

VICE ADMIRAL JAMES B. STOCKDALE, USN, (RETIRED)



Vice Admiral Stockdale served on active duty in the regular Navy for 37 years, most of those years as a fighter pilot aboard aircraft carriers. Shot down on his third combat tour over North Vietnam, he was the senior naval prisoner of war in Hanoi for seven-and-a-half years. He was tortured 15 times, in solitary confinement for over four years and in leg irons for two.

When physical disability from combat wounds brought about Stockdale's military retirement, he had the distinction of being the only three-star officer in the history of the U.S. Navy to wear both aviator wings and the Medal of Honor. Included in his 26 other combat decorations are two Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Distinguished Service Medals, four Silver Star medals, and two Purple Hearts.

As a civilian, Stockdale was a college president (including a year as president of The Citadel), a college teacher (a lecturer in the philosophy department at Stanford University), and a Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford for 15 years. His writings all converge on the central theme of how man can rise in dignity to prevail in the face of adversity.

Besides numerous articles, he co-authored the book *In Love and War* with his wife Sybil (Harper and Row, 1984). The book is now in its second revised and updated edition (Naval Institute Press, 1990). NBC produced a dramatized version of this book, which appeared in 1987, starring James Woods and Jane Alexander. Admiral Stockdale also wrote two books of essays: *A Vietnam Experience: Ten Years of Reflection* (Hoover Press, 1984) and *Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot* (Hoover Press, 1995). Both books won the Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge's George Washington Honor Medal for books.

Upon his retirement from the Navy in 1979, the Secretary of the Navy established the Vice Admiral James Stockdale Award for Inspirational Leadership, which is presented annually to two commanding officers, one in the Atlantic Fleet and one in the Pacific Fleet. In 1989, Monmouth College in his native state of Illinois, from which he entered the Naval Academy, named its student union "Stockdale Center." The following year, he was made a 1990 Laureate of the Abraham Lincoln Academy in Illinois in ceremonies at the University of Chicago. He was an Honorary Fellow in the Society of Experimental Test Pilots. In 1993, he was inducted into the Carrier Aviation Hall of Fame, and in 1995, he was enshrined in the U.S. Naval Aviation Hall of Honor at the National Museum of Aviation in Pensacola, Florida. He was awarded 11 honorary degrees. In 2001, he received a Distinguished Graduate Award from the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association.

Vice Admiral Stockdale died on July 5, 2005, the day after the 229th birthday of the nation he loved so dearly and served so nobly.

MORAL COURAGE: AN EVENING IN HONOR OF VICE ADMIRAL JAMES B. STOCKDALE

Welcome from Vice Admiral John R. Ryan, Superintendent, US
Naval Academy

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Introduction by Dr. Albert C. Pierce, Director, Center for the
Study of Professional Military Ethics

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Videotape Presentation

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Remarks by Captain Jack Fellowes, USN, Retired

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Remarks by Rear Admiral Robert H. Shumaker, USN, Retired

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A Conversation with Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale,
USN, Retired

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Presentation by Midshipman 1st Class William H. Wiley, USN,
Brigade Commander

This is an edited, abridged version of the original lecture transcript.

WELCOME

Admiral Ryan

Welcome to a very special night here at the Naval Academy. Tonight, each of us will have the opportunity to honor and reflect on the service, work, thoughts, and words of a distinguished naval officer and a great American: Vice Admiral James Stockdale.

Admiral Stockdale is a 1947 graduate of this institution, who served for 37 years on active duty. Most of those years were as a carrier-based fighter pilot. Ten of those years were associated with the conflict in Southeast Asia. Admiral Stockdale was shot down over North Vietnam in 1965. He spent the ensuing seven-and-a-half years as a prisoner of war, the senior Naval service POW. For his heroic actions during that time, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

After his return from Southeast Asia and his promotion to admiral, he served as the president of our Naval War College in Newport. During that time, he instituted a course on ethics, a course that we modeled our course after at the Naval Academy.

After Admiral Stockdale retired from active duty as a result of his wounds from Vietnam, he became an educator and a scholar, and we're all as rich for that service as we were for his heroic service in uniform.

All of his four sons are now in the education business. That's also a wonderful legacy, Admiral.

Tonight we get to honor this very special man and reflect on his thoughts, words, and service. I'll now introduce Dr. Pierce, who will explain the format for the evening.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Pierce

Thank you, Admiral Ryan. It's indeed a privilege and a pleasure for the Center for the Study of Professional Military Ethics to have as the second in our lecture series Vice Admiral Stockdale. We're going to do something a little bit untraditional this evening, and I will walk you through the sequence of events. We'll begin with a videotape documentary that does a marvelous job of setting the context for the time and the place in which this man and his brother POWs served with such distinction.

After the videotape, I will introduce in sequence two of his brother POWs, who will offer some reflections on the theme for this evening, which is "Moral Courage: An Evening in Honor of Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale." After they have had a chance to offer their reflections, Admiral Stockdale and I will have a conversation, and we will draw upon some of the issues that are important to him.

VIDEOTAPE PRESENTATION

Narrator

Hanoi, 1966. We knew them as American prisoners of war, but to the North Vietnamese, they were war criminals. Many were tortured, and some died there of malnutrition. But few were treated more harshly than this man. Admiral James Bond Stockdale was a POW in Hanoi for seven-and-a-half years. Some say he was the most tortured American in captivity. He spent over four years in an isolated cell in leg irons, where his captors twisted and broke his already broken leg.

Years later, Admiral Stockdale would receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for conspicuous gallantry while in a prison camp. At the cost of great personal agony, Stockdale created a dangerous prison underground and established a code of conduct among fellow POWs that frustrated the North Vietnamese. His goal: survival with dignity.

Admiral Stockdale

From the time I pulled that handle and was in that parachute, I was committed to several things, and coming home alive was one of them.

Narrator

Stockdale was an only child with limited physical aptitude, but he learned to make up for his small size with sheer force of will.

Admiral Stockdale

I said, "I am not going to be a sissy, and I am going to make the football team."

