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Leading with Honor
Lee Ellis
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A book on leadership is only as good as the examples the author uses. In this regard, Lee Ellis's book is unique: The author employs scenes he observed as a POW at one of the Vietnam War's most notorious camps, nicknamed the "Hanoi Hilton."

Leading With Honor is as much a sobering story about what it is like to be a POW for more than five years as it is a book on leadership. But, as Ellis writes, that is exactly the point: "There's nothing quite like the crucible of a POW camp for revealing authenticity … In the Hanoi Hilton I learned that leading with honor is about doing the right thing, even when it entails personal sacrifice. More often than not, doing the right things—accepting responsibility, fulfilling your duty, telling the truth, and remaining faithful to your words—is the most difficult thing to do, but it's also the thing that brings long-term success."

Ellis carefully weaves the story of himself and his fellow POWs throughout the book while relating their experiences directly to leadership lessons. The first part of the book, "Leading Yourself," offers the reader several guiding tenets for personal leadership, such as "Guard Your Character" and "Confront Your Doubts and Fears." The second part of the book, "Leading Others," broadens the discussion. Here, Ellis shares his view of how to lead people, ending with an unusual chapter entitled "Free the Captives." The chapter title alone is likely to command the attention of the reader, but the content is just as provocative. "Most leaders do not think of themselves as captives," Ellis writes, "but everyone has some areas that are holding them back from being all they can be— habits and behaviors that just aren't working. Awareness is the starting point for gaining full freedom to grow in leading with honor. Likewise, once you recognize your own need for freedom, you will be able to help others break free also."

Clearly, Ellis' painful experiences at the Hanoi Hilton shaped and molded his views on leadership and contributed to his current position as founder and president of Leadership

Freedom, a leadership consulting firm. Ellis has a rare ability to cast a positive light on what he and his colleagues endured, turning it into fodder for an exceptionally well-constructed and well-written book. The reader is sure to learn about leadership from an entirely new perspective.

Barry Silverstein