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A Code to Keep

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even the battles described within each volume seem unrelated. At first I was critical of the authors and publishers for poor quality work. Upon further reflection I recalled that that was the way it was—three separate wars, each with independent operations that always seemed to start at square one. Not much of a formula for success. No wonder the war colleges have rediscovered the art of campaign planning with such enthusiasm.

On balance, if you are looking for a quick refresher on naval operations in Vietnam, these three books might fill your requirement. If you want depth, detail and context, however, you will be better served elsewhere.

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Brace, Ernest C. *A Code to Keep*.
 New York: St. Martin's, 1988.
 264pp. \$16.95

In 1961 a general court-martial dismissed Captain Ernest C. Brace from the Marine Corps. As he put aside his mustang officer's good conduct ribbon (he had enlisted at age 16), his Air Medal (the fourth star represented 100 combat missions), and Distinguished Flying Cross (awarded after being shot down over North Korea), he assured himself that there are no ex-Marines. Less than four years after his trial, Brace was shot down a second time. While flying CIA-funded missions from Thailand into Laos in support

of Lao and Thai "civil action teams," he was ambushed, immediately captured by the Pathet Lao, and turned over to North Vietnamese regulars. On 28 March 1973—seven years, ten months, and seven days later—Brace emerged from Hoa Lo prison, the Hanoi Hilton. President Ford, citing his conduct in the prison camps, pardoned his court-martial conviction. Admiral James B. Stockdale recommended him for the Navy Cross and the Department of Defense awarded him its highest award, the Medal for Distinguished Service.

Anyone piqued to discover the mettle that provides the details behind this sketch of events will be well rewarded by *A Code to Keep*. It is an engaging, fast-paced good read. It also is a welcome, although regrettably brief, addition to the POW literature. Brace tells his story from POW ringside where he was often lodged because of the political complexities of his Laotian shutdown. The book both elaborates well-known episodes and contributes new details of its own. It covers three periods.

The first period spans his 1965 to 1968 imprisonment in South Vietnam. He was alone—he was not to hear an American for three and one-half years, and his major adversaries were the primitive conditions of his captivity: exposure to the elements and deprivation of food, water, and medical attention. Never physically tortured during his entire captivity, he describes his guards without rancor, emphasizing that for

everyone who abused him, several shared rations or even offered solace. The highlight of this episode is his spellbinding descriptions of four Houdini-like escapes and recaptures. One is reminded of Special Force Lieutenant James Rowe's *Five Years to Freedom* and naval aviator Dieter Dengler's *Escape from Laos*.

The second period (actually two periods) was in 1969 and again in 1971 when Brace was shuttled out of and back into the Plantation, a prison a few blocks from the Hanoi Hilton. It was here that for the first time in years Brace contacted an American, Lieutenant Commander John S. McCain III, now a U.S. Senator, who wrote the book's foreword. Brace gives us a firsthand account of the senior ranking officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ted Guy and McCain, and reports the role he and McCain had in assisting Guy's efforts to establish command.

The second Plantation period covers mid-1971 until just prior to his release. Guy was again senior ranking officer, but the population was now predominately a poorly organized group of Army and Marine enlisted men captured after Tet. Eight—the self-proclaimed Peace Committee—were later to be charged for misconduct. Brace and six POWs he christened the Lulus, the Legendary Union of Laotian Unfortunates, came together and began actively assisting in unifying the camp. The POW histories (Grant's *Survivors* and Hubbell's *POW*) have described the Peace

Committee, but Brace's chronicle of the Laotian shootdowns stands alone.

The final period Brace describes takes place in the Hanoi Hilton itself. During 1970 Brace was in the Vegas, a section containing so many high-ranking early shootdowns that he dubbed it the "old folks home." The Hanoi Hilton experiences are well-documented, notably by Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Robinson Risner's *The Passing of the Night*, the Stockdales' *In Love and War*, and Commander Jeremiah Denton's *When Hell Was in Session*. Brace was again at center stage with the Lulus and contributes his own details and perspectives; he published the camp newspaper, the toilet paper *Vegas Gambler*.

After the November 1970 Son Tay raid, the POWs were congregated into the Hanoi Hilton's Camp Unity. Briefly, Brace mentions that four Air Force colonels then emerged. One, John Flynn, North Vietnam's highest ranking POW, established the highly organized 4th Allied POW Wing and assumed command. Still again the Lulus were on site with Brace operating as Colonel Flynn's "chief communicator" during this highly charged period. Here Brace describes the "turncoats," a group, including a commander and lieutenant colonel ("my old Marine buddy"), charged after reparation. Other eyewitnesses have relegated this group to footnotes.

Throughout, Brace returns to the Code of Conduct. Is it binding? There are no ex-Marines. What are its "salient portions"? "Resist" and

“attempt to escape.” “Name, rank, . . .” are passed by; he freely wrote a “truthful” biography and provided military information “they already had.” How to apply it? To resist most of all is to communicate at all costs. Once ordered to cease communicating, Brace chose instead to “disobey” and thereby to violate the “obey” section of the code. Escape was almost as non-negotiable. His four early attempts absorbed him and as late as 1971 he was preparing to escape because “the Code said” it was a POW duty. (John Dramesi’s *Code of Honor* is the *locus classicus* for this view.) Yet after learning of Nixon’s timetable for ending U.S. participation in the war, Brace “scotched [his] plan” partly because it was “unnecessary.”

Tough issues, new facts and perspectives, and as Senator McCain tells us, “a timeless account of courage”—all here in this slender volume.

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Moran, Lord. *Anatomy of Courage: The Classic Study of the Soldier’s Struggle Against Fear*. Garden City Park, N.Y.: Avery, 1987. 202pp. \$9.95

“Courage equates with willpower, of which no man has an unlimited stock. . . . Men wear out in war like clothes.” Based upon diaries kept while serving in heavily bombarded and gas-laden trenches in World War I between 1914 and 1917, incorporating personal observations of the Royal Navy and Royal Air

Force in World War II as well, this classic essay by Lord Moran studies men under the stress of war. The author, a veteran physician of both world wars and physician to Sir Winston Churchill, reminds us that “the morale of all armies broke sooner or later.”

To Lord Moran, a man’s courage is his capital, and he is always spending. The call on the bank might be only the daily drain of the trenches, incessant watch rotations in a destroyer in northern seas in wintertime, or repeated high-stress bombing missions. Alternatively, there may be a sudden major expenditure which threatens to “close his account.” When his capital is depleted, he is finished!

Although a man’s will may be almost totally destroyed by intensive shelling, heavy bombing or a bloody battle, it may be more slowly and insidiously depleted. Monotony, exposure, the loss of support from stronger comrades on whom he has come to depend, physical exhaustion, or a wrong attitude to either danger, casualties, war, or to death itself, all may dissipate a man’s willpower.

Lord Moran attempts to address the question of how courage is born and how it is sustained in a modern army of free people. The major sections of this treatise deal with fundamental issues: “The Discovery of Fear,” including subsections exploring how imagination helps or destroys some men, the meaning of cowardice, the birth of fear, and the influence of shifting moods (includ-