Narrator

At the urging of his father, Stockdale entered the Naval Academy at Annapolis, the Class of 1947, where he would once again have to prove himself. One of his classmates was the future President Jimmy Carter. The yearbook noted that James Earl Carter rarely studied but was still at the top of his class. Of Stockdale, it said that he worked hard and played hard, adding it would be a lucky man to find himself on the China station with Stock.

Admiral Stockdale

In my mind, I was the world's best fighter pilot. I was a man of modern technology. I really loved my work. I'll in all honesty say that I preferred to be out there flying combat to anything else.

Narrator

The Gulf of Tonkin, 1964. Stockdale is assigned as Crusader squadron commander on the USS *Ticonderoga*. Tensions with the North Vietnamese are at an all-time high. Reports reach the *Ticonderoga* that North Vietnamese PT boats had attacked a nearby American destroyer. Stockdale's Crusader squadron goes into action. After news of a second PT boat attack, President Johnson orders American planes to bomb bases in North Vietnam. Now there is no turning back.

President Johnson

But let no one doubt for a moment that we have the resources, and we have the will to follow this course as long as it may take.

Narrator

Reporters interviewed the leader of that first retaliatory air strike: James Bond Stockdale.

Stockdale after the air strike

I was particularly impressed with the way the coordination was worked out. I was able to see the planes as we approached the targets, and the attack, from a professional aviator's viewpoint, could hardly be improved upon.

Narrator

Within six months, America would embark on a bombing strategy of unprecedented magnitude. At its height, Operation Rolling Thunder would involve over 12,000 missions per month, with pilots often flying through intense anti-aircraft fire.

Stockdale's next assignment was to the USS *Oriskany*, a key carrier in the Rolling Thunder plan. By now, he had more flying time in the supersonic F-8 than any man in the world. Stockdale earned the respect of his men by refusing to sit behind a desk when his required number of missions had been met.

Captain Jenkins

He flew the attack aircraft with us. He was not one to sit back and let somebody else carry the load. He did his share and then some.

Narrator

Captain Harry Jenkins served under Stockdale on the *Oriskany*. He would later share a cell with him in a Hanoi prison camp.

Captain Jenkins

He seemed to have an insight into things that other people didn't have. For example, on our way to Vietnam, he got all the pilots together, and he went over the Code of Conduct with us and made it very plain that, if any of us were shot down, the Code of Conduct would apply.

Narrator

September 9th, 1965. Stockdale, a little tired, makes final preparations for what was to be an important bombing raid over North Vietnam. In less than two hours, his plane would be shot down. He was 41 years old and would spend the rest of his forties in tiny prison cells, wearing leg irons and enduring the infamous torture rooms of the Hanoi Hilton prison camp.

This is *Hoa Lo* Prison, Vietnamese for "fiery furnace," later nicknamed the "Hanoi Hilton" by the POWs. James Bond Stockdale spent nearly eight years in leg irons here. More than four years of that time would be in isolation.

Admiral Stockdale

It became obvious after a while of living alone that if you didn't want to become an animal, you had to organize your life in some way. Now this may seem like a strange thing in a little bit of a box in a pair of leg irons, to organize one's life, but I learned to do pushups in leg irons. I did exercises, and of course, I had a ritualistic period in the day when I prayed, and that became kind of an obligation.

Narrator

While Stockdale learned to cope with life in prison, his fellow pilots from the *Oriskany* continued Operation Rolling Thunder.

Harry Jenkins was flying two missions a day until November 13th, 1965, the day his plane was shot down. He too was brought to *Hoa Lo* Prison, where he experienced the same system of torture that awaited all new arrivals.

Captain Jenkins

Well, they tied me up in such a way that my limbs, my arms lost all the blood. My hands were dark, had turned dark. The fingers wouldn't move when I moved them. My legs were in irons, weighted to cut my ankles like a pair of scissors, and they just left you to hurt.

Narrator

After four days of brutality, Jenkins finally broke down and gave his captors information about his missions. Only then was he transferred to the main cellblock. Racked with guilt over being broken, he discovered that Stockdale was in the next cell.

Captain Jenkins

He was the first person who was able to contact me after I was thrown in with the group or in a different cellblock, and when I told him that I'd been broken, his words were: "Welcome to the club." That told me so much, that I wasn't alone, and I wasn't going to be shut out, and that he understood.

Narrator

It was extremely dangerous for prisoners to actually speak to one another. Instead, Stockdale taught them a tap code that dated back to the Civil War. He used this code to issue orders and direct the actions of the prisoners.

Admiral Stockdale

You throw out the letter K, and you've got a 25-letter alphabet. If I put a C where the K should be, the guy is going to be able to figure out what I got.

He demonstrates how the code works, tapping out the numbers.

A is one-one, and I know that four-three is S. To get practical about it, we had to have a call up. We soon learned that the best

way to call up an American was to give him a very traditional American signal, which is “shave and a haircut.” What do you do when you hear that? You rush to the wall and tap “two bits.”

If I were going to talk to the guy at the other end of the building, I could probably raise him by a big thump of the heel of my hand, and if he was alert, and it was during a quiet period, I would hear back. If, on the other hand, I had access to the peephole, I could see the shadow under the door. I knew where the guard was, and I wanted to talk surreptitiously and rapidly to the man next door, I might have the convention of using a cup even for that, because we could tap, and then I would get it back. You know what I just sent him? Hi is H-I, and then he would reply, and then I would say R, the letter R, U OK?

Captain Jenkins

We would communicate sometimes just for the sake of communicating. When a new guy would come in, we'd get his name and what was going on in the war. We had people who ran out of things, so they'd tell us what TV shows were in color, what was no longer on. They'd tell us about movies that we'd missed. Just the ability to communicate was a very, very important thing, and I think without that, they'd really have been successful in isolating us from each other. Many of us would have not survived.

Narrator

Harry Jenkins almost didn't survive. He was dying of malnutrition when Stockdale and other fellow prisoners went to his aid.

Captain Jenkins

I had a very severe stomachache, and there was no position I could sit in that would ease that pain. I asked the guards for morphine, and they would give you nothing. I finally was hurting so badly that I asked them to just shoot me. In the middle of the night, I wanted some relief, and I hollered for the guard. No one came, so 11 of us in this camp created quite a stir. Everybody was hollering, and the admiral took the brunt of this. He was accused of orchestrating this thing, and they removed him from the camp and gave him some pretty harsh treatment.

Narrator

As senior ranking officer of some 300 American prisoners at the Hanoi Hilton, Stockdale bore the heaviest burden of torture. In one session, his already broken leg was twisted and rebroken by his captors.

Today, almost 20 years later, Admiral Stockdale is retired from the Navy, but he remembers the details of his torture sessions as if they happened yesterday.

Admiral Stockdale

Their response is to come in, lock you in leg irons. These have a long bar; they're heavy. Then, amid lots of clamor from a crowd that gathers and some slaps to the face, two torture guards will normally emerge, specially trained men. They cinch your arms together with a manila rope. Then one of them climbs on your back, forcing you flat, into a V-shape. He stands on your back and then gets more leverage as he pulls your shoulders together to the point where you think your shoulders are going to touch. All the time, you're conscious of the fact that you have numb arms, which if you've done this before, memory tells you that you will not be able to tie your pajama pants for weeks or months, depending upon the amount of minutes these limbs are drained of blood. Then he adds the fillip by taking his heel and pushing your head down between your feet, totally jackknifed. You start panicking, choking, maybe vomiting because of claustrophobia. At some point, with claustrophobia, blood circulation stoppage, and arms distended into unnatural, painful configurations, there comes a time when you submit.

Narrator

These are North Vietnamese propaganda films. Many prisoners were forced, through torture, to appear in them.

Prisoner

The people who rescued—who captured me—treated me fairly.

Prisoner

Carolyn, I love you. They're treating me well. Merry Christmas. Dick.

Narrator

You won't see Stockdale in these films, because he bloodied his face each time they were to be taken.

Prisoner

I'm Lieutenant Colonel Lewis. My serial number is 572, and I'm receiving excellent medical help.

Narrator

While he didn't ask the same of his men, he did insist that all prisoners go through a period of resistance before giving in to the demands of their captors, and that usually meant torture.

Captain Jenkins

This was a method of command in which he wasn't setting goals that people could not reach. He understood that all people aren't equal. Some are stronger than others, and he took that into account.

Admiral Stockdale

Make them work for it. That is the slogan. Make them hurt you. Never leave that room in that torture situation unless you can say to yourself, "I made them earn their pay."

Mrs. Stockdale

Almost 900 wives and families of the missing and captured American servicemen came to Washington to attend a tribute that was spearheaded by Senator Dole. It was a tribute to prisoners of war and missing in action in Southeast Asia.

Narrator

Sybil Stockdale did not know if her husband was alive or dead for over eight months after he was reported missing. As her husband became the leader of the men in prison, she became the leader of the POW wives, spearheading a campaign for the release of the captured men.

Mrs. Stockdale

The first Christmas Eve was really a very, very, very bad time for me. After I got all the Christmas presents under the tree, I

reminded myself that no matter whether Jim was here or not—whatever memories were made were the memories that the boys were going to have of Christmases in the future. I gave myself a talking to and said, “You must treat this like a business, that you’re in the business of making memories for little boys, and we’re going to do this as well as we possibly can.” That helped a lot.

Narrator

On rare occasions, prisoners were allowed to exchange letters with their families. Stockdale took advantage of these occasions to reassure his wife and send her his confidence and love. In a 1978 interview, Sybil Stockdale read one of her favorite letters from her husband.

Mrs. Stockdale in 1978

When these four letters came, this one was written: “My darling Syb, please know how much I miss and love Stan, Jimmy, Sid, and little fellow Taylor. Also know that I love you most of all. Syb, I pray that you know of my pride in you and of my faith and confidence in your judgment in all matters. Your rearing of our four wonderful sons is a magnificent achievement. Tell them of my pride and confidence in them. God bless you all this Christmas season. Love, Jim.”

Admiral Stockdale

I think another great obligation that I felt, that I must preserve the flame for, was the love of the family. Sybil’s dignity and motherhood and guts and rectitude demanded nothing less. I had to come home in a way that would make my family proud.

Narrator

In January of 1973, an agreement between the United States and the Republic of North Vietnam was signed. The war was over, and the prisoners were going home. Seen here moments before boarding a plane home, some prisoners are getting their first glimpse of freedom in over seven years. Prisoners like Harry Jenkins and James Bond Stockdale.

San Diego, February 15th, 1973.

Admiral Stockdale

They took me right to the microphone. There was no hugging and kissing before the speech. The speech was the thing.

Introduction in 1973

Ladies and gentlemen, Captain James Stockdale.

Stockdale in 1973

We're so glad to be home. Our thoughts have been with you ever since we left, and they're going to be with you from now on. For just an instant, permit me to let my thoughts turn inward, however, inward to these wonderful Americans with whom I've been imprisoned. I'm proud of their performance. We've fought together. We've laughed together. We've cried together, and we've prayed together. Thank you.

Narrator

After nearly eight years in captivity, James Bond Stockdale was home. The children he had left were now young men, and the America he lived in had changed, but friends, family, and the United States Navy would soon learn that they hadn't heard the last of this heroic man.

The prisoners were home, and for a while, they became the spokesmen of postwar heroism in America.

Admiral Stockdale

I had a regimen of some 300 pushups a day, at least in the last couple years. Harry Jenkins, on my left here, had the dubious honor of sitting on a bench under which I'd prop my legs as I did a couple of hundred sit-ups.

Captain Jenkins

Just a few weeks before we were allowed to come home, they came in with a sports magazine of some sort, and there's a Green Bay Packer stuffing his hair into his helmet, and you know, this just isn't the way it is, but it was.

Admiral Stockdale

The only thing I remember really finding disturbing was the noise level of the country. It seemed like after all these years of silence that there was a lot of unnecessary racket, not only from mechanical conveyances, but particularly from people. I called it the big wide world of yackety-yack.

Narrator

Stockdale had hoped to get his own ship, but with the damage to his leg, it was not to be. Yet he was named three-star admiral and made President of the Naval War College.

