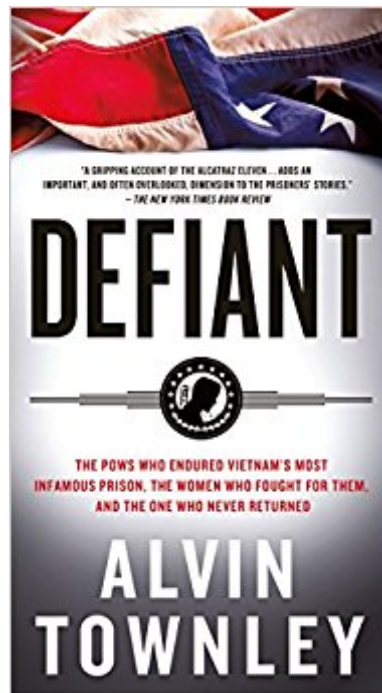




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# Defiant: The POWs Who Endured Vietnam's Most Infamous Prison



## Synopsis

“Unbroken meets Band of Brothers and then some.”

Congressman Pete Sessions During the Vietnam War, hundreds of American prisoners-of-war faced years of brutal conditions and horrific torture at the hands of North Vietnamese guards and interrogators who ruthlessly plied them for military intelligence and propaganda. Determined to maintain their Code of Conduct, the POWs developed a powerful underground resistance. To quash it, their captors singled out its eleven leaders, Vietnam’s own “dirty dozen,” and banished them to an isolated jail that would become known as Alcatraz. None would leave its solitary cells and interrogation rooms unscathed; one would never return. “Inspirational.” Kirkus Reviews As these men suffered in Hanoi, their wives back at home launched an extraordinary campaign that would ultimately spark the POW/MIA movement. When the survivors of Alcatraz finally returned, one would go on to receive the Medal of Honor, another would become a U.S. Senator, and a third still serves in the U.S. Congress. A story of survival and triumph, courage and brotherhood, Alvin Townley’s *Defiant* is a compelling work that no reader will soon forget. “A riveting tribute to true American heroes.” Senator John McCain, POW (1967-73) This edition of the book is the deluxe, tall rack mass market paperback.

## Book Information

Mass Market Paperback: 640 pages

Publisher: St. Martin’s Paperbacks; Reprint edition (August 2, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1250061881

ISBN-13: 978-1250061881

Product Dimensions: 4.4 x 1 x 7.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 216 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #234,613 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #44 in Books > Parenting & Relationships > Family Relationships > Military Families #187 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Military > Vietnam War #232 in Books > History > Military > United States > Veterans

## Customer Reviews

“You told it exactly like it was. In this unexpected way, your book made it all

worthwhile. — • — GEORGE MCKNIGHT, POW, 1965-1973 — “Defiant is a riveting tribute to the unyielding men who endured years of brutal captivity as POWs in Vietnam and the families they left behind. The men of the — Alcatraz Eleven’ are true American heroes and their extraordinary stories will serve as an inspiration for generations to come. — • — SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN, POW, 1967-1973 — “These heroic men and women remind us how courage, devotion, and faith can triumph even in the darkest of times. In Defiant, Alvin Townley masterfully tells the inspirational and unforgettable story of our Vietnam POWs and the Alcatraz Eleven. — • — PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER — “Alvin Townley’s story of the courage, valor and honor of eleven indomitable POWs and their wives is a new American classic that will be read as long as the breezes kiss Old Glory. As I read it I wept. — • — STEPHEN COONTS — “A moving, must read of extraordinary courage and mutual support in facing unimaginable hardship and torture. — • — ANN MILLS-GRIFFITHS, Chair, National League of POW/MIA Families — “This stirring tale by Alvin Townley of resilience and leadership under unimaginable conditions is a must read. — • — JIM LOVELL, Commander of Apollo 13 — “Defiant is Unbroken meets Band of Brothers - and then some...The devotion and undefeatable will of these courageous American heroes shines on every page and reminds us exactly what our great nation is made of. — • — CONGRESSMAN PETE SESSIONS — “This moving and authentic epic of unrelenting heroism shines like the sun as an example of American men and women at their very best. — • — Medal of Honor recipient GEORGE "BUD" DAY, POW, 1968-1973 — “Riveting. Powerful. Authentic. I had tears in my eyes reading Defiant. If I can still cry, I know others will too. — • — MIKE MCGRATH, POW, 1967-1973 — “Defiant will make you proud to be an American, and Alvin Townley’s writing makes you feel as if you are there yourself. It would be a wonderful textbook for a course on how to be a POW, but it is also a book for anyone on how to face and overcome adversity! — • — WESLEY D. SCHIERMAN, POW, 1965-1973 — “Alvin Townley has captured the individual accounts of these eleven men and woven them into a captivating story of resilience, courage and love of country. — • — ROBERT H. SHUMAKER, POW, 1965-1973 — “A unique American epic which must never be forgotten. Thanks to Alvin Townley’s ability to convert its heartbreaking reality into vivid prose, its men and women are alive as human beings as well as symbols of their commitment to each other -- and their country. — • — THOMAS FLEMING, author of The Officers’ Wives — “Defiant is a must read for those who seek to understand and honor the very best of America and its heroes. Alvin Townley’s exhaustive research shows us how our prisoners of war in Vietnam served with inspired bravery

