

RECOGNIZING THE COURAGE AND SACRIFICE OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES HELD AS PRISONERS OF WAR DURING THE VIETNAM CONFLICT AND CALLING FOR A FULL ACCOUNTING OF THOSE WHO REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 62) recognizing the courage and sacrifice of those members of the United States Armed Forces who were held as prisoners of war during the Vietnam conflict and calling for a full accounting of the 1,902 members of the Armed Forces who remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam conflict.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 62

Whereas recent world events have brought Americans closer together, while reinvigorating our patriotism, reminding us of our precious liberties and freedoms, and giving us a greater appreciation for the men and women of the United States Armed Forces who daily defend our homeland;

Whereas the honor and valor of past and present members of the United States Armed Forces have inspired many young people, once again, to serve their country;

Whereas participation by the United States Armed Forces in combat operations in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam conflict resulted in more than 700 American military personnel being taken prisoner by enemy forces;

Whereas American military personnel who were taken prisoner were held in numerous prisoner of war facilities, the most notorious of which was Hoa Lo Prison in downtown Hanoi, Vietnam, which was dubbed by prisoners held there as the "Hanoi Hilton";

Whereas on January 23, 1973, the United States and North Vietnam jointly announced the terms of a cease-fire agreement, which included the release of prisoners of war;

Whereas the return of the American prisoners of war to the United States and to their families and comrades was designated Operation Homecoming;

Whereas on February 12, 1973, the first group of American prisoners of war were released at airfields near Hanoi and Loc Ninh, and the last Operation Homecoming repatriation took place on April 1, 1973;

Whereas many American military personnel who were taken prisoner as a result of combat in Southeast Asia have not returned to their loved ones and their fate remains unknown;

Whereas American military personnel who were prisoners of war in Southeast Asia were routinely subjected to brutal mistreatment, including beatings, torture, starvation, and denial of medical attention and outside information, and were frequently isolated from each other and prohibited from communicating with one another;

Whereas the prisoners, at great personal risk, nevertheless devised a means to communicate with each other through a code transmitted by tapping on cell walls;

Whereas the prisoners held in the Hanoi Hilton included then-Major Samuel R. Johnson, United States Air Force, now a Member of Congress from the Third District of Texas, who was shot down on April 16, 1966, while flying his 25th mission over North Vietnam, who spent more than half of his time as a prisoner in solitary confinement, conducted himself with such valor as to be labeled by the enemy as a die-hard resister, and, not-

withstanding the tremendous suffering inflicted upon him, demonstrated an unflinching devotion to duty, honor and country, who, during his military career, was awarded two Silver Stars, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, one Bronze Star with "V" device for valor, two Purple Hearts, four Air Medals, and three Outstanding Unit awards, who retired from active duty in 1979 in the grade of colonel, and who personifies the verse in Isaiah 40:31, "They shall mount with wings as eagles";

Whereas the American military personnel who were prisoners of war during the Vietnam conflict truly represent all that is best about America;

Whereas the 30th anniversary of Operation Homecoming begins on February 12, 2003, and ends on April 1, 2003;

Whereas the world acknowledges that the words inscribed by an American prisoner of war in a Hanoi Hilton cell, "Freedom has a taste to those who fight and die for it that the protected will never know", are bitterly true and eternally appreciated; and

Whereas the Nation owes a debt of gratitude to these patriots and their families for their courage, heroism, and exemplary service: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its deepest gratitude for, and calls upon all Americans to reflect upon and to show their gratitude for, the courage and sacrifice of the brave members of the United States Armed Forces, including particularly Sam Johnson of Texas, who were held as prisoners of war during the Vietnam conflict;

(2) urges States and localities to honor the courage and sacrifice of those prisoners of war with appropriate ceremonies and activities;

(3) acting on behalf of all Americans, will not forget the 1,902 members of the United States Armed Forces who remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam conflict and will continue to press for a full accounting of all of these members; and

(4) honors all of the members of the United States Armed Forces who have fought and died in the defense of freedom.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 62.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of this resolution authored by the distinguished majority leader and gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY). It recognizes the courage and sacrifice of American military personnel held prisoner during the Vietnam conflict and especially highlights the courage and sacrifice of one of our own, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON), a POW for 7 years.

Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY).

Mr. DELAY. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. I greatly appreciate the chairman for bringing this resolution to the floor at this time. It is a timely resolution, as we all know.

Madam Speaker, most of us feel something very special for the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON). We feel a profound sense of gratitude to every American who has suffered greatly in defense of freedom. And prisoners of war frequently suffer levels of abuse that most of us could scarcely imagine, let alone endure.

Each of our American prisoners of war should know that the people of this country cherish their service. They have our solemn gratitude and our solemn appreciation.

Let me say a few words about my friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON), because there is a lesson in SAM's story for the rest of us. Even during the most trying and emotionally wrenching experiences that life can possibly confront us with, the eternal qualities endure and they will sustain us.

SAM emerged from those years of brutality with his essential virtues only that much stronger. His captors attempted to strip away the qualities that took him to Vietnam, but the torturers' twisted objective utterly failed, because far from eroding SAM's defining principles, the abuse only tempered his convictions and raised them to a new plane upon which they were forever beyond the reach of evil or intimidation.

SAM JOHNSON came home with his love of country, his passion for family, his reverence for freedom, and his faith in the Lord immensely strengthened.

