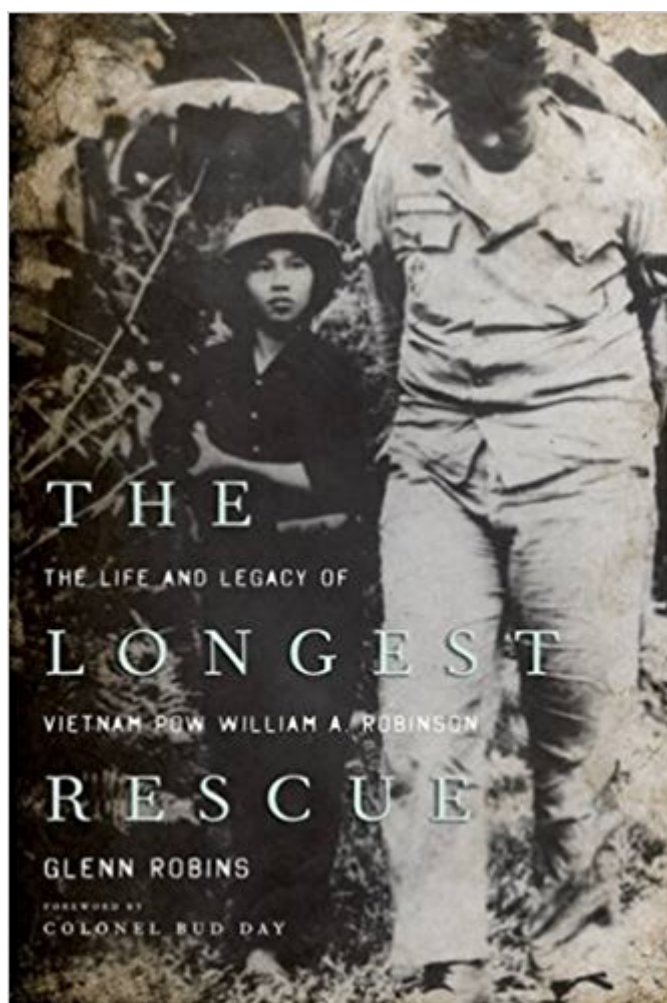


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The Longest Rescue: The Life And Legacy Of Vietnam POW William A. Robinson



Synopsis

While serving as a crew chief aboard a U.S. Air Force Rescue helicopter, Airman First Class William A. Robinson was shot down and captured in Ha Tinh Province, North Vietnam, on September 20, 1965. After a brief stint at the "Hanoi Hilton," Robinson endured 2,703 days in multiple North Vietnamese prison camps, including the notorious Briarpatch and various compounds at Cu Loc, known by the inmates as the Zoo. No enlisted man in American military history has been held as a prisoner of war longer than Robinson. For seven and a half years, he faced daily privations and endured the full range of North Vietnam's torture program. In *The Longest Rescue: The Life and Legacy of Vietnam POW William A. Robinson*, Glenn Robins tells Robinson's story using an array of sources, including declassified U.S. military documents, translated Vietnamese documents, and interviews from the National Prisoner of War Museum. Unlike many other POW accounts, this comprehensive biography explores Robinson's life before and after his capture, particularly his estranged relationship with his father, enabling a better understanding of the difficult transition POWs face upon returning home and the toll exacted on their families. Robins's powerful narrative not only demonstrates how Robinson and his fellow prisoners embodied the dedication and sacrifice of America's enlisted men but also explores their place in history and memory.

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Customer Reviews

"A very interesting account of how one POW not only came to terms with his Vietnam experience, culminating in a return to the country where he was imprisoned, but even more strikingly, how he eventually reconciled himself to his own status as a POW." — Craig Howes, author of *Voices of the*

Vietnam POWs: Witnesses to Their Flight" *The Longest Rescue* is one of the most detailed and meaningful descriptions of what it means to be a prisoner of war." •Lewis H. Carlson, author of *Remember Prisoners of a Forgotten War* and *We Were Each Other's Prisoners*" *The Longest Rescue* is an incredibly moving account of the brutal captivity and honorable return home of a big man with an even bigger spirit, William Andrew Robinson. I had the distinct pleasure to meet Bill this past year when our Enlisted Heritage Research Institute unveiled a Vietnam POW exhibit paying tribute to him and his fellow captives. He shared his remarkable story with us, and what struck me most was his ability to forgive those who treated him so inhumanely. I greatly respect this American Airman, and am forever grateful for his tremendous contributions to the proud heritage, tradition of honor, and legacy of valor we celebrate in our Airman's Creed. This well-written book has deepened my admiration of and gratitude for Bill Robinson even more." •Lt. General Dave Fadok, USAF, Commander & President, Air University" This fine book tells the story of William Robinson's heroic life before, during, and after his captivity experience in North Vietnam. It talks about real people working together to survive perhaps the longest and most severe POW experience since the Civil War. A very personal kind of story, one that touches the emotions deeply, I hope that readers will find it fascinating, especially in the horrific details of Robinson's captivity, his family difficulties, and his basic and genuine goodness of character." •Robert C. Doyle, author of *The Enemy in our Hands: American Treatment of Enemy POWs from the Revolution to the War on Terror*" *The Longest Rescue* is a fine contribution to US military history in general and to POW studies in particular." •Michigan War Studies Review