He took the opportunity to challenge the popular assumption that if you simply act tough enough as a prisoner of war, your captors will give up and leave you alone.

Admiral Stockdale

That's not true. There is no way. They are just as energetic and just as determined and just as aggressive against the toughest as the weakest eight years after you get there.

Narrator

When he retired from the Navy in 1979, Stockdale was the most decorated member, wearing 26 personal combat medals, including the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Today, Stockdale is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University. In writing about his Vietnam experience, he deals with a universal human issue, how to persevere through hard times with courage and dignity. This was the central theme of a book that he wrote with his wife Sybil about how they survived their ordeal. It was later made into a television movie.

Admiral Stockdale

We have had a great experience in living a life without regrets, now that I'm home.

Narrator

Since his return from Vietnam, Captain Jenkins has retired from the Navy and works with a top defense contractor. He lives with

his wife in San Diego, only a few blocks from the Stockdales. Jenkins says that friendship and trust were the keys to survival among fellow prisoners.

Captain Jenkins

People who have been in combat together form a bond that they would not have ever formed otherwise. I guess you just lived on the bitter edge together, and you can't talk about it or understand it unless you've been there.

Admiral Stockdale

When comradeship ran so high, and there was such an affection for each other among us guys who were victims of this thing, I thought to myself: you know, I wouldn't be anywhere else. I'm right where I should be.

Narrator

Admiral Stockdale will never forget being a prisoner in Vietnam, for he still bears the scars of all those years of pain and torture. But if a hero is a man of great strength and courage, then this man surely deserves the admiration and gratitude of his countrymen.

From the darkness of a lonely prison cell, he preserved the flame of the American spirit, and in doing so, he has given us the rarest of gifts: a legacy of American heroism we can all be proud of.

REMARKS BY CAPTAIN FELLOWES

Dr. Pierce

On August 27, 1966, Lieutenant Commander Jack Fellowes, United States Naval Academy Class of 1956, was shot down over North Vietnam. Later, Admiral Jeremiah Denton would praise him as one of the toughest men in prison. Part of his toughness came from an undying sense of humor, and on one occasion, he apparently convinced a North Vietnamese interrogator that John Wayne was a pilot in his squadron but had refused combat duty and was ordered by the Pentagon to remain in the United States. Please join me in welcoming back home Captain Jack Fellowes.

Captain Fellowes

Thank you. If you'll notice in the program that they handed out, my name appears in front of Bob Shumaker's. Bob and I are classmates, and this is the first time it has ever appeared in front of Bob Shumaker's name.

On August 26th, in my stateroom, I received a secret message, which was to be eaten and devoured. The message was from the Class of 1956. It said, "Find Bob Shumaker." I launched off the Constellation the next day, flying a Grumman A-6 aircraft, and found much to my dismay that Grumman has never built an airplane that can fly without a right wing. Within four days, I had found Bob Shumaker. I might tell you, Bob, they never sent anybody to find me.

I'm touched to be in this crowd, with Dave Hoffman and Bob Shumaker, and of course, Admiral Stockdale. It's sort of interesting, because there is a great bond between all of us. I was kidding Admiral Stockdale tonight and said that they're looking for someone to say some nice things about him, but they couldn't find anybody, so they called me. How ridiculous that is, huh?

First I'd like to challenge one statement that a lot of POWs are making. A lot of POWs are saying that they were broken. I have never served with a POW who was broken. I have served with POWs who were bent but never broken. I never saw a POW who did not go back and ask for more from the Vietnamese, and that

was partly because of the leadership of Admiral Stockdale. We gave them all we could give them. We fought them constantly. I never, again, have seen a POW who was broken, so when you hear it, just say, "Oh, the guy doesn't know what he's talking about." He's bent, maybe, but not broken.

When I got there, I also found Admiral Stockdale and the great leadership that was involved in that system, and it reminded me of a statement that General Shepherd made when he was Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Korean POWs were released: "In the struggle against communism, the war is no longer over when a man is forced to yield. The POW's stockade is only an extension of the battlefield, where they must be taught to carry on in an equal struggle with the only weapons remaining to them, faith and courage." And from faith and courage, which we all had a little bit of, we were able to glean it from others, such as Admiral Stockdale, Bob Shumaker, and the rest.

It was an amazing situation, because when they thought they had us, they never did. We used to say that we lived in the camp called the zoo, and it was strange to see the people looking out at the animals. A sense of humor was absolutely mandatory in that environment. I don't know how we could have survived without it. I have been involved with situations that today seem so funny and so ridiculous, and at the time, they were also funny and ridiculous.

I tried not to laugh at them, although I was accused once of laughing, and the door was closed. I was not allowed to bathe for 11 days in the summer because I had the audacity to laugh. What I gleaned from you, Admiral, I can't even describe it. They gave me 10 minutes to do this, but I can't do it in 10 minutes, so I just won't try.

You know how I feel about you, and the rest of the world knows how I feel about him. If you want a leader, don't go to total quality leadership. Don't go to TQM. Don't go to a pill. Go to somebody who leads by example, and that's what it's all about. Lead by example first, and all those other things will fit into place.

There was a guy that was the first one out to take the beatings, and they liked to beat the senior ranking officers first, and there was Jim taking his beatings. I tell you, it's very hard not to follow in his footsteps and do the best you can in taking beatings.

God bless you, Admiral Stockdale.

REMARKS BY REAR ADMIRAL SHUMAKER

Dr. Pierce

On February 11, 1965, Lieutenant Commander Robert Shumaker, United States Naval Academy Class of 1956, became the second American taken captive in North Vietnam. Admiral Denton called him brave but not foolhardy and slicker than anyone in inventing new ways to communicate. So good at communication, he was often referred to by his brother POWs as “our anchorman.” Please join me in welcoming back home Rear Admiral Bob Shumaker.

Rear Admiral Shumaker

Thank you very much. Admiral and Mrs. Ryan, Admiral and Mrs. Crowe, Admiral and Mrs. Stockdale, and other distinguished guests, but most of all midshipmen, good evening and thank you for inviting me to appear tonight to give you some of my personal thoughts about the role of ethics in the military.