and unrelenting courage. We can now know in detail how the most abused of them all survived years of brutality and solitary confinement.

— MELVIN R. LAIRD, Secretary of Defense (1968-1972)

“In *Defiant*, Alvin Townley reveals a moving, inspiring, untold story of courage and sacrifice that stands as a vivid testimony to what the human spirit can overcome. This is an important and too often overlooked aspect of the Vietnam War’s history.

— For those interested in Vietnam’s Band of Brothers, it is a must read.

— JAY WINIK, bestselling author of *April 1865* and *The Great Upheaval*

“*Defiant* is an astounding story that will capture your heart and mind proving once and for all that determination trumps circumstance.

— ANDY ANDREWS, New York Times bestselling author of *How Do You Kill 11 Million People?*, *The Noticer*, and *The Traveler’s Gift*

“I carried this book from room to room and kept trying to put it down, but I couldn’t stop reading. Alvin Townley shows the heart of what it means to be American in this tale of some of our greatest heroes. *Defiant* is superb.

— GREGORY A. FREEMAN, author of *The Gathering Wind: Hurricane Sandy, the Sailing Ship Bounty, and a Courageous Rescue at Sea*

“*Defiant* is all about voices — those that went unused for days by solitary prisoners of war, and those of silently suffering women back home who eventually felt no choice but to speak out. Alvin Townley soberly evokes the terror, sadness, frustration, pain and inspiration they all felt, and along the way, gives us a Vietnam War most of us have never heard about, involving legions of American women and imprisoned men fighting together, thousands of miles apart.

— ALAN HUFFMAN, author of *Here I Am: The Story of Tim Hetherington, War Photographer*

“The story of human courage, individual and family perseverance, survival based on a warrior’s code of honor. Alvin Townley weaves the recollections of these remarkable men into a compelling narrative against the backdrop of war, freedom, forgiveness and reconciliation. An inspirational account of POWs who served with honor while in captivity and returned home with a commitment to serve their country.

— Larry Berman, author of *Zumwalt: The Life and Times of Admiral Elmo Russell “Bud” Zumwalt, Jr.*

“If you have ever wondered how real courage and ultimate perseverance should be defined, all you need to do is read these pages. If you have ever pondered whether Americans still have the grit and the ‘guts’ to show the world what it takes to defend freedom, reading about the ‘Alcatraz Eleven’ will bolster your confidence. What these men endured nearly defies description, but Alvin Townley has managed to pull it off brilliantly. The writing is hard-hitting and powerful, dynamic and breath-taking. So, too, is his retelling of the stoic courage of the loved ones stuck at home with uncertainty and doubt: uncertainty about their own abilities to bear up, then doubt in the fortitude and truthfulness of their own government. What

the families did from afar, and how they ultimately put backbone into their own leaders and pushed accountability onto the captors of the POWs, is a story heretofore largely untold. It is a narrative as striking in its own right as the tales of the 'Alcatraz Eleven' themselves.

