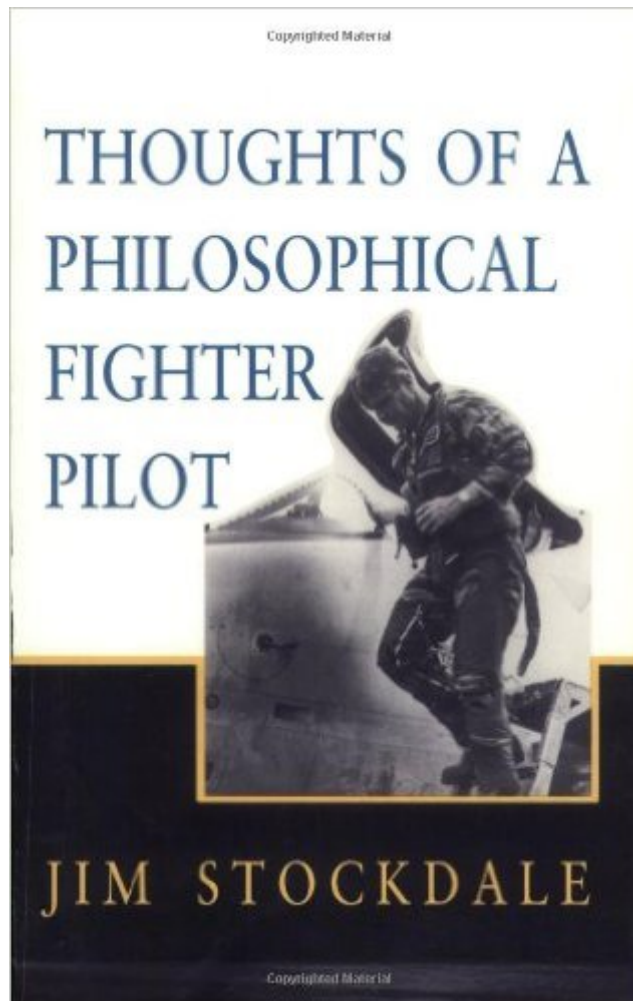


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# Thoughts Of A Philosophical Fighter Pilot (Reprint Ed.)



## Synopsis

Thoughts on issues of character, leadership, integrity, personal and public virtue, and ethics, the selections in this volume converge around the central theme of how man can rise with dignity to prevail in the face of adversity; lessons just as valid for the challenges of present-day life as they were for the author's Vietnam experience.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I do not normally choose to read a book based on the author's resume', but Stockdale's credentials (retired thirty-three year U.S. Navy Vice Admiral (3-stars), spent over seven years as the highest ranking U.S. prisoner of war (POW) in Vietnam, Medal of Honor recipient, 1992 Reform Party vice presidential candidate, president of the Naval War College and the Citadel, holder of eleven honorary doctoral degrees, experimental test pilot, author, professor), compelled me to read his book. I am very glad I followed my gut instincts, for Stockdale wrote one of the best thought-provoking books about life, character, and leadership that I have ever read. This book is a collection of essays, speeches, and articles by Stockdale (and one by a Stockdale friend and colleague) about his many and diverse experiences and how they have influenced his personal philosophies about life, character, and leadership. Many of his key points are repeated throughout the book, but the different purposes and audiences for the essays, speeches, and articles prevented those key points from becoming stale. Stockdale's key points included, but were not limited to:

character is demonstrated under pressure; his POW experience was the defining event in his life, a blessing (that I believe most non-POWs (like myself) will have trouble understanding or appreciating); the value of an education in philosophic classics (i.e. Stoicism, Epictetus, the Enchiridion, etc.); his first-hand accounts of the events leading up to the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which officially began our involvement in the Vietnam War (I was surprised); how the lack of character and integrity in senior U.S. leadership prolonged the Vietnam War and ultimately led to defeat and betrayal; and how Vietnam's U.S.

I do not waste my time reviewing marginal books. I thought long and hard before writing this review. It is presumptuous to comment on the life and thoughts of this man. But it is also compelling to encourage its readership by the broadest possible audience....especially our young people. It is especially relevant today, circa early 2008, as America decides on a President. This is perhaps the most intellectually and emotionally charged book I have read. And yet Admiral Stockdale was a quiet, humble man. As previous reviewers have commented, there is a wealth of material: ethics, history, drama...but I focus on the introspection he demands of America, especially in choosing leaders that send our young men and women into harms was...and, at times, into 7 and-a-half years of constant torture. Do not presume to think you know the substance of this book. I assure you, you will be proven wrong. The book is brutal. Yes, it does describe the torture and underground resistance - the ordeal and triumph American POWs. And that is more than useful for several generations of Americans who came to maturity when we, as a Nation, preferred to ignore a government's duplicity and, in many instances, stupidity in the conduct of war and national affairs. The book is critical of the government. What? A Vice Admiral and holder of the Medal of Honor being critical of the government? Damn right! So pay attention. This is not a criticism based on emotion or a "why didn't you help me" cry. It's a demand...nothing less...that elected officials exhibit character. Character is unambiguous. You want an example...it is simple: It is not what you believe in. It is how you act.

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