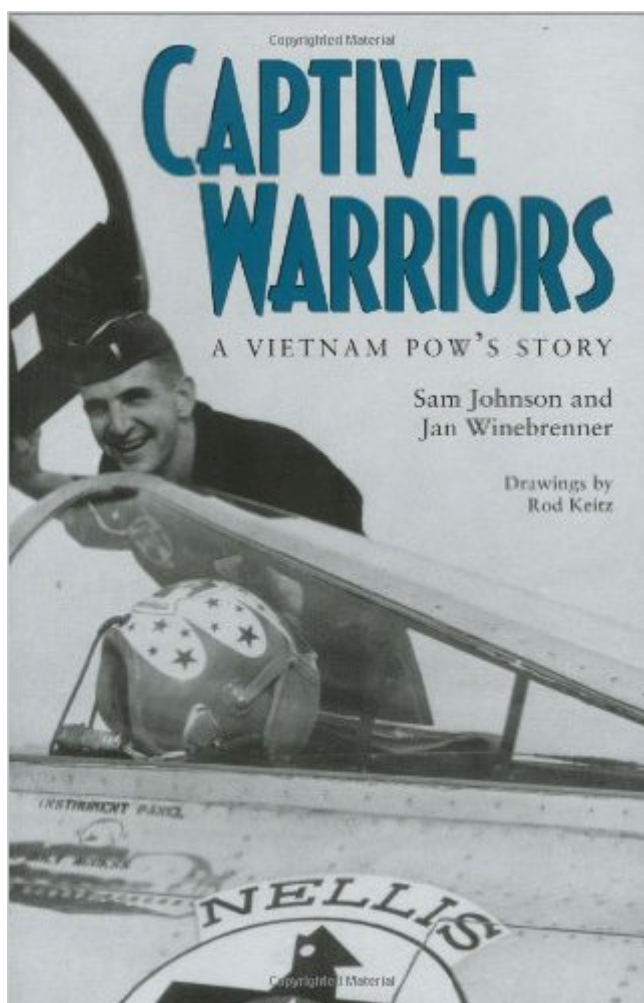


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# Captive Warriors: A Vietnam POW's Story (Texas A & M University Military History Series 23)



## Synopsis

"If hell is here on earth, it is located on an oddly shaped city block in downtown Hanoi, Vietnam," writes Sam Johnson, who lived in that hell for seven years. Col. Samuel R. Johnson, U.S. Air Force, was shot down in April, 1966, while flying his twenty-fifth mission over North Vietnam. Shortly after his capture and imprisonment in the infamous Hanoi Hilton, Colonel Johnson was labeled a diehard by his enemies. His creative and innovative resistance of prison authority earned him banishment to the high-security prison unit where, unknown to U.S. military intelligence, Ho Chi Minh kept the eleven prisoners believed to be a serious threat to his war efforts. For two years Johnson and the other ten endured leg irons, malnutrition, and appallingly primitive conditions while imprisoned in tiny cubicles built in the earthen-walled facility dug out of the center courtyard of North Vietnam's Ministry of Defense in downtown Hanoi. *Captive Warriors* is the story of Alcatraz, where courage and humor thrived amid the madness. It is the story of Colonel Johnson's seven-year battle for his life, limbs, and sanity. It is the story of the hundreds of captured warriors--American POWs--whose lives lay in the hands of angry and vengeful North Vietnamese captors. The book also chronicles America's trek into political confusion and chaos throughout the course of the Vietnam War. More than a story, *Captive Warriors* is a tribute to all the American prisoners of war who, without benefit of the conventional weapons of war, waged daily battles against an insidious enemy disdainful of the requirements of the Geneva Conventions and who, in the end, became the final pawn in the peace settlement that ended the longest war in American history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**QUICK REVIEW:** With such an intense story, you wish the merely average writing could measure up to the events it records. But the writing is the only thing that holds this book back. You will find yourself stunned at both the horrific treatment of the POW's and at the POW's strength to overcome it. This is an eye-opening book worth reading.**FULL REVIEW:** Sam Johnson gives a first hand account of what it was like to be a POW in North Vietnam. He gives a lot of details which gives the reader a full picture of the conditions and events that happened inside the prison. We follow his story through seven years of imprisonment but, unlike other POW stories, the events do not get monotonous with the same thing happening the same way all the time. Instead the account gets the readers attention and holds it through the entire book. He describes the activities of the prison with enough feeling and fear for the reader to feel his pain and determination to survive. The story is related to us from one agonizing event to another with the amazing strength of the prisoners' resolve to persevere throughout. At times the writing gets too involved in the political events surrounding the war, or else strays off to other personal stories, but generally the story still pushes through with enough interest. It is written with the desire to "tell the story" more than it is to impress the reader with the style of writing. Despite those few setbacks the book is hard-hitting and worth reading, especially for anyone interested in POW stories.

While I would never claim to understand what Sam Johnson went through, I can't imagine a book doing a better job of expressing what it's like to be a POW than this one did. The description of his experiences was detailed without being tedious, and the book was both disturbing and uplifting -- disturbing due to the brutality of Johnson's captors, but uplifting because of his faith and optimism. I've also read "Faith Of My Fathers", but I enjoyed "Captive Warriors" quite a bit more. In my opinion, FOMF wasn't as effective at describing the POW experience, and while I don't intend to diminish what McCain went through, it seems apparent that his treatment was nowhere near as harsh as Johnson's. A previous reviewer implied that the references to Johnson's faith in God were numerous to the point of being excessive, but I didn't find that to be the case at all. I don't recall the point having been made more than a few times, and certainly not in a gratuitous manner. My only complaint about this book is that it didn't contain more information about Johnson's life after the war. He is continuing to serve his country, currently as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. After reading this biography, I'm hoping that he will consider pursuing a higher office, and maybe then he'll have enough material for a second book.

When Sam Johnson was shot down over Vietnam, he was badly injured in the bailout. He survived

years of solitary confinement and extreme torture with his body broken yet his resolve firm. His story of his faith in God, his fellow prisoners, and the Code of Conduct is remarkable. We Americans owe Mr. Johnson and the other courageous POW's our undying gratitude.

Amid the blather today of who did what during the Vietnam War, *Captive Warrior* tells the story of one true American hero, Sam Johnson. Johnson, a Korean War veteran returned to fly and fight in Vietnam. On his 25th mission his F-4 was assigned to attack a target with little value. Johnson was shot down and badly injured during the ejection. For seven long brutal years, Johnson continued his fight while in captivity. Johnson's story is one of hope, despair, of men bonding together and overcoming seemingly insurmountable challenges to the human mind, spirit and body. It is also a story that briefly touches on other POWs who willingly aided the North Vietnamese in propaganda and in some cases, turned on their own fellow pilots. Although Johnson was beaten, tortured and often consigned to solitary confinement, Johnson fought the good fight and prevailed. The book is the story of a man's courage, faith, endurance and tenacity. For students of the Vietnam War and for those who want to read about an indomitable spirit, I recommend *Captive Warriors*.

Great book. Started with a brief history of VietNam and the impending conflict. It then spoke of his bombing of the North, his capture and the 7 years he was captive. I was rivited to this book. He does not speak like a polititian but of someone with first hand knowledge. Even though at the time he was oblivious to much of what was going on in the world this book interweaves all that was actually happening. It does it very well. This point also points out in detail the absolute human failures of communism. I appreciated that extra detail. When the time came for him to come home I could not put the book down. I would recommend this book to anyone who would like to learn a first hand account of what a hero does under the worst of circumstances.

Sam Johnson's story of how he was shot down in Vietnam, tortured, and spent more time in solitary confinement than any American in history is a powerful tale of heroism, human endurance, hope, and faith. No, the book won't get an award for literature, but it is an easily-read, gripping story of a man's seven years in the Hanoi Hilton. I must confess. I've met Sam Johnson. And when I shook his hand, I was shocked by the sensation of feeling every broken bone in it, the result of countless acts of torture by his captors. His body is a wreck. But he almost always has a friendly, welcoming smile on his face. It's a book well worth reading.

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