And, as it was for SAM JOHNSON in the Hanoi Hilton, so too will it be for the United States during our war against tyranny and terrorism. Our enemies may think that acts of brutality and mass murder will divert Americans from our purpose, but they do not understand America. As SAM JOHNSON and most Texans would tell them, we have drawn our line in the sand and will never back down until every last terrorist stands before judgment.

Thank you, SAM JOHNSON, for your service to your country. God bless you, and God bless America.

Mr. SNYDER. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. McNULTY).

Mr. McNULTY. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman (Mr. SNYDER) for yielding me this time, and I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) for bringing this important resolution to the floor.

As I get older, I work more on trying to keep my priorities straight. Among them are remembering that had it not been for all of the men and women who wore the uniform of the United States military through the years, people like me would not have the privilege of going around bragging, as I often do, about how we live in the freest and

most open democracy on the face of the Earth. Freedom is not free. We have paid a tremendous price for it.

I try not to let a day go by without remembering with deepest gratitude all of those who, like my own brother Bill, made the supreme sacrifice. I'm thankful to all those who wore the uniform of the United States military, put their lives on the line for us and all that we hold dear, and then came back home and rendered outstanding service in our communities, and raised beautiful families to carry on in their fine traditions.

Today, most especially, we salute and pay tribute to all those who endured torture on our behalf as prisoners of war. Chief among them are my friend and colleague from the Committee on Ways and Means, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON), Senator JOHN MCCAIN, and Ambassador Pete Peterson.

I join my colleagues in saluting them for what they went through remembering all of those who endured torture on our behalf as prisoners of war, and renewing our collective commitment to account for all of the American military personnel who are still missing in action.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. GRANGER), and this was at the request of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON), that we have the best-looking Texans go first. We made a mistake with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), but we are going to make up for it now.

Ms. GRANGER. Madam Speaker, since September 11, 2001, Americans have had great lessons in what it means to be a hero. We realize more than ever that we owe a debt of gratitude to those patriots and their families who fight to protect our freedoms.

Today, I am rising to particularly recognize a man whose life is a lesson in heroism.

I did not know SAM JOHNSON before I campaigned to join him here in the Congress, but I knew him from his reputation and his record.

After I came to Washington, I read the book he wrote of his experiences in Vietnam. Although it is not a long book, and I am a pretty fast reader, I could not read it all in one sitting as I often do, because I would have to put the book down to wipe my eyes, because I have never known anyone to go through what he went through in the name of America.

He is being recognized today on the 30th anniversary of his release from a North Vietnamese prison camp in Hanoi, where he spent 7 years as a prisoner of war, 7 long years, 3½ in solitary confinement and 2½ in leg irons. During that time, he was a hero to all he came in contact with.

How did he come in contact with his fellow prisoners? By tapping a code on the wall and by memorizing 374 names of other prisoners, because he never lost hope of getting out of that confinement and bringing those names home.

For his service, he was awarded two Silver Stars, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, one Bronze Star with Valor, two Purple Hearts, four Air Medals, three Outstanding Unit Awards, and the admiration, respect, and the appreciation of millions of Americans and Vietnamese.

That makes SAM a tough son of a gun, but he is also a man of great depth and great faith. On the 47th day of his confinement, a typhoon blew the window open for the first time and he said, "I saw the sunrise, the trees; it was God in all His glory."

I think God's glory shines through SAM JOHNSON. He is a hero to all of us and he certainly has been that to me.

□ 1515

Mr. SNYDER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise and join my colleagues in support of House Resolution 62, which recognizes the courage and sacrifices of American prisoners of war during the Vietnam conflict and calls for a full accounting of those who remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam conflict.

Thirty years ago today the first group of American prisoners of war was officially released from captivity in Vietnam. Operation Homecoming began on February 12, 1973; and the last repatriation occurred on April 1, 1973. Who can forget those dramatic news photographs of families being reunited with their POWs, their loved ones. In less than 2 months, over 500 Americans returned to the United States.

During the Vietnam War, over 700 American military personnel were taken prisoner by enemy forces. The first prisoner of war in the Southeast Asia conflict occurred in Laos on March 23, 1961. For some like Floyd Thompson, who was the longest held POW, it would be nearly a decade before his family saw him again. Many were held in infamous prison facilities, such as the Hoa Lo prison, which was referred to by the prisoners as the Hanoi Hilton. Many Members of the House have visited the Hanoi Hilton.

On January 23, 1973, the United States and North Vietnam agreed to a cease fire and a return of the prisoners of war. Operation Homecoming resulted in the release and return of 591 Americans. One of the prisoners held, and the one we particularly honor today, was then-Major SAM JOHNSON of the United States Air Force, now a Member of Congress from Texas' third district. He was shot down on April 16, 1966, while flying his 25th mission over Vietnam.

He was labeled a die-hard resister and spent the majority of his time as a prisoner of war in solitary confinement. During his captivity, SAM demonstrated an unshakeable devotion to duty, honor, and country. He retired from the Air Force with the grade of colonel in 1979. It is clearly an honor and privilege to serve with SAM in the House of Representatives.

My colleague mentioned the book that SAM wrote. It is called "Captive Warrior: A Viet Nam POW Story." This is a young-looking version of Congressman JOHNSON here on the front, and I will take the liberty of at least plugging the book.

Texas A&M University Press is where I got my copy, and like my preceding colleague, it is an unadulterated and captivating version of what the life of these men was like in captivity.

Back home, Madam Speaker, I do a talk primarily in schools. I call it my congressional heroes speech in which I have blown up photos of Members of Congress and talk about a 1-, 2-, or 3-minute summary of their life. One of the people I talk about is Floyd Spence, our great and beloved chairman, now passed away, and his courage in the face of having an organ transplant, one of the first in the country that had, I believe, a lung transplant.

