. Not much, but it was all he needed.

He took the stool and began hitting himself in the face. Before they were able to stop him, Stockdale bashed, hammered and pummelled himself until he was not presentable for public display.

Blood flowed down his face when the stool was taken from him. Rabbit looked at him and went to report Stockdale's belligerence to the camp authority. Left alone again, Stockdale went over to a wall and banged his face against it a couple of times for good measure.

Planned irrationality and disfigurement were only two weapons in Stockdale's arsenal that helped keep his enemy off-balance. There was a third; one that frightened his foe and helped end terror in the POW camps.

The POWs in North Vietnam were forbidden to communicate with one another. If caught talking without permission or transmitting notes, the likely result would be a session in the ropes. The North Vietnamese understood Morse code, so the Americans developed a specialized tap code.

This, too, was banned, and the punishment when caught was just as severe. More than one American POW had been killed in the torture room, but basic communication with other Americans was needed to avoid the desperate feeling of being alone.

In September 1969, Jim Stockdale was caught writing to a fellow prisoner. In the note was information that with help of the ropes would reveal the names of other POWs who were also guilty of transmitting communications. Those with whom he had been in direct contact would be uncovered and, in turn, they would be tortured and name others.

erupted, particularly when he was trying to put the make on me for some kind of propaganda stunt, and we would both lose our cool and start calling each other sons of bitches.

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We didn't come to the point of personal expressions of vindictiveness overnight. It came about over months of contact. It was when we both had a measure of each other's strengths. My strength was that I knew that he had deadlines to meet. He had a boss, a commissar, and bureaucratic pressures to produce a stream of intimidated prisoners to meet the commissar's propaganda requirements laid down by his boss.

Rabbit's strength was but ordinarily he didn't have the authority to have them applied unless he had some sort of 'moral' justification, like my breaking a prison rule. So our battleground was framed with these limitations, and over time our tempers tended ever more frequently to explode into shouting matches.

It was for these shouting matches that I saved up disquieting seeds that I wanted to plant in his mind. Once the barriers are dropped and shouting starts, a man acquires a license to say things that he could not get away with in measured conversations. A smart prisoner learns to feign spontaneity.

Sure, he had the ropes and I was going in them again, but it wasn't a stoic Indian versus an oriental ogre. It was two pretty smart guys. Each had assets and each was going after the other.

I always lost, but when we started shouting, I knew I could feign a response. It was like a cheap act, but every so often I would come to the end of my string and would start shouting things at him that I had no business shouting.

In a sense, after prolonged association with extortionists with total power on their side, one learns that his best defence often lies in the field of drama.

My mother was a drama coach and I learned to act from her, and this was very helpful in prison. When I talk about drama, I mean over a period of months to find ways to express sullenness and contempt short of a point that will get you slapped silly every day. You want to avoid that because it will cause you to lose energy. This – theatrics – would come in handy when Rabbit was being pressured to get me to make a public statement or an appearance before a visiting delegation.

He came in one time after I had submitted and said that there was a visiting delegation and I had to talk to it. The questions were prearranged, as were my 'answers'.

I had to do something that he thought was spontaneous, a product of my total loss of control. I had to give him the signal that I was high risk of embarrassment to him, and to his boss, and his boss' boss in public.

So, I came to my feet without being given permission – violating all rules of prisoner conduct – upset the table, and shouted with conviction and a wild expression on my face, 'No, goddammit! I won't do it!'

This caught him completely off guard and he said, 'Now, calm down, Stockdale, calm down'. He had a deadline to meet and this was throwing a monkey wrench in it because he would be held responsible if I acted up before a delegation.

So he told his guards which plane he had been flying.

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"It doesn't sound like much, but they never got anything out of me that they didn't already know, and I don't think I am unusual.

They know you know what type of airplane you are flying, what the target was, what unit you were in. If they want it, they are going to get it.

They don't do it by boxing your ears or hitting you in the jaw, because those kinds of blows do not lend themselves to giving up information. They do it by putting you in the ropes and shutting off your blood circulation, by giving you claustrophobia, and so forth.

If you can come out of one of those torture sessions and make the son of a bitch really give it to you, you go back to your cell feeling exuberant, because it didn't hurt anything.

Sure, you had given the enemy information, but it had taken its toll on him, too, and all for something he already knew.

But if you get yourself into such a state as to believe there is something sacred in revealing only the big four – a total misunderstanding of what the writers of our Code of Conduct had in mind – you might get a guilty conscience and that might start to destroy you from within. And guilt is what kills you.

I can't imagine what would have happened to me if I had only tried to stay with just name, rank, serial number and date of birth over a four-year period and four hundred interrogations.

We had a rule over there that it was best to give ground grudgingly before you lost your mental skills. The last thing you want to do is react to every little challenge as though it were your ultimate test of manhood and goad them into forcing you to spill your guts. You have to retain a credibility of defiance and save something to fight with the next day. This is a very hard thing to coach. Everybody is different.