You know, I can remember lectures such as this some 40 years ago, when Jack Fellowes and I sat where you are after a long day of classes, so I know how you must feel, and we’ll try to make it worthwhile for you tonight.

But we three speakers must look like a bunch of old, old men to you, and we represent collectively 22 years of imprisonment. Jack Fellowes and I are classmates and close friends, and Admiral Stockdale is out of the Class of ‘47. Each of the three of us would give anything to be where you are tonight: healthy, about to start your careers, idealistic, and out of debt, but we can’t do that, of course. All we can do is talk to you about our experiences, the things that we did right, and some of the pitfalls that we overcame.

I’d like to observe that the practice of teaching ethics at the Academy is not new. It just wasn’t always as formalized as it is now. Our instructors and company officers and commandants and superintendents were carefully chosen to be role models for the brigade. In my time, they started a course on leadership, and it was a noncredit course. It was held in the basement of

Bancroft Hall, next to some boilers that were always noisy, and taught by a company officer. But you know, as I reflect over my own career, that low-key course probably had more impact on me than any differential equation I ever tackled or physics theorem that I addressed.

Our emphasis then was to stress engineering and science, and our quest was for precision and exactness and speed. You know, we learned that X equals 7.23 or something like that. That was all our slide rules could generate at that time.

But in this leadership course, we were exposed, perhaps for the first time, to the case study method, in which some situation involving human interaction was presented, and our task was to analyze all the elements and then to discuss possible courses of action. At the end of the hour, we'd turn to our instructor, the company officer, and say, "So what's the correct solution, sir?" And it really bothered me initially that often there was no correct solution. The value of the discussion was that we learned that solutions are variable and dependent and often not very precise.

My instructor was a Marine captain, and he was even then a legend. We clandestinely called him Bonzo for reasons that I won't elaborate, but to this day, I'm very grateful to him (he's now deceased), for his example of leadership and ethics, the two of which, as I'm sure you know, are inexorably intertwined.

Another example of leadership during my days came from further on down the line. There was a colorful chief petty officer named Shorty, who was assigned to the seamanship department, and his succinct advice, delivered in a rather salty and profane style, was: "You guys get out there and learn your stuff, and also be careful who you marry." Well, paraphrasing him out of respect for his widow, I'd say that you really need to become an expert in something, at least one field, in order to command the respect of the people with whom you'll be associated. You also have to be careful in choosing your associates—wives or friends or whatever—because they can very strongly influence you both beneficially and detrimentally.

I suppose that people have struggled with the definition of leadership for a long time and especially with what role ethics should play in leadership. I like to keep it simple. My definition of ethics is simply doing the right thing. Doing the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences might be, but it's not always easy to do the right thing when human traits, such as greed and bias and impatience or the avoidance of blame or the need for public adoration, play into the equation. It's not always easy to take a firm stand when you know that it's going to cost you your friends or money or physical pain.

We had a lot of good leaders in our POW camp, and Jack Fellowes, my classmate, is a good example of it. Jack specialized, as was said earlier, in covert communications. He always maintained a high spirit, which was contagious.

Now let me tell you a little bit about the main speaker tonight. He's a soldier, a scholar, a sailor, a statesman, and his name is Stockdale. You know, if his first name had been Sam, we'd have perfect alliteration here, but it's not—it's Jim—and he came from an Illinois farm to join the star-studded Class of '46, which produced a President, a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a senator, and others. He played some football at the Academy, as we saw in the film, and learned that life itself is a contact sport.

He spent the mandatory year at sea before flight training and then held a variety of jobs as a fighter pilot. He graduated from the Patuxent Test School and then stayed on as an instructor and was known for an unusual method of keeping the class's attention. I'm sure you can sympathize with your classmates, whose eyelids sometimes droop after a class or in class after a heavy lunch.

That used to be the case at Patuxent also until Lieutenant Stockdale pulled out his .38 revolver—filled with blanks—and that ended any drowsiness.

Admiral Stockdale's epiphany came as a graduate student at Stanford. Its two-year curriculum in international relations was jam-packed with course requirements, and with just one course elective, he decided to study philosophy. Philosophy? Well, now

hotshot fighter pilots just don't do that sort of thing, but actually they should, because this exposure strongly influenced Lieutenant Commander Stockdale and later, through him, affected some 500 POWs and 1,000 or so War College graduates and countless others who read the *Naval War College Review*.

He continues to influence the American political scene today with his views on ethics and morality. His mentor at Stanford was Professor Rhinelander, who once gave him a pamphlet to read and study, which he did with some consternation and puzzlement. It was about a Roman general named Epictetus, who came from very humble origins to become a revered leader and who epitomized the meaning of ethics as it relates to military leadership.

Those of us who know Admiral Stockdale call him CAG. That was the term we used for the guy who is in charge of all the squadrons on an aircraft carrier, Commander Air Group, and in this case, it's a term of endearment. As CAG, as was said before, he was shot down over North Vietnam in 1965, badly injured as you saw, captured, and he spent seven-and-a-half years there. Throughout those years, he was Epictetus incarnate. The Vietnamese tried to break him, humiliate him as the senior POW, but he resisted with every fiber in his body and set the example for the rest of us to follow.

Through it all, he never relinquished his responsibility to lead, to encourage, and to maintain everyone's morale. His motto to all of us in Hanoi was: **BACK U.S.** The individual letters stood for: don't **B**ow to them, stay off the **A**ir, don't **C**onfess, don't **K**iss them goodbye, and finally, **U**nited we **S**tand. It helped me and helped Jack and many others get through that ordeal intact. He's a man who knows how to do it right, one of the most ethical people I know: my friend, CAG Stockdale.

A CONVERSATION WITH VICE ADMIRAL STOCKDALE

Dr. Pierce

Earlier today when I went over the program with him, Admiral Stockdale said, “Look, the theme is ethics, and if Fellowes and Shumaker get to say a few words about me, then it’s only fair that I get to say a few words about them.”

