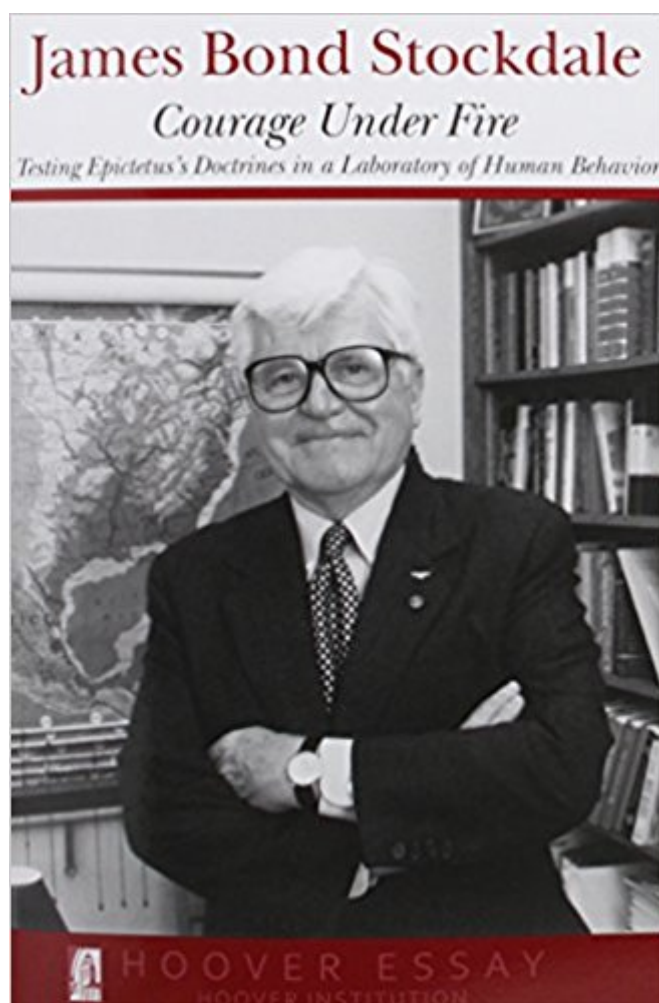


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# Courage Under Fire: Testing Epictetus's Doctrines In A Laboratory Of Human Behavior (Hoover Essays)



## Synopsis

When physical disability from combat wounds brought about Jim Stockdale's early retirement from military life, he had the distinction of being the only three-star officer in the history of the navy to wear both aviator wings and the Congressional Medal of Honor. His writings have been many and varied, but all converge on the central theme of how man can rise with dignity to prevail in the face of adversity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Vice Admiral James Stockdale, a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution, served in the navy from 1947 to 1979, beginning as a test pilot and instructor at Patuxent River, Maryland, and spending two years as a graduate student at Stanford University. He became a fighter pilot and was shot down on his second combat tour over North Vietnam, becoming a prisoner of war for eight years, four in solitary confinement. The highest-ranking naval officer held during the Vietnam War, he was tortured fifteen times and put in leg irons for two years. His books include *Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot* (1995, Hoover Institution Press) and *In Love and War* (second revised and updated edition, 1990, U.S. Naval Institute Press), coauthored with his wife, Sybil. In early 1987, a dramatic presentation of *In Love and War* was viewed by more than 45 million viewers on NBC television.

This 21-page book is an excellent introduction to Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius and the poem

Invictus. The stoic thinkers are woven into his story of his time as a prisoner of war in Hanoi. Rewarding for anyone who wonders how best to be an adult.

A strong account of how the Stoic philosophy helped a courageous man respond skilfully to extreme adversity. A reminder that even though we have little real control over our lives, Stoic clear thinking can help us "play the game" of life with some autonomy.

I don't have a lot of detailed commentary for this one, but it's a very interesting stoic retrospective on experiences that clearly had major impact on the author. It is an essay rather than any sort of narrative, but that's fine. A bit pricy given the extremely short length, however.

i wish i had paid more attention to Adm. Stockdale while he was still alive

It's a very good introduction to stoicism thought, mixing historical facts, personal impressions and philosophy concepts in a simple, clear and direct narrative. I already liked stoicism philosophy, but it was much more involving reading such ideas explained by someone who has lived in the XX century. Besides, the life of James Stockdale by itself is a great testimony of self improvement and righteousness. Fascinating.

This pamphlet, published by the "Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace" at Stanford is a reprint of a speech Adm. Stockdale delivered at the Great Hall, King's College, London on Monday November 5, 1993. The pamphlet is 21 pages long. The booklet begins with Stockdale at Stanford as a middle-aged, gray-haired grad student. He bumps into professor Rhineland, who persuades him to try studying philosophy. Stockdale gets hooked on the Stoic philosophy of Epictetus. Pages 2 - 7 are a synopsis of Epictetus' philosophy. On page 6 Stockdale says that after we returned to duty he always carried with him the Enchiridion and Discourses of Epictetus, the Memorabilia by Xenophon, the Iliad, and the Odyssey. On page 7 he is shot down and begins discussing the interaction between Stoic teachings and life as a prisoner. I had my 12 year old boy read this pamphlet up to page 13, when it starts to get rough. On page 14 he quotes Epictetus and then relates those lessons to his practice of chanting to himself, "control fear, control guilt, control fear, control guilt," on his way to interrogation. Stockdale explains the psychological aspects of torture and describes some details of how they were tortured. This is a moving story of how he struggled to be a leader to the rest of the prisoners, how he struggled against the torture, and how he used Stoicism to aid him

in his struggles.

Great account of a strong mind under extremely testing conditions.

I am not sure how I stumbled on the writings of former POW Admiral Stockdale but am so glad I did. Having served a couple tours in Nam myself I have been a forever student of the war and this book, while out of print, should be a best seller. Stockdale came home and served as President of a couple universities and the book is a compilation of his articles, speeches and writings on the topic of the war. I did not know he was the Commander of the planes who responded to the now infamous Gulf of Tonkin incident. He outlines his personal observations of the event and his utter shock at being sent out to bomb Vihn the next night in retaliation. If you are a student of the war this is a great read.

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