One of the people I talk about is SAM, and I make the point that SAM and I often disagree on political issues on the floor of this House. And when you see those votes where it is 220 to 190, well, I am usually in the 190 and he is in the 220; but the differences in policy and politics does not change the fact that SAM JOHNSON is truly one of America's heroes and I will continue to talk about him.

I also mention a former colleague of ours, Pete Peterson from Florida, who was also a prisoner of war during the Vietnam conflict, shot down on September 10, 1966. He also had a distinguished career in the Air Force and retired as a colonel in 1981. He left Congress and served with distinction as our Nation's first ambassador to Vietnam following the Vietnam conflict. I met with him in Hanoi as many Members did, and he is also a very fine American.

Also a note, Madam Speaker, about civilians. We recognize the sacrifices and courage of our servicemembers who were held as POWs. Twenty-five civilians were also released as prisoners of war during Operation Homecoming. Twelve were released prior to the operation and four escaped. Of the 97 individuals listed by the services that were not returned during Operation Homecoming, 80 were servicemembers but 17 were civilians.

Madam Speaker, recent world events remind us that our freedoms are not free. Men and women in uniform volunteer to protect the liberties and ideals that we hold dear, but there are risks. In our recognition today of our colleague, Congressman SAM JOHNSON, and his former colleagues that served as POWs, once again brings home the sacrifices that are made. We use SAM today as our symbol of all the POWs from that conflict, and we salute them today.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. CRANE).

Mr. CRANE. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution to honor all of our prisoners of war from the Vietnam conflict. In particular, I want to join the House in paying a special tribute to my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON). SAM's service to his country has spanned the Korean War and the Vietnam War, where he was a prisoner of war for 7 years.

In his office on Capitol Hill, SAM has a photo of his favorite plane. On it is inscribed part of a special Bible verse from Isaiah, "They shall mount up with wings as eagles," an inscription that embodies the continuing spirit of this great patriot in our midst and one which should inspire all Americans with the courage to face the critical, difficult challenges facing this Nation in the days ahead.

It is my distinct honor and privilege to serve with SAM in this great body and on the Committee on Ways and Means. SAM, you are a true champion for all Americans and a true hero to me. America is better off for your service, and I am very proud to call you my friend.

Mr. SNYDER. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HALL).

Mr. HALL. Madam Speaker, I certainly want to recognize the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON). He is a friend of mine. He is a neighbor of mine. Our boundaries are contiguous. They talk about redistricting and I have always said, If they ever put me in SAM's district, he will have the best campaign manager in the world. It would be me because no one would want to run against this great man with his history, his background, the gifts he has given to this country, the suffering that he has suffered for this country.

I rise in support of this resolution and call for a full accounting of the 1,902 members of our Armed Forces who still remain unaccounted for in unmarked graves or uncharted jails somewhere out there. Among those we honor today are SAM JOHNSON and a number of others that together they put together a series of codes of communication with one another.

This resolution marks the 30th anniversary of his return home from being held captive for 7 years. Can you imagine that? Seven years. I think almost half of that in solitary.

If you have ever shaken hands with him you will feel the hands of a man who has had every bone in both of his hands broken, probably from holding the bars and being hit with bamboo, being beaten and treated unmercifully at the hands of an enemy.

In April 1966 during his 25th combat mission over North Vietnam, Major JOHNSON was shot down. He was taken prisoner. He was taken near Hanoi where he and his fellow POWs were subjected day and night to physical

and mental abuse but refused to give up sensitive information on the American military campaign, using tap codes at the camp where they were able to keep in contact with one another.

Mr. JOHNSON began his career in the United States Air Force after graduating from my alma mater, Southern Methodist University. He served his country with distinction in the Vietnam War as well as the Korean War.

Listen to this: he earned two Silver Stars, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, one Bronze Star of Valor, two Purple Hearts, four Air Medals and two Outstanding Unit Awards. He also served as a director of the Air Force Fighter Weapons School, popularly known as Top Gun and co-authored the first Air Force tactics manual for fighter pilots.

I am honored to count the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) as my good friend and his wife as our good friend. I hold him in high regard and respect very much the work he has done in strong support of our men and women in the military. As one of the few men and women in Congress who has fought in combat, he is a valued and respected advisor on military readiness for all of us here on this floor.

I also appreciate his tireless work on retirement, health and labor issues. Since being elected to Congress he has risen to the post of the highest-ranking Texas member on the Committee on Ways and Means and the Committee on Education and the Workforce, where he serves as chairman on the Subcommittee on Employer-Employee Relations.

Madam Speaker, I proudly support this resolution and join my colleagues today in honoring this man and the men and women who served in Vietnam. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) is a true American. I am also proud to record our thoughts today on behalf of those on all wars and remember SAM JOHNSON, who school children, 200 years from now, will read about this great man. God bless him.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) in the wake of that eloquent statement by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HALL).

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the gentleman from Texas' (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) return from Vietnam after nearly 7 years of brutal captivity, I am confident his courageous example will serve as an inspiration to our pilots preparing for possible attacks against Saddam Hussein.

Congressman JOHNSON's devotion to his comrades and his country during 2,500 days of captivity should also serve as a reminder to all Americans of the support our servicemen and women deserve before, during, and after war.

Our voluntary Armed Forces are replete with men and women of extraor-

dinary devotion to duty who are willing to following Congressman SAM JOHNSON's example of steadfast devotion to duty in the face of torturous conditions. We must unite as a Nation in support of our troops as we face a time of great danger to our freedom from terrorists at home and abroad.