Admiral Stockdale

Well, I was overwhelmed. I just wanted to tell the crowd that I have nicknames for Jack and Bob, and these are my heartfelt nicknames. Jack Fellowes: salt of the earth. One thing he didn’t talk about was when he was locked up with a couple of other fellows in Heartbreak Hotel, and the obvious job was how to take care of three other prisoners who were somewhere on the road to insanity. He has compassion and did the best he could, and they wanted to be left alone. They had left this world, and that was the kind of a job that Bob could do or Jack could do that very few of us could. He saw some people in straits that none of us have ever seen the like of.

If Jack Fellowes was the salt of the earth, then Bob Shumaker was the brains of the outfit. All this thing about communication and all he was a co-inventor of. He set up a whole procedure for the thing. He was interested in all sorts of science. He’s got, of course, a Ph.D. and was President of the Naval Postgraduate School, and so I’m just going to leave it there. You guys really did me proud, and I wouldn’t trade you for anybody in the world for friends. Thank you.

Dr. Pierce

Admiral, when you and I discussed this, I told you that I think the most common question anyone has who hasn’t been through what you have is: once you’re taken captive, and you know you are captive, what do you go through? Do you think you’re going to go crazy?

Admiral Stockdale

Each case is so different. It depends on how bashed up you are. It's when you get what hospitalization you're going to get, when you're put into torture and in isolation, that there is a time when you've got to face up to yourself. Are you going to go crazy? I say: no such luck. You've got to get used to yourself, and you've got to discipline yourself to make your life and your activities a part of a regimen, a coordinated thing. You don't just lie there and wait for somebody to open the door to get up. You've got things to do. You've got to remember all the names of these prisoners and go over that list. You've got to go over the list of your whereabouts in the past, keep a record so that your day is full. There is communication time during the noon hour usually, and that has to be done. I remember being in a little cell in a place we called Alcatraz about four in the afternoon, and here came the guy with the leg irons, and I said, "Oh, my God." I'd been up since six doing these things, and I said, "I haven't had a second to myself all day, and here he comes."

(Laughter.)

Dr. Pierce

When you're in a situation where almost everything is out of your control, what really makes you vulnerable to the captors? Is it pain? Is it fear? Is it shame? What is it that makes you vulnerable?

Admiral Stockdale

Well, your vulnerability, I kind of encapsulate as fear and guilt. By guilt, I don't mean guilt in the direct sense. I mean you feel guilty because you didn't do as well at the last torture session as you thought you had in you. The fear is just part of the equipment. You get so you're not enveloped in these things, and this comes with confidence in yourself. I just described three people who really were over the hill, but they were about the only ones. Everybody else after a while was, not content, but not continually upset. You knew what the odds were. I mean, you were facing a tough time, but you don't lose your ability to think and to plan and to take some time to pray for your family. You come to live a life that you can exist with for years and years.

Dr. Pierce

It seems that the circumstances there drive you into yourself and to think about your situation and where you are. What pulls you out of that? What keeps you going? What pulls you out from being obsessed with your own personal, individual situation?

Admiral Stockdale

Well, you have to be a little bit selfish, I mean, proud of yourself. That's a big thing, when you say, "I'm doing okay. I'm going to make it." I think that was more the common case than the person that's just at bay. He takes the part of a prisoner. He plays well the given part. He knows you're not to blab. He knows you're not to betray the trust of others.

There were some flagrant violators, in selfish ways, whom I can count on my fingers, who should have been punished and weren't, and they were both senior officers. Both of them were O-5s, and they both sort of divorced themselves from the prison, and they were picked up by the Vietnamese and put in special places. I don't know why that happened. I filed charges against them, and the first four charges on each sheet were capital offenses, mutiny, and so forth, but the Secretary of the Navy, John Warner, decided that they should be patted on the hand and let go. I can live with that. But these were the worst cases.

Dr. Pierce

In your speeches, one of the phrases that you use over and over again is "my brother's keeper." What do you mean by that?

Admiral Stockdale

Well, that occurs to you. When the man next door is sick, or he's got troubles at home, that's what we all said: "I am my brother's keeper." That's your most important job, to make sure that you contact him daily. Don't give him your philosophy of life. That doesn't work in those isolated circumstances. The last thing he wants to hear is your philosophy of life. He's got all his ducks in line. He's got a program. They're working well enough, so don't preach to him but let him know you are worried about him, and you're pulling for him.

Dr. Pierce

You've spoken in the past eloquently about loyalty to the group. You've said: "I have a reputation to uphold with them. I can't let them down. They are my country. They are my family."

Admiral Stockdale

Well, I certainly felt that way, and they felt the same way about me too. I think that was a very common conclusion when you take stock of yourself. We're all in this together, and we're going to get through this together. Loyalty to your shipmates is right up there at the top in the obligations of a fighting man.

Dr. Pierce

You've talked about the problem of the loners, the occasional people who pulled into themselves. What can you do about that? What do you try to do about that?

Admiral Stockdale

Sometimes they're beyond a layman's capability. Usually they're kind of bitter people, who for some reason, sort of hate themselves, and the only thing you can do is to do them a favor once in a while and hope they turn around.

Dr. Pierce

In a couple of your speeches, you talk about what do you draw upon and what do you turn to, and you used a line in one of them. You said, "So you learn to get up in the morning and say to yourself, 'God, help me keep my conscience clear.'"

Admiral Stockdale

Well, that's a very high-priority item. This means you have to not betray a shipmate, to certainly not bring harm to somebody else out of selfishness. This is the greatest tonic you can give yourself is to get up and say, "Keep my conscience clean, dear God." That's the route to success.

Dr. Pierce

Success for you and success for many of the other POWs was a function, as Admiral Shumaker and Captain Fellowes have already said, of your own leadership. I was struck in reading a

couple of your articles and speeches, where you talked about how early on, your first instinct was to be compassionate when new prisoners would come in, to say, “We’re in this hellacious situation, and just do your best, and everything will be fine,” but they didn’t respond well to that.

Admiral Stockdale

Well, I don’t know that I had much experience with people that were brand new there. The community had about three focuses, and one was the so-called senior officers, which you could count on several hands, and then the ones that really carried the load were what I called the young Turks. That would be Bob and Jack. They were a little older than most of them. And then there were the captains and the majors, and they carried the communication load particularly.

One of the things that you have to do if you’re trying to outwit a circumstance like this is get the drop on the commissar. If you smell a rat coming up the line—like he took me aside one day in the summer of ‘67. The Navy and the Air Force were bombing the hell out of that country. We thought by Christmas we’d have the war over until McNamara moved them out in about middle of the fall. There was bomb debris on the streets. The power plants were being put out of commission. The power was down. The water mains were broken, and the commissar came to me, and he said, “You can take credit for this. I’d like for you to invite your men to volunteer to be on work details on the streets of Hanoi, picking up debris.” Well, for every American out there picking up bomb debris, there would be five cameramen on him, and that would be appearing all over the world. I told him no, I wasn’t interested in that. But I went back to the cell, and I put out a message right away to these young Turks to get it out right now. Nobody goes out and works in town. I’ve got to get my message to my men from the shoulder and tell them no. I’ve thought that through, and that’s going to backfire on us, and that’s the methodology. You have to have coordination, and people sensitive enough to know the importance of speed and communication, so that when they call up people, everybody says—that. That’s the way it went.

Dr. Pierce

You've written that in some cases, the officers who served with you really demanded leadership from you. They wanted you to tell them what was expected of them.

Admiral Stockdale

I think that it was my responsibility to give them the leadership that would steer them in the direction that we all agreed was the right course, to stick with America, to stick together, to go down to the wire together, to shoulder the load together. This was a floating population, and there would be new commanders that would show up in the middle or later part of the war.

We had a problem keeping track on seniority in there, because the war lasted so long. Pretty soon, you're out flying, and you're a lieutenant, and your wingman is with you. You get shot down; he gets back to the ship, and then five years later, he shows up. You're still a lieutenant, and he's a commander.

(Laughter.)

Admiral Stockdale

So we had to figure out a way to get at it. The way we did it, when two men are vying for promotion or rank, the date of importance is the day the first guy gets shot down, and everything proceeds from there. If he's senior, he's still senior.

But when the new guy does come in, and he's a bona fide lieutenant commander, he's the right man to be the cellblock captain. He's inexperienced, and he doesn't know; he's just going through the early torture. People say, "Well, we got to listen, hear what the new guy has got to say." Usually, it was something like this. He said, "Gentlemen, it's just a shock to me to come into a situation where we have so many good men being forced to do things that they would never in the world do in the land of freedom, and it's just overwhelming, and I believe you all deserve to be the manager of your own defensive system." Now we're starting to float, and then he might close out with a nice thing like, "I'll be here, and God bless you."

Okay. Well, then everything is quiet in the cellblock. About five seconds later, one of the young Turks come up and say, "Sir, we want to sleep at night. We want our consciences clean. The least you can do is to let us say that we are adhering to the policies of our commanding officer. That's what gives us the drive and the coordinated spirit to move this thing. When you say that we're to design our own defenses, that's the last thing we want. We want direction from the commander. We want to know what we take torture for, and there may be 15 or 16 or 20 items. Give us the list. We will not sit here and not complain to a commanding officer who doesn't have the courage to tell us to go to torture." I heard that all the time.

Dr. Pierce

You said that you developed what you called orders that can be obeyed. What do you mean by that?

Admiral Stockdale

It's so easy to give orders that really can't be obeyed. For instance, the guy that says, "Okay, here are the orders of the day. Obey the Code of Conduct." You've got to give specific orders that everybody can understand.

When we all got released in the spring of '73, a lot of us got invitations to military bases to give talks or to participate in reunions, and Sybil and I accepted some of those. One of them was at the Army War College in Pennsylvania. A little guy walked up to me, and he said, "Could I sit with you tonight?" And he was a pleasant-looking little fellow. "Of course," I said, dignified. We went over and took our seats, and he stuck out his hand, and he said, "Hello, I'm Slam Marshall. How did you get along with that Code of Conduct? That name, rank, and serial number thing?"

"Well," I said, "it was impossible, so we just sort of ignored it." And he said, "I was afraid of that." I said that there were dozens or scores of soldiers and officers who came face to face with the fact that this solemn pledge that they were given in survival school, there were circumstances where it wasn't even sensible not to talk.

He said, “Well, you know, I wrote that Code of Conduct.” He was a newspaper man. This fellow was a citizen-soldier in World War I. He was probably a second lieutenant out of OCS in World War II. He was a colonel in the Korean War. He was a brigadier general, and Ike Eisenhower was one of his close friends.

He said, “I wrote ‘I am bound to give only name, rank and serial number and date of birth,’ and in the formal language, that means I am obliged to only give those things. The rest of it’s up to me. I’ve got to give name, rank, serial number, date of birth, or I can be thrown in jail by these people or even punished and court martialed, but the rest—it never occurred to me to have that apply to everybody.”

“Well,” I said, “that’s what the common belief was of people who went to survival schools.” He said, “I went to Ike.” The leaders of all the services started vying for macho position *vis-à-vis* the others to tell about what little their people could tell anybody. He said, “Call these service chiefs in and read them the riot act, Ike, because this is going to ruin the whole damn thing.”

The idea that silence is a blessing to a fighter is baloney. You’ve got to have guile. You’ve got to be able to tell stories. You’ve got to be able to tell lies.

One time, my interrogator Rabbit said, “I got to get you to write something.” I said, “Why don’t you let me write history? Let me give you a history of the American-Korean War.” He couldn’t believe it. So I said that when the Americans first got in the Korean War, they didn’t understand the thing. Here was the United Nations, and they were there in some pose that nobody really understood, and they were disorganized. I’m exaggerating. I was probably telling things that really aren’t true. I wasn’t trying to tell them the truth. I wanted to tell them what I wanted to tell them.

But anyway, the only thing that really changed the situation is when they started talking about brainwashing. Now I don’t believe there is such a thing as brainwashing, but I didn’t put that

in the story. I said the population rose as one man when they heard that the communist armies were trying to brainwash their sons, and that was the downfall. It was then that we generated power and took over. This was the short version.

