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"In Love and War," and "A Vietnam Experience: Ten Years of Reflection"

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"losers." It tries, and I think usually succeeds, to pick the very best from a group of "winners." By the time an officer is a captain or colonel competing for flag rank, he or she has been a leader, made tough management decisions, demonstrated integrity and earned a measure of respect based on those achievements. Those officers were winners in a very tough, but fair competition to reach the rank they hold. It is not surprising that when not selected for stars some of these winners leave the service. It would be a surprise if they stayed. Few senior officers serve past retirement eligibility for the money. Many, especially the winners, stay on in hope that they can rise to even more senior positions and greater challenge. With that hope lessened by a nonselection to flag rank, some, probably most of the winners leave. Therefore, it is not too difficult to find many examples of outstanding officers, leaders in every sense of the word, who have retired. To use these people as evidence that the system does not value or reward leadership makes little sense. First, there is no evidence that the officers selected for flag rank were any less able leaders than those not picked. Second, if the system does not value leadership, how did the individual ever get to be a colonel or captain? In truth an O-6 has been selected for advancement by at least five promotion boards during his or her career. It would appear that the much maligned system does work.

To the authors of *Where Have All the Warriors Gone?* I would answer "Look around, they are still here!" To those warriors I would say "If you can only read one book on leadership, make it the revised and expanded *Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership*." It is the finest handy reference for students, teachers, and practitioners of leadership available today. In its many pages are the data that makes it a little easier to understand why you must: Know your self! Know your stuff! Know your men!

Stockdale, Jim and Sybil. *In Love and War*. New York: Harper & Row, 1984. 472pp. \$18.95

Stockdale, James B. *A Vietnam Experience. Ten Years of Reflection*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1984. 147pp. \$19.95, paper \$9.95

"The important thing is not what

with what they've done to you," said philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre to Fr. Marius Perrin while both were prisoners of war in a German camp in Trier after the fall of France in 1940. What was done to POW Sartre was nothing compared to what "they" did to Navy fighter pilot Jim Stockdale, shot down over North Vietnam in 1965 and held captive in Hanoi with other US fliers for more

than seven years. More than half that time Stockdale was confined in solitary, and under torture in conditions of almost unbelievable deprivation. How Stockdale responded to this ordeal, for which he received the Medal of Honor, he sets down in *In Love and War*, the best and most fully-documented of the long and moving series of prison chronicles published by or about Vietnam POWs since their release in 1973.

Jim Stockdale shares honors in this book with his wife Sybil. She has written alternate chapters describing what she did in response to what was done to her—the sudden tearing away of a beloved husband and father, the tormenting uncertainty about his fate over the years, an anxiety which twice drove her into deep depression, and the long and courageous battle with the Washington bureaucracy which for years wanted to soft-pedal what they knew about the brutal treatment of US prisoners of war by the North Vietnamese.

In Love and War is not just a POW-and-wife book, though it is that in the best sense of the term. Jim Stockdale opens the story with his own eye-and-ear witness account of the Tonkin Gulf incident which led to congressional passage of the now notorious “Tonkin Gulf Resolution,” which gave President Lyndon Johnson executive license to project power into Indochina. For those crucial three days in August 1964, Stockdale, commander of Fighter Squadron 51 operating from the carrier *Ticonderoga* enjoyed “the best

seat in the house” overlooking the confused situation in the sea below. According to Stockdale, a single North Vietnamese torpedo boat managed to put a single bullet hole in the USS *Maddox*. Washington interpreted the muddle of the second night as a deliberate attack on two US destroyers operating in international waters. The action on the night of 4 August, the decisive event in Washington’s mind, was no action at all. There were no hostile PT boats in the sea below Stockdale’s F-8, only a roiling, confused shoot-out at imaginary targets. As the truth dawned on those in the destroyers, according to Stockdale, their corrective messages to Washington were ignored. Rather, their earlier, and erroneous reports that they were again under PT boat attack, were used to justify a major escalation of military force against North Vietnam. Stockdale himself was part of the force that bombed the tank farm at Vinh on 5 August.