Like Congressman JOHNSON, we can rely on our troops' dedication to protect our way of life. We need to do our duty to ensure that they have the material and moral support they need to accomplish the difficult task ahead.

Congressman JOHNSON's service demonstrated the highest virtues of patriotism. It is humbling to me as a current member of the South Carolina Army National Guard and a source of pride as I am the father of three sons in the military service who strives to follow Congressman JOHNSON's historic and heroic example.

We thank Congressman JOHNSON for his service to our country. It is an honor to know you. It is an honor to have you as chairman of the subcommittee that I serve on in the Committee on Education and the Workforce. God bless you.

Mr. SNYDER. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BISHOP).

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, through this resolution we express our deepest gratitude to those who endured the cruel conditions as POWs in Vietnam, to their families who suffered at home, and to the sacrifice of every American who defends our freedom.

Our congressional colleagues, the gentleman from Florida, Mr. PETERSON; Senator JOHN MCCAIN of Arizona; and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) spent bitter years in the Hanoi Hilton in Vietnam.

In my area of southwest Georgia, the Andersonville Historic Site where the Nation's Prisoner of War Museum and memorial are located tell the story intensely of the suffering and the limitless courage of our prisoners of war throughout history.

One of my boyhood friends was a fighter pilot lost for 30 years on a combat mission in Vietnam whose remains were just recently found. One of my constituents was a soldier serving on the joint task force in Southeast Asia who lost his life last year in an air crash during a search mission. I knew these wonderful young men personally, and I know what their families went through.

Madam Speaker, this resolution pledging never to rest until we have a full accounting for every American lost in action honors the services and the sacrifices that literally made America the home of the free, the land of the brave.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand here today to give tribute to our colleague, SAM JOHNSON, and others and all Americans who have served as prisoners of war and to also salute ex-prisoners of war who worked so hard to

dedicate the memorial in Andersonville to the cause that our men and women sacrificed for as prisoners of war. I thank them for this honor. I thank them for what they do and the sacrifices they have made.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 45 seconds to the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BALLENGER).

Mr. BALLENGER. Madam Speaker, I am privileged to speak today in honor of my friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON). The gentleman is one of the kindest, most thoughtful human beings I know, a principled and unwaivering man. He fights like a lion for what he holds dear. He is truly a man of mettle and conviction.

□ 1530

SAM is also a war hero if ever there was one. I cringe when I think of the incredible price he paid for the freedom of this great Nation, 7 years as a prisoner of war. We all owe him a debt of gratitude.

Today Congress recognizes SAM JOHNSON's sacrifice and his service to America. In so doing, we again acknowledge freedom at its high cost and remember those soldiers who did not return home. Fortunately for us, SAM did.

I thank the Chair for the chance to honor SAM.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Madam Speaker, I rise on this occasion to salute the tremendous courage and profound sacrifices that American POWs made for our country during the Vietnam conflict. One of those courageous POWs is my friend and our distinguished colleague, Congressman SAM JOHNSON of Texas.

Forced to endure severe torture, solitary confinement, malnutrition and attempts by their captors to force confessions for propaganda, SAM JOHNSON and countless other American POWs conducted themselves with uncommon courage and heroic strength of character.

I recall a veterans breakfast that Congressman JOHNSON attended in my District with our distinguished colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM), a fellow Vietnam veteran. While trying to convey the ideals that kept him going as he once thought capture by the North Vietnamese was imminent, the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM) was choked by emotion.

Putting his arm around him, SAM JOHNSON finished his sentence, stating those ideals simply and eloquently, "God and country, God and country." Every veteran in the room rose to their feet in standing ovation.

Madam Speaker, as a Texan and as an American, I am proud to rise and salute patriot SAM JOHNSON.

Mr. SNYDER. Madam Speaker, I have no speakers, and I yield 4 minutes of our time to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) to use as he sees fit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) for his bipartisan gesture and great work on this particular issue.

Madam Speaker, I yield 45 seconds to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS).

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, I am going to quote SAM JOHNSON's wife. I do not think anybody today has done that. Let me tell my colleagues what Shirley says: "When he makes up his mind he's going to do something, he doesn't make a big deal of it. He just does it."

These words, of course, stood true in perhaps one of Mr. JOHNSON's greatest tests, the hellish 82 months he spent as a prisoner of war in the Hanoi Hilton. Bound by a faith in God and a love of country, Congressman SAM JOHNSON is a man who has given 29 years to the United States Air Force, 52 years to his wife Shirley, and a lifetime to his country.

SAM, congratulations on the 30-year anniversary of freedom and patriotism for this country. I am proud to serve with him on the Air Force Caucus, which he helped to start.

Resilient, courageous, steadfast, a patriot, and a friend; SAM JOHNSON is all of these things to me. He is a man of unwavering commitment to the betterment of this country. As both a statesman and an airman, SAM JOHNSON has fought both for the sovereignty of democracy and our children's future. From the battlefields of Korea and Vietnam to the Halls of Congress, this "Top Texan" has never lost sight of his objective, because in his wife Shirley's words, "When he makes up his mind he's going to do something, he doesn't make a big deal out of it. He just does it." These words of course stood true in perhaps one of Mr. JOHNSON's greatest tests, the hellish 82 months he spent as a prisoner of war at the Hanoi Hilton. Under constant physical and mental duress SAM JOHNSON never forgot his commitment to his family, his men, and his country. One of the 12 remaining combat tested members of Congress, Mr. JOHNSON represents an elite club of men who have taken up arms in the defense of our way of life. We gather today to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Mr. JOHNSON's release from imprisonment and the amazing things he has accomplished in those short 30 years. Bound by faith in God and a love of Country, Congressman SAM JOHNSON is a man who has given 29 years to the Air Force, 52 to his wife, and a lifetime to his country.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 45 seconds to another gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON).