PHIL KEITH, award-winning author of *Blackhorse Riders* and *Fire Base*

"Alvin Townley's *Defiant* is a compelling recounting of the horror, hope, hell, and humanity that was daily life for the American prisoners of war who struggled through existence at Hanoi's most brutal prison camp. Expertly researched and compellingly written, Townley's account of the reality of life both in Hanoi's prisons and for the families of the prisoners at home is inspiring reading and should be part of any Vietnam War library."

ANDREW WIEST, author of *The Boys of 67*

"Alvin Townley has done a magnificent job of weaving together the powerful and complex story of eleven men who survived the unbelievable cruelty of their North Vietnamese captors. *Defiant* honors the bravery and sacrifice of our prisoners of war and their families as no other reporting has done to date. These men, many of whom I knew, deserve no less."

RICHARD G. CAPEN, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (1968-1971)

"Alvin Townley's work speaks volumes of America and our service men and women, and their spouses|their honor, steadfastness, perseverance, spirit, and love of country|and clearly illuminates the differences in our militaries and governments. Reading 'today' of their time in captivity, brings the same emotions Americans shed upon their release and return in 1973."

GENERAL J.H. BINFORD PEAY III, U.S. Army (Retired); Superintendent, Virginia Military Institute; former Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Central Command

"With *Defiant*, Alvin Townley has done readers a huge favor. By describing the POWs' scenes of torture and deprivation in such detail--to the point we can almost feel our own bones crack under pressure--he reminds us that we should never take our civil liberties for granted. This book is a testament to the human spirit and how, in the worst of conditions with the best of men, it can be bent but never broken."

DAVID ABRAMS, author of *Fobbit*

"In a fast-flowing narrative replete with reconstructed dialogue, Townley writes reverently of these POWs"

Publishers Weekly

"Inspirational."

Kirkus Reviews

"*Defiant* is a significant document of human survival and endurance under unspeakable circumstances, and, in a time when the White House levels charges of torture against fellow Americans, provides a reality check."

World Affairs

"A gripping account of the 'Alcatraz Eleven,' a group of American prisoners of war in North Vietnam who formed a tough core of heroic resisters despite brutal and relentless efforts to break them and convert them into fodder for the Communist propaganda machine."

“Townley’s telling of these important stories is fresh and vivid, thanks to his interviews with surviving prisoners and their family members. *Defiant* is an excellent book for younger readers with little knowledge of this searing chapter in American history, when a brash United States stumbled its way deeper and deeper into the Indochina morass. Townley also adds an important, and often overlooked, dimension to the prisoners’ stories -- that of their wives’ campaign at home to thrust the plight of the P.O.W.’s into the national spotlight.” --The New York Times Book Review

Townley shines a light on [the POWs’] courage and what their families back home went through. The New York Post

“Townley recounts, in detail, how Stockdale, Denton, and the other POWs endured years of almost unimaginable physical and mental torture, and the ways the men coped with the physical pain and emotional torment. VVA Veteran

“*Defiant* is a page-turner. ... *Defiant* focuses on the prisoners -- ‘war criminals’ to the Vietnamese -- who were upgraded from bad (Hanoi Hilton) to worse (Alcatraz). ‘No one group endured any more than the 11 brothers,’ Townley writes, and he proves his point. ‘We should not forget,’ and you won’t. Marine Corps Times

ALVIN TOWNLEY is the acclaimed author of *Legacy of Honor: The Values and Influence of America’s Eagle Scouts*, *Spirit of Adventure: Eagle Scouts and the Making of America’s Future*, and *Fly Navy: Discovering the Extraordinary People and Enduring Spirit of Naval Aviation*. He lives in his hometown of Atlanta, Georgia.