Stockdale draws the moral: before we respond in force to the next major military crisis our nation encounters, we should be a bit surer of our ethical grounds for deep commitment than Washington was in those fateful days following which, in Stockdale’s words, “a generation of young Americans would get left holding the bag.” Of course, it can be argued that the Tonkin Gulf incident simply dotted the “i” (some dot!) of a US commitment to Indochina that ran back as far as the Truman administration.

A year later, on 9 September 1965,

Stockdale, flying from the carrier *Oriskany* was shot down over North Vietnam; his target had been a string of box cars. He survived and was captured. After they beat him up, the North Vietnamese locked him into a Hanoi prison cell with a broken leg and other injuries, shackled in iron that cut to the bone. By his resistance to interrogation he was quickly tabbed by his captors as incorrigible, and suffered brutal consequences. Despite his injuries, Stockdale, as senior ranking officer, organized his fellow "war criminals" into a tightly knit band of disciplined resisters whose motto, endlessly repeated by prison tap code on the walls, sounded "Unity over Self." No claim is made about *never* breaking. Given certain extremes of physical pressure, Stockdale learned that everyone, including himself, breaks. The important thing is to make them do it all over again the next day. They don't like that!

Medieval alchemists of the superior sort insisted that their art did not aim at vulgar metal changing, that the sealed-off crystal retort, heated by dangerous, even infernal flame, was the symbol of their hermetic endeavor to affect the moral and spiritual transformation of the confined material, outwardly ordinary perhaps but with a little something extra in it to start with. The extravagant metaphor fits the Stockdales' experience surprisingly well. Not that Jim was an ordinary person to begin with, despite his image of himself as a regular golf-playing, martini-drinking, right-stuff Navy fighter pilot. The chapters of *In*

Love and War that tell of his early years make clear that he was a born fighter whose high-tech plane would fit him like Roland's warhorse. But he did undergo a near-magical change in the Hanoi pressure cooker. Wounded, sick, depressed, stripped of all the sophisticated weaponry that an advanced industrial nation equipped him with, having only his will to rely on, he found in himself a fire of moral leadership that inspired and held together those who were confined with him: Denton, Rutledge, Mulligan, and other brave men who tapped "God bless you, Jim Stockdale" on the walls of their cells.

The theme of transformation under pressure is in some ways more remarkable in Sybil's case. She appears in her early biographical chapters as a standard well brought up young woman—good Connecticut family, Mount Holyoke, Congregational Church and the rest of what a proper New England background provided. But this white-gloved maiden, dreaming romantically of love and marriage with her handsome Naval Academy prince turns into a tigress capable not only of cuffing all the wives of US POWs into a national organization to press for awareness of the plight of the captives, but of taking on as well the whole bureaucracy of the Navy, the departments of State and Defense, the Governor of California (Ronald Reagan) and the President of the United States (Richard Nixon)—not to speak of Henry Kissinger and the whole North Vietnamese "Peace" team in Paris.

Sybil and Jim Stockdale were

reunited, together with their four sons in February 1973 after a separation of seven and a half years. The photograph of their meeting at the Miramar Naval Air Station, San Diego, chosen for the dustjacket front of the book tells that story better than words. Sybil remembers that when Jim got off the plane he was escorted to a microphone where, she says, his remarks included reference to "his beloved Greek philosophers."

That raises a puzzling question. Why did not Jim himself refer to the role philosophy played in support of his ordeal? His 1978 *Atlantic* essay "The World of Epictetus," now required reading at the Naval Academy, the Naval War College (of which Jim was president from 1977 to 1979) and other institutions of higher learning, military and nonmilitary alike, gives explicit credit to Epictetus's *Enchiridion* and the Stoic philosophy generally for helping him understand and evaluate his predicament in prison, to reinforce his conviction that a man can be stripped of everything but his will. "Lameness is an impediment to the body, but not to the will," Jim remembered the old philosopher saying as he looked at his own (Stockdale's) leg, permanently crippled: "If I can get the things I need with the preservation of my honor and fidelity and self-respect, show me the way and I will get them. But if you require me to lose my own proper good, that you may gain what is not good, consider how unreasonable and foolish you are."

But of this, Stockdale, the friend of philosophy, writes nothing in his

chapters of *In Love and War*. Perhaps his editors said to him, "Let's stick to the action. Cut the philosophy. You can put all that in your next book." The next book is already available. Though it is a backward glance over well-traveled roads, the small soft-cover volume makes a welcome addition to the Stockdale bibliography. Titled *A Vietnam Experience*, published by the Hoover Institution at Stanford University where Jim Stockdale is Senior Research Fellow, the book is a collection of Stockdale's articles and speeches dating from 1973 on. Here one can find "The World of Epictetus" and several "Taking Stock" pieces the admiral wrote for *The Naval War College Review* during his tenure as president, as well as a useful and well-ordered miscellany of occasional lectures, articles, and occasional speeches which Stockdale fans will be pleased to have conveniently bound in one set of covers.

Stockdale is a man with a message. Since his release from captivity he has been working hard to get that message across. It is a message about courage, endurance, patriotism, integrity—an attack on guilt-makers and extortionists wherever found and in whatever guise. The message has not yet been completely expressed. Stockdale's long writing and speaking career subsequent to his imprisonment represents a struggle to get that message clearly formulated. Word has it that he is now working on a follow-on book about leadership. Odds are that here the message will be the words of the prisoner released

from Plato's Cave. Until then Stockdale holds us cheerfully with the lines from Louis MacNeice he quotes:

Good-bye now, Plato and
Hegel,

The shop is closing down;
They don't want any philoso-
pher-kings in England

There ain't no universals in
this man's town.

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Ahern, Donald and Shenk, Robert. *Literature in the Education of the Military Professional*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: US Air Force Academy, 1982.

This collection of essays is written by officers and civilians who have taught English at the Air Force Academy. It is a catalog of arguments for including the study of literature as an *essential*, rather than a "nice to have" ingredient of military professional education. The polemic is derived from the authors' perception that the present system of professional education rests on an overly narrow foundation and is therefore in danger of producing automaton-technicians who will eventually rise to become unimaginative bureaucrats. The prescription proposed to set this right is a redesign of curriculum to include more of the humanities.

It is forcefully suggested that as modern warriors are exposed to belles-lettres, ranging from Homer and Herodotus to Melville and Mark Twain, they will be better equipped to understand their own humanity,

deal with decisions as the determination of ends rather than mere means, achieve self-confidence, exercise their emotional, intellectual and moral facilities, discern the true nature of combat, develop imagination and insight, apply moral values in stressful situations, experience several lifetimes (rather than just one), unite science with the human condition, understand the value of that which they defend and that which they may be called upon to destroy, and last but not least, be creative.

The strength of this treatise is its practical usefulness as a litany of logic to those who must defend the teaching of literature to prospective or practicing professionals (military and otherwise) or who wish to expand the domain of English Departments in those particular halls of academe that are not friendly to the conception of humane letters as arrows in the quivers of "real world actors." Enlightened Provosts, Chancellors and Presidents of professionally oriented institutions will also find this to be a handy reference as they attempt to generate a philosophy that can stem the omnipresent tide of a post-Sputnik current of misguided pragmatism and anti-intellectualism. Such defenders of the "faith" will find solace in the echo of frustration that pervades these essays, an echo that is captured by the concluding sentence of one contributor. "If literature can really do all of this, why do you teach only one semester of it at the Academy?"

The weakness of this collection is that it is severely limited in its grasp