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Madam Speaker, February 12, 1973, I was a

graduate student at the Krannert School in Purdue University up in West Lafayette, Indiana, just another day for me; for Lieutenant Colonel SAM JOHNSON, it was the first day he had been able to breathe free air in over 7 years.

If we look in the dictionary under "patriot," we ought to see SAM JOHNSON. If we look in the dictionary under "hero," we ought to see SAM JOHNSON.

Director of the Top Gun school; Thunderbird pilot; decorated for two wars, Vietnam and Korea; holder of two Silver Stars; two Legions of Merit; the Distinguished Flying Cross; one Bronze Star with Valor; two Purple Hearts; four Air Medals; and three outstanding unit citations.

By any means he is a hero. He is an American patriot. He is my friend. I am glad he is in the House of Representatives. God bless you, SAM and Shirley Johnson.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, in the wake of that eloquent statement by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON), I yield 45 seconds to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS).

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I stand here to recognize a distinguished Member of the House of Representatives, a 29-year veteran of the United States Air Force, Colonel SAM JOHNSON, who is my next-door neighbor in North Texas.

Today marks the 30th anniversary of Congressman JOHNSON's return from Vietnam as a result of Operation Homecoming, the project that brought home hundreds of men and women who had sacrificed their lives for our great country and served in Vietnam.

It is a tremendous honor for me to serve in this Chamber with Colonel JOHNSON. He is a true American hero, a man who sacrificed his life for the betterment of all of us and this country. He knows the true meaning of freedom because he fought for it, and he spent 7 long years as a POW in Vietnam, over half of that in solitary confinement.

He has dedicated his life to God, his country and his family. Congressman JOHNSON is a fine example to our future generations of a hero. Congressman JOHNSON was willing to give of his life in the fight for freedom.

Today and every day, when I look at the American flag, the flag that he fought for, I will remember the sacrifice that he made.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 45 seconds to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE).

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in honoring the extraordinary accomplishments of a true hero. On the 30th anniversary of his return from captivity, SAM JOHNSON deserves a far greater tribute than we can offer today. However, the debt of honor we owe to this great American compels us to do our part to bring attention to the impact his example and leadership provide to each of us.

Every person in this room, in the gallery and on the floor, has served his

country, but even the achievements of those of us with a lifetime of military service pale in comparison to the service and sacrifice exemplified by Congressman SAM JOHNSON. Not one individual in this room has attained the level of service and sacrifice exemplified by the gentleman from Texas. He is an American hero.

It has been a privilege to know SAM during my brief tenure as a Member of Congress. I look forward to learning from his wisdom as we serve together.

His service is exemplary, his experience unparalleled. I rise to honor this American hero.

Mr. SNYDER. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON).

Ms. CARSON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time; and thanks to my colleagues who had the compassion and the wisdom to bring forth this very vital resolution before the House today.

I wanted to add my gratitude and my applause to the Honorable SAM JOHNSON for the yeoman service that he has given to this great United States, the gentleman from Texas, and oftentimes when I have barely been able to get over to the floor, he walks through the tunnels with a great deal of pride and strength, and I just admire him so much. He does not know the many ways that he has given me the momentum to walk on here to the House.

Along with Congressman JOHNSON and all of the other wonderful women and men who have made this extreme sacrifice in terms of serving our country to preserve its freedom, I wanted to give my thanks and gratitude to that yeoman group of people and to pray for the safe return of those yet unfound.

I would also like to add, Madam Speaker, that I come from the State of Indiana. The lieutenant governor there is the Honorable Joe Kernan, and Mr. Kernan entered the United States Army in 1969 and served as a naval flight officer on the USS *Kitty Hawk*, and in May of 1972, he was shot down by the enemy when he was engaged in a reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam.

He was held as a prisoner of war for months. He was repatriated in 1973 and continued on active duty until December 1974.

For his service, the Honorable Joe Kernan has received numerous awards, including the Commendation Medal, two Purple Hearts and the Distinguished Flying Cross. He is also a graduate of Notre Dame in Indiana.

So there are countless unnamed and unrecognized heroes who are similarly situated, and I just wanted, on behalf of the people that I represent, the proud State of Indiana, to add my support to this needed resolution.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 45 seconds to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER), another one of SAM's Texas colleagues.

Mr. CARTER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Madam Speaker, as a freshman member of the Texas delegation, I am honored to be serving alongside Congressman SAM JOHNSON. It was on this day 30 years ago that SAM arrived home after almost 7 years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. He spent his first 3½ years as a prisoner of war in solitary confinement.

SAM managed to survive these years while maintaining a strong sense of pride and an unrelenting faith in God, country and duty. Not only is SAM a Vietnam veteran, he is a testament to the greatness of American military men and women.

Upon returning with his fellow officers, his first words were, "Lieutenant Colonel SAM JOHNSON reporting for duty, sir." SAM reported for duty, and to this day he has never left his post serving America.

I thank SAM for all the sacrifices he has made and for the example he makes for this House.