I just finished this book this morning, and even as I sit to write a review I am at a loss for words. I did not grow up knowing details of, or understanding much of the Vietnam War. I was not yet alive when this all took place. I know it was a painful time in our country’s history that so many have extremely passionate opinions about, and to that I do not assume to hold such an opinion. I always wanted to understand more. Alvin Townley’s “*Defiant*” allowed me to see through a peephole into the human spirit of men like I can only hope we still have fighting for our country today. The story of the eleven men who were imprisoned in Alcatraz in Northern Vietnam were men of character, courage, faith, integrity and valiance. The torture that was brought to life on the pages of Townley’s book forced me to lay the book aside more than once, yet I could not put it down. I am proud to be a part of a country whose history includes these men, along with their wives and families back home who fought tirelessly for their lives and release. I felt heartache and sickness as I read of the days and weeks of endless torture. I cried tears of joy and pride that welled up in the end as the men returned to lives that had been put on hold for them, luckier than I know many were. Though not often, I did

laugh - being a born and bred Texan it made me chuckle to read that Sam Johnson ate Tex Mex for five days straight upon his return to the Lone Star State. I read a lot, though not a lot of historical non-fiction. However, I would recommend this book to everyone who would like to have a glimpse of this time in our history, or into the lives of these men who served us so well. Alvin, great job on telling their stories to the rest of us!

I am always impressed when an author who did not live through the events he is reporting does such a masterful job of recreating an era he did not know. This author, Alvin Townley, has done just that with his riveting, unflinching account of the torturous ordeal of the US POW's held in North Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Like many Americans of my generation who were in high school and college during that war, I paid much more attention to protesting the war than to the plight of the POWs being held there. Of course, as I learned in this book, the secrecy of the Department of Defense and the ineptness of LBJ's Department of State did little to publicize what was going on, keeping us in the dark about the prison gulag where our men were imprisoned. I want to thank Alvin Townley for writing this book, and for writing it so well. I could not put it down. Please Mr. Townley, take on some other important and untold stories from our history and keep writing. You did a superb job with this one.

I can't tell you how much I cried. Excellent book, written well and really let a reader what was in these guys souls. I do now remember as a kid sitting at the tv watching these POW's get off the plane with their families waiting. It's taken me over 40 years to discover what I was really watching as a 13 year old. I wish all these people who decide to send troops some where would read a few books like that and not send our guys out to fight other people's wars, and die for other countries. It's just not right. God bless all soldiers.

This is one of the most moving and historical accounts of what our POWs had to endure at the infamous Hanoi Hilton. Despite the brutal torture, meager diet, filthy and inhumane conditions, the captives fought their captors each and every day. They established simple yet effective methods of communicating with each other as they tried to keep the population of the prison informed and acting as a unit. This is a MUST READ! Also highly recommend the book Five Years To Freedom.

A true testament to courage, brotherhood and respect for the Code Of Conduct! After reading of the brutal torture and barbaric conditions these men suffered at the hands of the enemy, it's a miracle

that any of them survived to return home. Not only survived but resisted and defied the enemy and adhered to the Military Code Of Conduct to the best of their ability! As a veteran I am in awe of these true heroes! All gave some. Some gave all.

This is must read for readers who are interested in the Day to Day Lives of the POW's who where imprisoned in Hanoi during the Vietnam War. The author , Alvin Townley , obviously researched the personal stories of a number of P.O.W.'s but in particular a primary group who remained committed to honoring the Military Code of Honor . These men were beaten and tortured both physically and mentally by the North Vietnamese on a 24/7 basis. For the reader, it is secondary if one believed or did not believe in the Vietnam War as the book is about courage and a believe in country without consideration to life and well being. They survived through the secret creation of communications and insistence that each individual follow the Military Code even when faced with daily torture for long periods of time. Many experienced torture that resulted in permanent damage to their bodies which could not be reconstructed upon their release. Although a large portion of the book is about the POW's it also provides a detailed description of how their wives and family members created a challenge to our President and Secretary of State to assure the release of their family members became a major part of the negotiations at the Paris Peace Talks, that eventually ended the war, Their efforts embarrassed both the U.S. State Department and the Vietnamese negotiators and and in turn forced them to make the welfare and release of their men a priority with the negotiation process..

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