

two other detained American officers, stood at attention with tears in his eyes, and simply said, "Lieutenant Colonel SAM JOHNSON reporting for duty, sir."

Madam Speaker, there's no better way to describe a hero than retelling that story.

Today, I am proud to serve with SAM on the House Education and the Workforce Committee. Together, we're working to reform our education, pension, and health care laws for generations to come.

SAM is an effective subcommittee chair, an astute legislator, and a terrific representative of his constituents at home in Texas. His continued to service to his nation is most admirable.

To SAM, I thank you for your 29-year career in the Air Force, your courage and sacrifice, and your continued commitment to this country by serving in its Congress. On this important anniversary, I salute you and wish you and your wife Shirley the very best in the years to come.

Mr. COLLINS. Madam Speaker, I have the privilege to sit on the Ways and Means Committee here in Congress with SAM JOHNSON. I consider him to be my friend. More than that. He is a true American Hero. You see, SAM JOHNSON was an F-4 Fighter-Bomber pilot in Vietnam. SAM was shot down and captured by the North Vietnamese in 1966. For the next 7 and a-half years he was a prisoner of war in what the POW's referred to as Alcatraz. This was a prison for the strongest willed of American prisoners of war. A place where the Vietcong would try to break the will of those who stood against it.

For three years of his time, SAM was in solitary confinement. Other than the frequent times when the enemy took him and brutally tortured him, he never had any contact with another human being for that entire time.

To communicate with one another, the prisoners developed a system of taps with their fingers on the walls and floors of their cells. This allowed them to provide each other their names and ranks so that if one of them should escape or be released, they would be able to tell American intelligence who was alive and in what prison they were being housed.

While in Alcatraz, SAM met another pilot. This pilot was also in the camp for 7 and a-half years, three of which were spent in solitary confinement. Colonel Jeremiah Denton also endured years of torture, abuse, degradation, untreated injuries, malnutrition, years of separation from his wife and family, and conditions that most human beings would consider impossible to survive.

Both of these men were in Vietnam to serve their country. To fight for American interests and to bring democracy to an oppressed people. While some back home were protesting the war, these men didn't let that influence their mission. They were heroes who stood strong, never renouncing their nation. They always supported the United States throughout.

During an interview with the media during his imprisonment, Denton was asked about his support of U.S. policy concerning the war. He replied: "I don't know what is happening now in Vietnam, because the only news sources I have are North Vietnamese, but whatever the position of my government is, I believe in it, I support it, and I will support it as long as I live."

When the prisoners were released in 1973, they were flown to Clark Field in the Phil-

ippines before being flown home. President Ronald Reagan summarized that moment best in his State of The Union Address before Congress in 1982:

He said, "We don't have to turn to our history books for heroes. They are all around us. One who sits among you here tonight epitomized that heroism at the end of the longest imprisonment ever inflicted on men of our armed forces. Who will ever forget that night when we waited for the television to bring us the scene of that first plane landing at Clark Field in the Philippines—bringing our POWs home. The plane door opened and Jeremiah Denton came slowly down the ramp. He caught sight of our flag, saluted, and said, 'God Bless America,' then thanked us for bringing him home."

As the senior officer on the plane, Denton was asked to go to the microphone and say a few words. What he said that day fully captures that American spirit which so motivates young men and women to serve their country. "We are honored to have had the opportunity to serve our country under difficult circumstances. We are profoundly grateful to our Commander-in-Chief and to our Nation for this day. God bless America."

It is no wonder to me that the American people elected Jeremiah Denton to the United States Senate, and SAM JOHNSON to the United States House of Representatives. But their story is repeated countless times in the thousands of American prisoners of war who returned home after that long conflict and after other wars and conflicts throughout the years.

It is repeated in every voice of every serviceman and woman who takes an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. It is echoed in every snap of the American flag as it flaps in the wind, and seen meandering through the rows of crosses in every military cemetery in which American soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines are buried.

You see, America has never been an oppressor nation. Each time troops have been sent to battle, it has been to carry on the ideals of freedom and liberty. Each free breath we take, every moment we live without oppression makes that sacrifice worthwhile.

Yes, serving your country can be hard. Just ask SAM JOHNSON and Jeremiah Denton. But if it was easy, everyone would do it. It is the fact that it is hard that makes it worth doing.

Since the fall of Saigon in 1975, we have failed to locate 1,948 Americans in Vietnam, including 38 civilians.

It is our duty, as a nation, and as a Congress, to continue pursuing every available avenue, until we have located and brought home every one of our service personnel from Vietnam.

One veteran we were able to bring home after many years summed up this duty best before he disappeared in 1970.

Major Michael O'Donnell, who flew many rescue missions in his helicopter while in Vietnam, expressed it this way.

"If you are able, save for them a place inside of you and save one backward glance when you are leaving for the places they can no longer go. Be not ashamed to say you loved them, though you may or may not have always. Take what they have left and what they have taught you with their dying and keep it with your own. And in that time when men decide and feel safe to call the war insane, take one moment to embrace those gentle heroes you left behind."

After many years, Major O'Donnell's remains were finally returned home in 1995 and positively identified in 2001.

It is my hope that some day, we can say that every one of our men and women who have served their nation has finally come home.

Madam Speaker: It is my honor to stand on this floor today and express my profound gratitude for the service of our men and women in our armed forces. Their commitment and sacrifice are the ultimate price for our security and liberty. It is my prayer that every one of them would come home to us healthy and safe. It is my commitment that if that is not possible, we will still bring them all home so they may rest among those they served in the peace they helped to forge. To me, that is the greatest memorial we can provide for these brave souls.

In closing, I just want to echo the sentiment of my colleagues in saying to every POW and MIA; you are not forgotten.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 62.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 11, 2003.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I respectfully request permission to resign from the House Committee on Education and the Workforce effective immediately. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

MARK SOUDER,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted. There was no objection.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on Science: