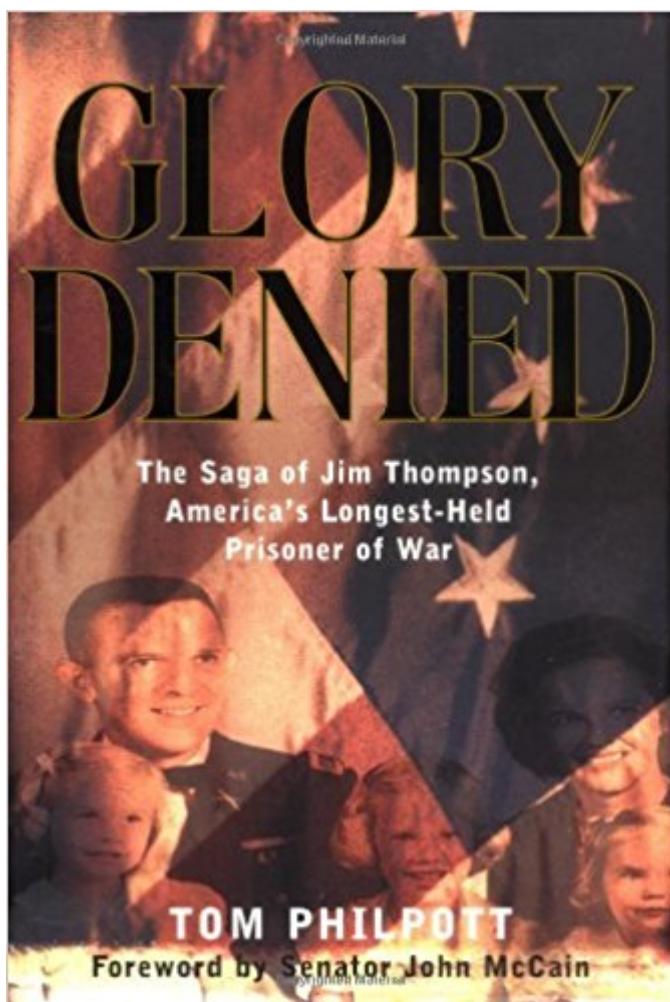


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# Glory Denied: The Saga Of Jim Thompson, America's Longest-Held Prisoner Of War



## Synopsis

Glory Denied— the harrowing story of America's longest-held POW, the wrenching agonies faced by his family, and the larger story of a nation divided.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Army officer Jim Thompson's horrific experience in a series of North Vietnamese prisons was nasty and brutish--but definitely not short. He was held as a prisoner of war for nearly nine years, longer than any other American POW. His treatment was torturous: "I was put into a horizontal cage maybe two feet wide, two feet high, and five feet long. There I was kept for four months, chained hand and feet." And sometimes he was just plain tortured: "I sat there with a pen in hand as they shouted at me to write," he recalls of a time his captors tried to make him issue a statement condemning the American war effort. "Periodically they hit me with bamboo. Not hard enough to knock me unconscious or to break the skin. Just enough to hurt. They kept at it for eight, ten, twelve hours a day." (He eventually gave in, and signed a statement.) The irony is that Thompson's life improved little upon his return to the United States. His wife had taken up with another man, his family fell apart, he drank to excess, and his son was convicted of murder. Readers will be at once tempted and reluctant to call Thompson a hero--tempted because of how much he suffered for serving his country and for his numerous escape attempts, but reluctant because Thompson was himself responsible for much of the pain he brought on himself and his family following his return. Military journalist Tom Philpott has produced an oddly fascinating book about Thompson's ordeal. Glory

Denied is not a piece of narrative nonfiction, but an oral history. It tells Thompson's story through the words of Thompson and those who knew him. Readers who want a more uplifting POW story may want to try *Faith of Our Fathers* by Senator John McCain (who contributes a foreword to *Glory Denied*), yet Philpott's book may come closer to capturing the agony so many Americans continue to associate with Vietnam. --John J. Miller

Col. Floyd James "Jim" Thompson of the U.S. Army Special Forces was captured by the Vietcong in South Vietnam in March 1964 and held longer than any other prisoner of war in American history, suffering greatly physically and emotionally. He was released, along with other American POWs, in March 1973. Thompson's troubles, however, only multiplied after his release. During his captivity, Thompson's wife, Alyce, moved with their four young children into the home of an army sergeant and told the children their father was dead. The Thompsons reunited after his release, but their marriage soon dissolved, and Thompson later suffered a stroke that diminished his mental capabilities. For this biography, Philpott, who writes the syndicated column "Military Update," interviewed 160 people over 15 years. In an even more *ritual* manner than Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* or George Plimpton's *Truman Capote*, Philpott tells Thompson's story mainly through the verbatim testimony he gathered from Thompson's family, friends and colleagues, along with various newspaper articles and other ephemera that have collected around Thompson. The Thompson family's postwar lives read like a *Jerry Springer* show, replete with severe alcoholism, spousal abuse, adultery, teenage pregnancy, bitter divorce and the jailing of Thompson's son on a murder charge. Philpott arranges the entire story deftly, with the most riveting sections covering Thompson's incarceration. Much of Thompson's own contributions come from interviews he gave for another book before his stroke. Philpott himself emerges here mostly through his choices in montage, and his refusal to comment directly gives this work real dignity. (May 14) Forecast: A *New Yorker* abridgement (Apr. 2 issue), a short foreword from Vietnam POW Sen. John McCain and release in time for Memorial Day should launch this book with verve, and its uncanny mix of human and military interest should quickly propel it onto bestseller lists. Expect serious sales and reviews that dwell on Philpott's primary source-based narrative method. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

I had the Honor of meeting Col. Thompson and 7 other Vietnam POW'S as I was a comrade in Arms with one of them Maj. Ret. Mark A. Smith or as he is well known by we Vet's, as "Zippo". The book tells of the struggles of Jim, both while being held prisoner of war by the NVA and of his

struggle after being freed. He was held in SOLITARY for Five years! I asked Jim as we all dined one evening at a local restaurant in Pensacola Fl. "How Did you do Five Years alone?" He replied." One day at a Time. I wasn't going to let the Bastards beat me!" When he was dragged into the compound with the rest of the POW'S the only way they knew he was an American, was by his combat boots dangling from his neck. He had lost so much weight that they did not fit him anymore. He barely weighed 90 lbs and then he went on to escape twice, being recaptured each time. All the Torture the Enemy inflicted upon him. But he never gave up! He is truly one of America's Best! You Can Take That to The Bank! How in the world could the United States Military treat a man, the Longest Held Prisoner of War like he wasn't even there? No one hardly know's of him or of the Inhuman treatment, put upon the POW's not held in the "Hanoi Hilton." When the POW'S at Jims prison learned that the men of the "Hilton" complained about their food, their response was, "What Food!" They were lucky to get any food at all. I would encourage every American to read this book if he or she wants to learn what it was like for the "Poor Souls" imprisoned in remote jungle camps during the war. It is a compelling story of One of our BEST, taking everything that the enemy threw at him, never giving in, and in the end, "Beating The Bastards" He is no longer with us now in body, But he will never be forgotten by those that served with Jim, Those that knew him, and those who have read of his Epic Struggle to survive and one day to be Welcomed Home by his Country which he so proudly served. Read this Book and tell your friends to buy it, borry it, or swipe it if they don't have the money. It is well worth it.Glory Denied: The Saga of Jim Thompson, America's Longest-Held Prisoner of WarKonKrete

Special Forces Captain Jim Thompson was shot down (while an observer on a reconnaissance flight) over South Vietnam on March 24, 1964. Held first in jungle camps in South Vietnam and later moved to North Vietnam, Thompson would not see another American for 4 years and would spend a total of 5 years in solitary confinement and isolation.Suffering brutal torture, disease, and starvation, he would endure some of the worst treatment ever imagined for almost 9 unbelievable years. Eventually, he would be recognized as the longest held prisoner of war in American history. During his confinement, Thompson never wavered in his defiance of his captors and continually upheld his convictions in America, his patriotism, his pride, and his beliefs.Upon returning to the United States, hoping to re-establish a stable home life, Jim Thompson is quickly immersed in tragic events that would continue several years after his return. Starting with the revelation of his wife's infidelity during his captivity, major turmoil would befall his family soon thereafter. He is unprepared for 9 years of change that has influenced his family and this sadly leads to, among other things,

alienation of his children, addiction to alcohol, estrangement from his wife, and eventual divorce. In a constant uphill struggle, Thompson painfully suffered through many subsequent events in his life that literally brought him to the edge of despair and his attempting suicide. Glory Denied is quite possibly the saddest, most tragic, and totally heart-wrenching accounts of POW captivity ever written. It is also a story of love, understanding, forgiveness, hope, faith, and survival. Sixteen years in the making, this book is exceedingly well written and prepared and evokes much emotion in its content. Deserving of 10 stars, this book is very highly recommended to everyone.

Attention: this is not a straightforward account. The author relies on statements from various people involved, so on the page it almost looks like the script to a play. This can be disorienting. I was hoping for a traditionally told story. Here's a sample of what I mean: SAM DEACON: I felt empty when I heard. They called me at home, told me to come in. I was to be Alyce's survival assistance officer, the guy there to pick up the pieces after the chaplain leaves. Alyce was in shock. It was a big blur, like a dream. ALYCE: Sam went all to pieces too, blaming himself, saying, "Maybe it would have been me in that plane instead of him." SAM DEACON: I did blame myself. The anger I'd felt earlier turned into frustration at not being there to help look for Jim. There wasn't enough information to conclude he was dead. They couldn't even find the aircraft. I felt as if I'd have been there maybe I could have found it. LEA HOFF: Alyce called crying to say Jim was missing. But she said she hadn't lost hope. She knew he was going to be found. ALYCE: Mother took me to the hospital. It was Good Friday, and the day of the big Alaskan earthquake. While in labor I kept asking if the nurse had heard anything. About six o'clock that evening young Jim was born. Anyhow, the entire book is like that, all 400 pages of it. If you are looking for a straightforward account along these lines, I would recommend Terry Anderson's "Den of Lions: A Startling Memoir of Survival and Triumph," or Lewis Burwell Puller, Jr.'s "Fortunate Son: The Healing of a Vietnam Vet," although that one, while it is about a Vietnam vet, it's not actually one who was a prisoner of war.

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