(Laughter.)

Well, he took it away, and he was a pretty savvy, sophisticated guy, and he wasn't going to argue with me about that. But I heard the commissar, who had learned to speak English, outside my window one day, telling a bunch of American visitors: "Ladies and gentlemen, we have a very strict rule here in Vietnam. We will not brainwash. We will discuss, and we will point out problems with your point of view, but we have never taken up brainwashing. I want you to tell all the people back home."

(Laughter and applause.)

Dr. Pierce

Admiral, you once wrote: "The stoic said, 'Character is fate.' In my life, education has been fate." And you've also told the story as you were shot down, as you were parachuting down, that you said out loud to yourself, "I'm leaving the world of technology and entering the world of Epictetus." How did a fighter pilot, a test pilot, a master of technology, how did you get into philosophy, and why philosophy?

Admiral Stockdale

Well, I was given a book by a professor at Stanford. I took his philosophy course. The only course I was eligible for was international relations. Well, I was too old for that. I was, you know, in my late thirties. I'd been beating systems of government for years. What do I want a degree in that for? But, anyway, I went through it, but I was sick of that stuff. It was kid's stuff. I didn't need this. I wanted to go over to the philosophy department.

I went there, and I was walking down the hall, and this big voice boomed out, "Can I help you?" And I just turned around. I said

yeah. I already had a little grey hair; I think he thought I was a father, and he said, "What is it you want?" I said, "I've had six years of college, and I've never had a course in philosophy. I'd like to take one." And he asked, "What is your profession?" And I said, "I'm a naval officer here in grad school." He said, "I was in the Navy in World War II," and he sat me down. This was a beautiful friendship with a very elegant man, Phil Rhinelander.

I had to go over to his house for an hour every week, and that was golden. I knew graduate students for Ph.D.s that couldn't get an appointment with their advisor. We had a lot of good talks.

He had me reading David Hume's dialogues on natural religion, and I remember, I'd go in there and I'd just work it over and over. Well, he had forgotten to tell me that natural religion is one which will not permit miracles to enter the theology, and that kind of attracted my attention. On the basis of that, he said, "I want to give you a book to remember me by."

I was just going back to sea, and he gave me the Epictetus book. The stoics do not believe in afterlife. They do not believe that because that introduces an unknown. A miracle is an exception to nature, and for the stoics, nature is God's body. I mean, you know, it's complicated.

But anyway, so I got interested enough in this book that I bought the real one, the big book from which it was excerpted. For three cruises flying combat, I made myself read that thing on my bedside table, and I was really catching on when I got shot down, and that's why Epictetus was on my mind.

Dr. Pierce

You've talked about Professor Rhinelander's course on the problems of good and evil, and I guess one of the people you read was Solzhenitsyn. There was a line from Solzhenitsyn that you used often in talking about your POW experience, and you said, "Solzhenitsyn wrote, 'The line separating good and evil passes not between states nor between classes nor between political parties, but right through every human heart, through all human hearts.'" I guess your reading of philosophy and your reading of literature held you in good stead.

As you and I have been talking, trying to get together and get ready for this evening, I realized it would come to an end at some point, and the question I had was: how do you end an evening like this? And I was flipping through your book and came across a speech that you gave in 1994 on Memorial Day on the site of Andersonville, the Civil War prison. And when I read the end of your speech, and you quoted from a poem, I said, "I can't improve on that." So I would like to close this evening reading the poem that you read on that occasion, which you said was found unsigned in a Civil War prison. This was written well over a century ago, but it could have been written about Vice Admiral Jim Stockdale or Rear Admiral Shumaker or Captain Fellowes or any of their brother POWs.

We asked for strength that we might achieve;
God made us weak that we might obey.
We asked for help that we might do great things;
He gave us infirmity that we might do better things.
We asked for riches that we might be happy;
We were given poverty that we might be wise.
We asked for power that we might have the praise of men;
We were given weakness that we might feel the need of God.
We asked for all things that we might enjoy life;
We were given life that we might enjoy all things.
We received nothing that we *asked* for
But all that we *hoped* for.
And our prayers were answered. We were most blessed.

Admiral Stockdale, Admiral Shumaker, Captain Fellowes, and all of your brother POWs, we want to thank you for the example, the inspiration, the grace, the courage, and the simple, decent honor that you showed during your time. We are all now and forever in the debt of all of you. Thank you very much.

PRESENTATION

Midshipman 1/C William H. Wiley, USN

Sir, for the last two decades, you dedicated your life to ensuring that military leaders study ethics. Tonight, I'm lucky enough to stand up here in front of this crowd and represent over 4,000 midshipmen, from your alma mater, who constantly, on a day-to-day basis, study ethics. We felt it only fitting, to take some time to write—in this book here—what ethics and honor mean to us as midshipmen, as we embark on a career in Naval service. So tonight, on behalf of you spending time with us and the example that you are for all of us, I'd like to present it to you on behalf of the Brigade of Midshipmen, Sir. Thank you.

Admiral Stockdale

That's wonderful, and Will, we met at dinner, and I know his first name, and I know what's in it, and it is first-person letters from the Brigade, and I'll treasure this. Thank you.

Admiral Ryan

Admiral, on behalf of the staff and faculty here at the Naval Academy, we'd like to make a presentation to both you and Sybil. You, in your first book *In Love and War*, gave us a wonderful example, one that I hope all the midshipmen here take advantage of and read this book. It tells you that you can be someone who serves your country for nearly four decades, and you can still have a beautiful, long, and lasting marriage and a wonderful partnership. Representing that partnership tonight, we have two bookends, one for each of you with the beautiful seal of the Naval Academy, and it's inscribed to Vice Admiral Stockdale. Thank you for your lecture tonight. Thank you for all you've done for us.

Mrs. Stockdale

Thank you. We'll think about all of you as we use the bookends. I hope you all will have as wonderful a time in the Service as we have had. I know that sounds kind of odd, but I really have loved almost every minute of it. Not every single one but almost. Thank you very much.