Mr. SNYDER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

If I might, reference was made earlier to SAM's wife. I know this is a very small book, but I have here a picture of Shirley and SAM from 1952, and our staff member Debra Wada says SAM is even better looking today than he was here in 1952.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 45 seconds to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CULBERSON), another one of SAM's Texas colleagues.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Speaker, the book of Proverbs teaches that the greatest profession, the most valuable profession on Earth, is our good name, and by that measure, SAM JOHNSON is one of the wealthiest men in America.

It has been my privilege to serve with SAM in the Texas house, to sit next to him on the floor there, and my great privilege to serve with him here; and I have seen firsthand SAM's devotion to duty, to his country, to honor, to his core principles. SAM JOHNSON does not take polls to help him decide how to vote.

He has been a mentor to me, to all of us who serve with him. We love him and admire him, and we are immensely grateful to him for his service to this Nation, and it truly is one of the great privileges of my life that I have had the privilege to be here with him, to serve with him; and I salute him and thank him so much for his service to this country.

Mr. SNYDER. Madam Speaker, I yield whatever time I have remaining to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) for purposes of control.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, first, I thank my colleague for that gracious gesture. How much time do we have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) has 12¾ minutes remaining.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 45 seconds to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS).

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, those of us who have served our country in the war understand in our hearts what every American understands in his head. We understand the words carved in stone down at the Korean War memorial, the words, "Freedom is not free."

Thousands of Americans have died in a war, but of those who did not die, few have gone through what our friend and colleague SAM JOHNSON went through in Vietnam. For years he suffered torture, imprisonment and solitary confinement. They worked on him relentlessly to break his spirit, but the spirit of SAM JOHNSON could not be broken. He refused to betray his country. He refused to give up his faith in God.

I had the privilege of visiting in that prison where he was in solitary 2 weeks ago. It was a horrible place. SAM is a living hero. He is an example to us all. He is living proof that what America stands for is right and just and good.

I thank SAM for his service to our country, and as a fellow vet, I salute him.

Madam Speaker, those of us who have served our country in war understand in our hearts what every American understands in his head. We understand what it says—carved in stone—on the Korean War Memorial down at the other end of the National Mall. The words "FREEDOM IS NOT FREE." Thousands of families have died in war. But of those who did not die, few have gone through what our friend and colleague SAM JOHNSON went through in Vietnam.

For years he suffered torture, imprisonment, and solitary confinement. They worked on him relentlessly to break his spirit. But the spirit of SAM JOHNSON could not be broken. He refused to betray his country. And he refused to give up his belief & faith in his God.

I visited that prison 2 weeks ago in Hanoi. Sam is a living hero. He is an example to us all. Thank you SAM. SAM, I salute you.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 45 seconds to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON).

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

I have not read this book "Captive Warriors" yet, but I am going to read it. I have known the gentleman for many years, and I have never been able to get out of him a lot of the things that happened to him in Vietnam, but I want him to know that from other people I have learned that he really is a hero, and he is a credit not only to the service of this country, the armed services, but he is a credit to this House as well.

One of the proudest things that I can say about being a Member of Congress is, SAM JOHNSON is my friend.

□ 1545

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 2½ minutes.

In that great book, "The Bridges at Toko Ri," one of James Michener's main characters was the commander of an aircraft carrier. After the hero in the book had flown off against those bridges at Toko Ri in North Korea and been lost, he stood on the ship and he asked where does America find these men who are willing to go in the service, in this case in the U.S. Navy, who fly off these small pitching aircraft carriers, fly to a distant target, heavily defended, and if they are successful in penetrating all that flack and air cover they try to get back and find that little postage stamp out at sea and make a successful landing?

That book was set against the backdrop of a war that was not widely heralded in the United States: the Korean War. It was a time when a lot of folks were focusing on having a rush-back from World War II, having families and building lives and getting jobs and building businesses; and we were not concentrating on that area of the world, that conflict. Yet a lot of Americans gave their lives. That question that was asked, where does America get these men, could just as easily have been a question about those great people that flew off the tarmac in those TAC air bases and strategic air bases or long-range air bases that flew missions over North Vietnam. SAM JOHNSON is one of those guys, a guy from San Antonio, Texas.

Madam Speaker, it has been brought out in all this discussion of whether we should have a draft and who participates and who bears the burden and who does not bear the burden that there is a disparate burden of defending this country, and that is why I think it is important for all of us to look to SAM because he is a model of our finest citizens. And like the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM), the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS), and others who have been pilots, like a lot of our great veterans who have been here in this body, he embodies that call to a higher duty, a duty that is most of the time inconvenient, and some of the times dangerous, but always the most important duty that one can fulfill on behalf of this country, and that is protecting us, giving us our security.

Madam Speaker, I yield 45 seconds to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER).

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, I could not resist this tribute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON).

When I think of many of America's heroes, individuals who were challenged, when you give your reflection, you know you were challenged. When America's children ask the questions: Who are our heroes? Do mentors still exist? Are there living idols? The answer is yes.

Sam lived his life in such a manner that his character is formed with the virtues and values that have been tested. I am privileged to serve here in this body with him, and I know that he represents a lot of his comrades who

served with him, some of whom were not the lucky ones because they did not get to come home. I know SAM holds them close to his breast in memory, along with their families.

It is a true and distinct honor to serve in this body with you, SAM. Godspeed, my friend.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE).

Mr. CASTLE. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I would also like to pay tribute to those who were held prisoners of war during the Vietnam conflict.

I do not know a lot of those individuals, obviously Senator MCCAIN; but I do know SAM JOHNSON, who is a representative of that, and I know that he has all the strengths that one could ever want in an American.