This is the same problem you have with a green football team. You tell them on the one hand to go out there and die for Dear Old Siwash, yet not lose control of their own destiny. The great majority of them will get the picture. But out of a squad of a hundred, there will be a small percentage that will cave in at the smallest twinge of pain; at the other extreme end of the spectrum, a couple of others will probably make it the test of their manhood and wind up choking on their own vomit. You have to allow for that.

You have to get the feel of the ring, to get bloodied and disarrayed but still have your marbles and hopefully still have the finesse and the cunning to appear to have lost your marbles.

This [being a successful prisoner] is hard to learn, and it takes getting the 'feel' of the thing. You will know when you are getting the hang of it when you begin feeling competitive and are able to manipulate *them* for a change, to plant misleading seeds in their minds.

I was told in survival school that if you tough it out for a couple of weeks, they will leave you alone. That may work in a German prison camp, but Communist jailers are never going to leave you alone. You never want to say, 'That is my last torture.' Figure there is always going to be another one. Get it through your head that it's never too late to become a hero in a prison camp.

In a prison camp, you've got to maintain your ego, you've got to have a belly for a fight.

People ask, 'What do you hang on to? Is it God, is it country?"

It's both, but more than that, it's to have a fixation on personal honor, that 'enigmatic mixture of conscience and egoism.'

There are those who say, 'Well, if you love America and you love God, that's all you need.' There are a lot of people who love America and who love God who are pretty poor prisoners.

In our situation in Hanoi, closeted in tiny cells, alone, or maybe with one other prisoner, the 'thing to hang on to' was the guy next door – to communicate with him, to tap through the wall to him, to level with him, to encourage him. By sowing the seeds of comradeship you become enveloped in a feeling of unified strength and selflessness. Our motto in prison was 'Unity over self.'

When people ask, 'What is it that is going in a prisoner-of-war environment? Is it a concept of this or a concept of that? How do you do it?'

I'll tell you how to do it.

You have to feel good about yourself and for that you've got to make them hurt you. It sounds dumb, but when you're in there, you've got to do a lot of things that sound dumb. There is a limit to what they can do in torture. They can't get anything out of you they don't know you have.

When you are out there in combat on the floor – in the torture room with the interrogator, with the torture guard – you have to be a helluva lot more than a stoic Indian or they will eat you alive.

You have got to be able to know how you can make them stop their torture short of you losing your rational skills and not give them the idea you are playing games with them.

You can scare yourself to death if you think about it abstractly and rationally. Abstractions don't pass the test of combat. Once you've been in the torture room, been cinched up a few times, made them take you down to where you are pulp, you see that there is a limit and you can get used to that.

You can't beat them but you can play games with them.

You also learn when to submit. When they are getting into dangerous territory, you can submit early enough so as not to let them carry it on to where you go over the edge, to the point where you spill the family secrets."

The "family secrets" for Jim Stockdale was his participation in the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, particularly the August 4 aspect where there were apparently no attacking enemy PT boats.

When he was first captured, the North Vietnamese commander showed Stockdale a story in the *Pacific Stars & Stripes* concerning an air raid launched off the *Oriskany* a couple of weeks earlier. Since the North Vietnamese were reading the *Stars & Stripes*, then surely they knew of his involvement in the Tonkin Gulf Incident. Stockdale's involvement was noted in the August 12, 1964 European edition which a friend in Germany had sent him.

If the North Vietnamese government were aware of this, it could create headlines around the world. Stockdale must not yield that information; he had to learn how not to give it up.

"I'm telling you how it is. If they know you know something, they are probably going to get you to say it. That's the nature of the torture system. They might not have gotten it at first, but they would have gotten it.

I was worried sick.

If they could get me to say that it didn't happen and President Johnson's justification for expenditures for the Vietnam War was based on fabrication, it would have caused a lot of trouble.

I just didn't know what to do. I would have done anything, including probably kill myself, to avoid being made a stooge of the enemies of America."

The fear that the North Vietnamese would pounce on him with the Gulf of Tonkin article was always lurking. Surely they had a copy and were just waiting. That in itself was torture: not knowing when the interrogators would spring the trap and ask him about Tonkin. Luck was on Stockdale's side, because they never read the article.

The paragraph about Stockdale had appeared in the European edition of *Stars & Stripes*, but somehow that paragraph – and only that paragraph – had been deleted in the Asian edition. Stockdale didn't discover this until after his release, so every time he faced his interrogators, he waited for the shoe to drop.

While he was never confronted with this shoe, there were others.

There was an interrogator, named Rabbit by the prisoners, who was one-on-one with Stockdale for about three years.

"He was an officer and his job was to get my number.

Well, after a fashion, he got mine, and I got his. It's impossible to spend an hour a day with a guy for years and not get to know what makes him tick. Now don't get the idea we ever met on even terms. I was always seated in the inferior position, on a stool if he was on a chair, on the floor if he indicated that was where he wanted me; he steered the conversation and I volunteered nothing. There was no familiarity. But flashes of anger