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A Vietnam Experience: Ten Years of Relection (Hoover Institution Press Publication)

James B. Stockdale

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The decade that followed James Stockdale's seven and a half years in a North Vietnamese prison saw his life take a number of different turns, from a stay in a navy hospital in San Diego to president of a civilian college to his appointment as a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution. In this collection of essays he offers his thoughts on his imprisonment. Describing the horrors of his treatment as a prisoner of war, Stockdale tells how he discovered firsthand the capabilities and limitations of the human spirit in such a situation. As the senior officer in confinement he had what he humbly describes as "the easiest leadership job in the world: to maintain the organization, resistance, and spirit of ten of the finest men I have ever known." His reflections on his wartime prison experience and the reasons for his survival form the basis of the writings reprinted here. In subject matter ranging from methods of communication in prison to military ethics to the principles of leadership, the thirty-four selections contained in this volume are a unique record of what Stockdale calls a "melting experience"—a pressure-packed existence that forces one to grow. Retired Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale, a Hoover Institution fellow from 1981 to 1996, was Ross Perot's 1992 presidential running mate and a recipient of the Medal of Honor after enduring seven and a half years as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam. He died in 2005 at the age of 81.

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