Sam and I are a little different politically, shall we say. I am a little more moderate than he is. He can be pretty tough on some issues. And no matter what I say today, he will probably still not vote the way I would want him to all the time. But sitting next to him in the Committee on Education and the Workforce, I can still say for certain that he is a person of tremendous character.

To go through the experience that he has gone through, to represent all the interests of defending our country, and then to come back to be able to contribute the way he has on a regular basis is something in his system that I do not think the average person has in his or her system. And for all those reasons I have to believe that all the others who went through that must have been men of incredible strength and character.

So it has been an honor and a pleasure and a privilege to work with SAM, and to work with all the others. But I just wanted to also say thanks to SAM for his service to this country.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the military personnel who were held captive during the Vietnam conflict, and to those who have yet to be accounted for.

Today, as we consider the prospects of a war with Iraq, it is important that we remain mindful of the great sacrifices our past soldiers have made in the defense of freedom.

The Vietnam conflict has often been categorized as a dark spot in our nation's history, yet for the U.S. soldiers who suffered from unspeakable acts while prisoners within Vietnam, the pain that they carry with them is not a part of history; it is as real today as it was thirty years ago. And for the 1,902 Members of the U.S. Armed Forces who remain unaccounted for, we must emphasize our commitment to not forget their continued sacrifices.

In the midst of such uncertainty, we must honor the POWs who languished in horrible conditions until their release in beginning in February of 1973, during "Operation Homecoming." A part of them may have been left behind in Vietnam, but in the end, they were able to rely upon the courage and determination that makes the U.S. Armed Services the best in the world, and ultimately survive to re-

turn home to their country and to their families.

Today, I want to remember these POWs and the 1,902 Members of the U.S. Armed Forces who remain unaccounted for. And I would also like to pay tribute to my friend SAM JOHNSON, who was among those released during the first day of Operation Homecoming.

SAM, whose distinguished service to his country did not end after his return, followed up an illustrious career in the Air Force with a successful career as a developer, a Texas Legislator, and a Member of Congress since 1991. I have served with SAM on the Education and Workforce Committee and value his friendship and resolve.

Like many others, who could have shrunken away from the duties of society because of the war, SAM rose above and celebrated his cherished freedom. Now a distinguished public leader, SAM has endured the horrors of war for our country, and in turn has given us much hope and optimism for the future of our nation.

In conclusion, I want to thank SAM for his service to the United States; and I want to honor all of those who were POWs in Vietnam. You all served your country admirably and we must not rest until everyone is accounted for.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, how much time do we have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) has 7¼ minutes remaining.

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to say that the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM), I know if he possibly could he would be here speaking for his old buddy, SAM JOHNSON, another great pilot and the only Mig ace from Vietnam, and a guy who really, really loves SAM JOHNSON.

Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON), the man who is the subject of this resolution.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman so much, and all our colleagues; but you know, this is not about me. This is about our American fighting men that keep America free, the guys and gals the world over. And they are all over the world right now, defending freedom not just for the United States of America but for the world.

I have been a member of the U.S.-Russia Commission on POWs and MIAs now for almost 10 years. We are trying to find out what happened to our missing in action, to those who did not return home from World War II, Korea, the Cold War, Vietnam and Iraq, if we have one there. So we have not given up on anyone, and I think that is what America stands for. It stands behind its military. We will go to extreme measures to make sure we recover our people and/or find out what happened to them. We are still pursuing that effort. There are as many as 70,000 from World War II that are missing in action, some 8,000 from Korea, some 1,800 from Vietnam, and maybe one from Iraq.

So this Nation is the greatest Nation in the world, and I and my colleagues who fought for it would say that, even though we were POWs, if we were required to go fight for this Nation again for the freedoms we enjoy, we would do it in a New York minute. So I thank all my colleagues for recognizing the POWs and for recognizing our servicemen and women around the world and all the great things they do for us, and many thanks as well for helping me in this House of Representatives to make this a better Nation for all of us to live in. We are free and independent, one Nation under God.

God bless you all. Thank you for today.

Mr. HASTERT. Madam Speaker, there just aren't enough words to describe a man who has led such an adventurous, challenging, and courageous life as SAM JOHNSON. He is a decorated war hero, a distinguished public servant, and a dedicated husband, father, and grandfather.

There have been many great public servants who have passed through these great Halls of Congress, and SAM is certainly one of them. These are men and women who have worked tirelessly for their constituents, who have faced difficult challenges, and who rarely, if ever succumbed to the challenges that have come before them, even when it seemed impossible. SAM JOHNSON has brought honor, dignity and respect to this great institution.

During his 29 years as a U.S. Air Force pilot, SAM flew combat missions in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and was a prisoner of war in Hanoi for almost seven years. His service in the military earned him many medals that serve as reminders to us all of his courage and personal sacrifice for our country. In total, he was bestowed with fifteen medals and awards, all of which were given to him for the heroism he displayed during both wars. In fact, today is the 30-year anniversary of his arrival back to America after his long torturous imprisonment in Vietnam. It was this day thirty years ago that SAM left that distant land and returned home to his loved ones.

I will always remember SAM to be a man of great accomplishments, a gentleman that I have had the honor to serve with for over ten years. He will be remembered not only for his public service to those in Texas, but also for his selfless sacrifice for all Americans. Thank you SAM.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution recognizing the courage and sacrifice of those who were held prisoners of war in Vietnam on the 30th anniversary of their release, and calling for a full accounting of those who never returned. This remembrance has a special meaning—not just for those like myself who served in Vietnam and saw the horrors inflicted by our enemy, but for those held captive so long, it is an especially emotional day. And I rise in honor of each of those POWS, for their service to this nation and the sacrifice that stands today as a testament to the greatness of our free nation.

