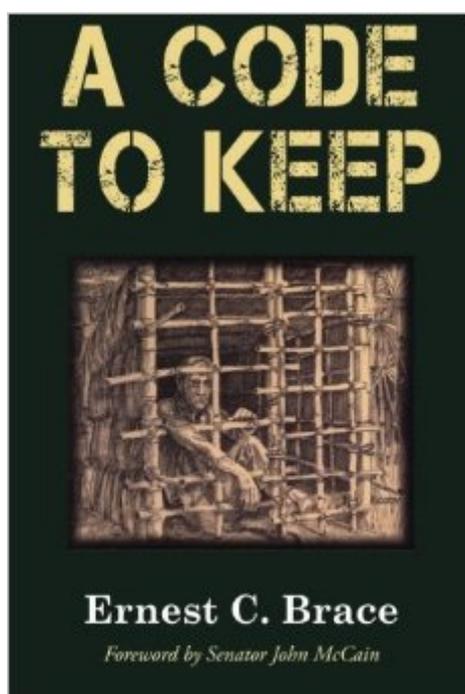


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# A Code To Keep: The True Story Of America's Longest-Held Civilian POW In The Vietnam War (Hellgate Memories Series)



## Synopsis

Ernest C. Brace was a former Marine hero, banished in disgrace from the Corps. In 1965, while working as a civilian pilot in Laos, he was captured and spent the next two years in a bamboo cage with his legs in stocks. His bravery did not diminish when transferred to Hanoi where he maintained the military code of conduct, refusing early release so that others might go free. This is the true, firsthand account of America's longest-held civilian POW in Vietnam, his eight years in captivity, and eventual return to honor.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Former marine pilot Ernest C. Brace was employed as a U.S. contract pilot for USAID, flying in Laos supporting Vietnam war efforts, when his airstrip was overrun by enemy forces in May of 1965 and he was taken captive. In his initial 3 years of captivity in Laos, Brace would be held alternately by Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese troops. Suffering inhuman conditions and being caged like an animal, he would end up attempting 3 daring escapes earning him brutal beatings and subsequent injuries that would affect him the rest of his life. Upon being transferred to North Vietnam, Ernest Brace would continue his last four and a half years of imprisonment in the Hanoi Hilton, Plantation, and Briar Patch prison compounds. While confined in these locations, though not obligated to do so, he honorably followed the U.S. serviceman's code of conduct earning him the respect and admiration of all the American prisoners he was with. Although never tortured like other POW's, Brace would risk this many times as he became a major junction for communications between

prisoners which helped boost morale and also heightened resistance to captors. Offered early release due to his civilian status, he declined with the intention of only going home when the sum total of American servicemen were also released. Upon repatriation from Vietnam in 1973, after almost 8 years in captivity (four and a half of those years in solitary confinement), Brace would find his return triumphant and bittersweet at the same time. Learning that his wife had remarried during his imprisonment and spending a full year in hospital visits to repair his injured body, he would eventually find success, happiness, and prosperity in the years to follow. Ernest C.

"A Code to Keep" is the story of Ernest C. Brace. Brace was a former Marine pilot, who left the Corps in the early 1960s under a cloud. His plane had crashed on a training mission in Maryland and Brace simply abandoned the aircraft. In May of 1965, he was flying for USAID in Laos when captured by the Pathet Lao. Any connection to the CIA is unmentioned. He was soon turned over to the North Vietnamese and went on to suffer nearly eight years captivity until the general release of the POWs in the Spring of 1973. Though a civilian, Brace comported himself as a military man. Though not mistreated as badly as many fellow POWs, Brace sought no special privileges his civilian status might have given him. Every POW tale tells its' own special story and CTK is no different: CTK relates the continuing struggle of senior POWs to maintain a command structure in prison and to minimize any cooperation with the North Vietnamese captors. Senior POWs as McCain, Risner, Stockdale are here, as are other brave high ranking Americans in Hanoi's captivity. So too is WO John Anton, author of the excellent "Why Didn't You Get Me Out?" Brace deals less with the aspect of torture and mistreatment than other POW tales. He even portrays an almost neutral attitude toward his captors. Brace is also somewhat benign to those Americans who cooperated with their captors. He labels them "The Peace Idiots" rather than "collaborators". Perhaps the author has come to terms with these folks. Moreso to his credit. What bothered and disturbed this reviewer about CTK is Brace's status as a Laos captee. Only 9 Americans, Brace included, were ever repatriated alive from that mysterious country. All were released through Hanoi. The remains of close to 200 more men were also returned. Some 450+ are still unaccounted for!

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