Glenn Robins, professor of history at Georgia Southwestern State University, is editor of *They Have Left Us Here to Die: The Civil War Prison Diary of Sgt. Lyle G. Adair, 111th U.S. Colored Infantry* and coeditor of *America and the Vietnam War: Re-examining the Culture and History of a Generation*.

(has this review as coming from Rena Agnew; I don't seem to be able to make that attribution go away. Sorry. She is my wife. My name is Al Agnew and I'm a retired US Navy Commander.) Bill Robinson is the longest held enlisted POW of any of America's wars and one of the first enlisted men to receive the Air Force Cross. I've known him for almost 40 years and as the last POW shot down in North Vietnam knew a bit of his story. Over the years I've learned quite a bit more as we've had conversations and participated in various functions. This book gives the full backstory, not only about captivity but about his reintegration into our free society. This is an honest, from the heart,

recounting of privation, faith, fellowship and making peace with a previously disruptive private life. Once you start reading, you won't want to stop.

Terrific story about an extraordinary person. Only reason I didn't give five stars is bc there were in my opinion far too many micro details that weren't necessary to tell the story. For example I got really bored trying to read through descriptions of military equipment I'm unfamiliar with to find out what happened. What I wanted to know was who is Bill Robinson and what did he endure during captivity? Just too many details of things that were irrelevant to the main idea.

A humble and big hearted young man, someone you can relate to, enlisted AF, is a POW for 7 and a half years, held under horrific conditions and tortured, imprisoned with strong willed patriots (in the most serious and honorable sense of the word); he matched them in strength and will. Most were officers; he was not. They nursed each other, strengthened each other, and in this man's story, they helped him grow to be a great man. The context then was the Viet Nam War. Read about the big picture: Decisions made by the Presidents and Their Men and the consequences for these prisoners; the lives of these Americans, small events and huge events while POWs, all revealing significant aspects of each POW as a man--and of their captors; read how military training and discipline gave these men the strength to serve with honor while imprisoned; how they coped day in and day out for so very long; the effect on this airman's family members and their abilities to cope, or not, with their loved one away and at risk for so long; how The Longest Rescue culminates not just in freedom for the young man but in finally finding and marrying the right woman, the one who completed him and helps him with his newer mission of supporting other POWs from that and other wars, inspiring young warriors with his presentations; and being all he can be to his family, his community, and his nation. It's not all torture. It's inspiring. It's humbling. These men were so human, yet superhuman in their strength and bravery. They are brothers together to this day, decades after release. Reading this book brings the big picture and this airman's story alive and is very readable. The story continues here at home for them and for us. Learn more about how and why. It's not just history, it's a story which hasn't ended. Moving.

This is a difficult read because of treatment as POW. Stick with it because after release and later after active duty in USAF there are interesting happening is life.

I have known Bill Robinson now for several months. He is such an inspiration for me and I am sure

the same applies for countless other people, Especially those who may suffer from Vietnam War related PTSD. I have learned in talking to him and observing him talking to others, that you must habituate and face the demons face to face, head on. For many years I couldn't do this. Now with the help of the Veterans Association and a wonderful Psychiatrist, I am able to more understand how to deal with the PTSD issue. But, the one person who has been instrumental in my "attitude" adjustment is Bill Robinson. After reading this book on his years as a POW and listening to some of his personal accountability, my experiences and problem areas have become miniscule. What a great American Hero. I am proud to have him for my friend.

This book is one of the best yet. It explains some of what our men faced in these prisons in Vietnam and all I could think of was "how do men like these survive and come back and live their lives while we take it for granted?" Without this kind of courage America would never have survived as we have all these years. Get the book, it will one you really want to read again!

From start to finish, I couldn't put it down. The story is very compelling, not just the POW side, but the impact of his capture on his family and the struggle after returning home. CPT Robinson has endured what few men could imagine, with honor and dignity. Read this book and discover for yourself some of the sacrifices of those who defend freedom and our way of life.

Very touching and heartfelt book by an acquaintance of mine years ago. Great to be informed of some of the many experiences all of our Military Personnel have, almost daily, especially during combat. A true story of the ;hardest of times for all of our Military people during a time when most of America did NOT support their efforts. A must read for those who really care for our Military and some of the trials they experience.

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