On this fitting occasion, I also want to honor one of those POWs, a great friend and hero of mine and many Americans, and our colleague, SAM JOHNSON. SAM and I shared long careers as fighter pilots before coming to Congress. Although we continue to argue to this

day over the accomplishments of Navy versus Air Force fighters, we have developed a strong bond over those shared experiences and our commitment to carry forward the lessons we learned from them.

SAM, and I have travelled together extensively, speaking to veterans' groups and working to ensure that Americans understand the importance of supporting the military—particularly at times like these when our troops are defending freedom around globe. As one who was shot down in combat myself, I know how difficult it is to talk about those harrowing experiences—and you won't hear that from SAM, nor him boasting that record of service or sacrifice. But it is clear from the historical records and the testimony of those who served with him that he is an American hero, and more that worthy of the numerous military awards and national recognition he ultimately earned. From his numerous combat missions and enemy kills, to the inner strength that earned him the label "die hard" by his captors, SAM stands out as an example of true American strength. On this anniversary of Operation Homecoming, I want to recognize SAM's accomplishments, his bravery, courage, sacrifice and service to this nation. Godspeed, my friend, from this Navy pilot.

Mr. SIMMONS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 62, recognizing the members of the United States Armed Forces who were held prisoners of war during the Vietnam War, while calling for a full accounting of the 1,902 members of the Armed Forces who remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, and a veteran of the Vietnam War, I take great care in this matter. For generations, Americans have taken extraordinary steps to account for all members of our Armed Forces who were lost fighting to preserve the freedoms we enjoy today.

I wish to share with my colleagues the compelling story of Captain Arnold Holm, a native of Waterford, Connecticut, whose recovery case remains active. Captain Holm was declared killed in Vietnam when his helicopter was shot down on June 11, 1972. Arnie Holm was a sports star in high school, when to Springfield College on a sports scholarship and left to enlist in the U.S. Army. He was fighting for what he believed in when his helicopter was hit in the summer of 1972. In an even more tragic twist, a second helicopter, sent to execute a rescue mission for Capt. Holm and his men, was also shot down, resulting in the death of pilot Lt. McQuade and his entire crew.

After relations with the Vietnamese government improved, missions to discover and recover the remains of nearly 2,000 personnel lost in Vietnam began. While the crash sites of Capt. Holm and Lt. McQuade were very close to one another, only the remains of Lt. McQuade were recovered. This year the United States will support a recovery mission in Vietnam to seek and recover Capt. Holm.

As we consider legislation to recognize the sacrifice made by Prisoners of War, we also commit again to accounting for all armed services members who remain Missing in Action. We must find and return the remains of Capt. Holm, and all MIAs, so that their families and friends see the real commitment our government has for our men and women in uniform.

Mr. REYES. Madam Speaker, I wish to voice my strong support for House Resolution

62, which honors the observance of the 30th Anniversary of Operation Homecoming. This resolution honors the courage and sacrifice of those members of the United States Armed Forces who were held as prisoners of war during Vietnam and returned home as part of Operation Homecoming.

For most Americans, it is difficult to conceive of the harsh reality that these prisoners of war had to endure. And it is important to appreciate the sacrifice that these men made, and that service members today are prepared to make, in defense of our freedoms.

The first group of American prisoners of the Vietnam War returned home as part of Operation Homecoming on February 12, 1973 and the last returned in April of the same year. These American prisoners of war fought for our country with valor and sacrifice. Mr. SAM JOHNSON, our very own esteemed colleague, is among these heroes.

After entering the U.S. Air Force at the young age of 20, Mr. JOHNSON was held captive as a prisoner of war in Hanoi. For seven years, half of that time in solidarity confinement, this brave individual was held captive, until returning back home on February 12, 1973, 30 years ago this day, as part of Operation Homecoming.

Mr. JOHNSON returned home a hero with several distinctions including two Silver Stars, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, one Bronze Star with Valor, Two Purple Hearts, four Air Medals, and three Outstanding Unit Awards. The service he offered to his country is one that we, as a nation, recognize as the greatest sacrifice for the survival of freedom and liberty. He has dedicated his career to the safety and security of his country, and has further dedicated his professional life to civic service.

Ironically, JOHNSON was one of the lucky ones. He came back home. Almost two thousand members of the United States Armed Forces remain unaccounted for. We must never forget their sacrifices and we must continue the effort to determine what became of them.

As a veteran of the Vietnam War, and as the U.S. Representative of a district that proudly includes nearly 60,000 veterans, I urge my colleagues and everyone across the nation to remember the ordeals experienced by our former prisoners of war. They carried a great burden so that we might live in freedom and prosperity.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the resolution; but more than that, I rise to honor my dear friend and colleague, SAM JOHNSON of Texas.

Thirty years ago today, SAM was released from captivity as a prisoner of war in Hanoi during the Vietnam War. He spent nearly seven years as a prisoner—half of that time in solitary confinement. His experiences in Hanoi were nothing short of remarkable.

For example: while held captive, SAM committed to memory 374 names of other prisoners of war by tapping a special code on the wall.

Why? In case some got out.

In Hanoi, he also endured unspeakable torture—72 days in leg stocks, followed by another two and a half years in leg irons, and of course, 42 months in solitary confinement.

After his three and a half years in solitary confinement ended, SAM was finally allowed to return to a joint cell. According to a fellow prisoner of war, he walked into the room with the

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: