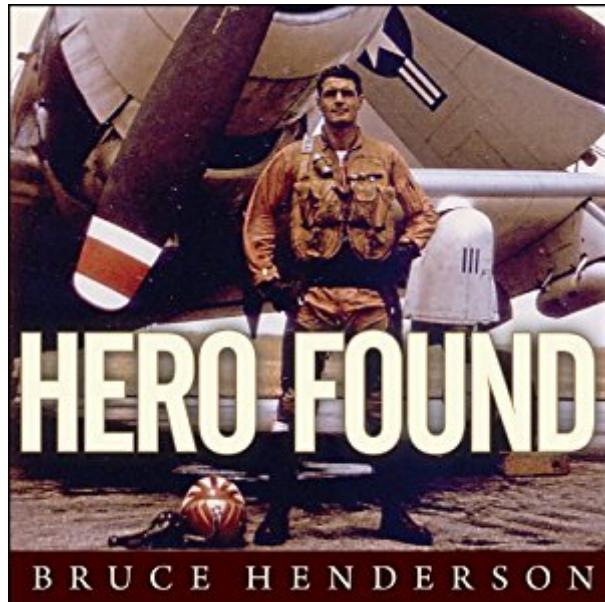


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# Hero Found: The Greatest POW Escape Of The Vietnam War



## Synopsis

In February 1966, U.S. Navy pilot Dieter Dengler was shot down over "neutral Laos". He crashed deep in territory controlled by North Vietnamese army regulars and the communist Pathet Lao, who would eventually capture him and hold him prisoner in a fortified jungle prisoner-of-war camp. But German-born Dengler was no ordinary prisoner. Already a legend in the Navy for his escape and evasion skills - amply demonstrated during training in the California desert - he would initiate, plan, and lead an organized escape from the POW camp, becoming the longest-held American to escape captivity during the Vietnam War. Caught in a most desperate situation, imprisoned not only by the enemy but by the jungle itself, Dengler's heroic impulse was to not only get himself out but to free all the other POWs - Americans, Thai, and Chinese - some of whom had been held for years. In a surreal scene of brotherhood and celebration, Dengler returned to his aircraft carrier, the USS Ranger, six months after being shot down - emaciated and ravaged with strange tropical illnesses, but very much alive and joyous to be so - only two weeks before the ship was due to leave the Gulf of Tonkin and return home. Bruce Henderson served with Dengler aboard Ranger off the coast of Vietnam and here tells Dengler's complete story for the first time, drawing on extensive interviews with the intrepid pilot, his squadron mates, friends, and family, as well as declassified military archival materials, some now available for the first time, and personal letters and journals. Henderson's riveting account amply demonstrates why Dengler's story of unending optimism, innate courage, loyalty, and survival against overwhelming odds remains for his fellow flyers and shipmates the best and brightest memory of their generation's war.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Hero Found tells the story of Dieter Dengler, a man who against all odds was a survivor. Not only did he survive WWII bombings in his hometown in Germany as a child, which left him homeless and starving, he also survived a brutal and tortuous capture by the Pathet Lao. From bamboo being shoved into his arms and under his nails, ant nests being placed over his head, being submerged in a well, and being dragged behind water buffalo, to starvation this man overcame it all. His will to survive allowed him to overtake and kill 5 Laotian guards and escape into the jungle. Not only did he escape once, but twice! This is a truly remarkable man! I am so grateful to have his story forever captured for future generations to understand the epic struggle that many men faced during the Vietnam War. I have always been intrigued by this war since my Uncle was a POW in the Hanoi Hilton for 5 very long years. Although I was not around during this time, my family would always share the stories of struggles faced during this time and how hard it was on our family knowing my Uncle was captured. My Uncle was also a Navy Pilot. This story also hits home for our family since I am married to Rolf Dengler, Dieter's eldest son and we recently had our first child together, Tayden Dengler, Dieter's grandson. It means a great deal to me that Bruce Henderson was able to capture the essence of Dieter and the determined, strong-willed, wild man that our son will get to know through reading this story. I believe any one interested in war, survival, human will, or perseverance will love this story. I highly recommend this book to all just so one can learn what it truly means to have the will to live. I look forward to when my son is able to appreciate this story of his grandfather.

This is the biography of Dieter Dengler, a German born American citizen who pulled off one of the most famous P.O.W. escapes in American history. As an honorably discharged Viet Nam era veteran myself... I appreciated (and enjoyed) his escape during the Viet Nam war even more than just for the act of his amazing escape... but additionally... the fact that he was shot down while piloting a plane over Laos... despite the fact that the United States claimed we weren't really there. Dieter was born in Germany and lived through the tail end of World War II and during bombings of his town... his Mother would take him out to hide in the forest. While in the forest... his Mother would teach him what plants were edible and how to survive in such an environment. Little did anyone in the world realize that his Mother's teachings would later save Dieter's life and make him one of the most honored and revered American servicemen during the Viet Nam War. Concurrently young Dieter fell in love with the idea of flying... as at times he watched the American planes fly low over

his town. A few times he could actually see the jaunty pilots flying with an open cockpit. The author meticulously details Dieter's time after the war when he became feared by locals as he scrounged for food in a dog-eat-dog world... and his eventual immigration to the United States. Dengler joined the U.S.A.F. in the hopes of becoming a pilot, but felt he was misled and wasn't eligible to fly due to his lack of a college education. After his enlistment was over despite being an irreverent playboy and party animal... he eventually got a degree... joined the Navy... and fulfilled his boyhood dream by becoming a pilot. Along the way to Viet Nam Dieter attended the legendary "SIX-DAY SURVIVAL, EVASION, RESISTANCE, AND ESCAPE (SERE) COURSE DESIGNED TO TEACH AVIATORS HOW TO LIVE OFF THE LAND AND AVOID CAPTURE, AS WELL AS WHAT WAS EXPECTED OF THEM IF THEY EVER BECAME PRISONERS OF WAR." The motto of this program is: "WE TRAIN THE BEST FOR THE WORST." Dieter became a legend as he escaped multiple times which was unheard of. "WHEN THE P.O.W. EXERCISE ENDED... DIETER WAS READY TO MAKE HIS THIRD ESCAPE IN TWELVE HOURS. THE FIRST TO ESCAPE MULTIPLE TIMES FROM THE NAVY'S SIMULATED P.O.W. CAMP. HE WAS ALSO THE ONLY SERE GRADUATE TO GAIN WEIGHT DURING THE RIGOROUS PROGRAM." If you combine Dieter's experience surviving in Germany during and after the war with the survival skills he displayed at SERE you will at least partly understand how Dieter was able to live through the despicable, barbarous, tortuous... less than human elements he had to fight and overcome not only in the Laotian prison camp... but in the jungle itself. In addition to sadistic beatings and malnutrition in the prison... Dieter and other prisoners were used like inanimate objects in real-life games of Russian roulette. In the jungle they had to drink water filled with minuscule worms... they had to eat bugs and worms... left over pieces of animals including but not limited to eyes and other gut wrenching body parts. When he was finally rescued "DIETER WEIGHED NINETY-EIGHT POUNDS. HE WAS FOUND TO HAVE TWO TYPES OF MALARIA, INTESTINAL WORMS, FUNGUS, JAUNDICE, AND HEPATITIS. DOCTORS SAID HE WAS SO MALNOURISHED THAT IF HE HADN'T BEEN PICKED UP WHEN HE WAS, HE WOULD HAVE DIED THAT DAY OR THE NEXT. This book combines a non-stop nauseating example of man's inhumanity to man... along with the greatest... most exhilarating examples of the courage... and indefinable... undeniable... pure spirit of will... to survive... that any human being on the face of this earth... could not rightfully... look in the mirror... and seeing their own image... even on the day they pledged to never give up the fight to survive... could expect to live up to. Dieter Dengler is a true \*AMERICAN-HERO\*... and this book is a must read!

The further removed we become from the Vietnam War, the greater the appetite has become for stories related to the conflict. A number of excellent books have come out recently and "Hero Found" is certainly among them. "Hero Found" is the tale of Dieter Dengler, a German-born American aviator shot down over ostensibly "neutral" Laos in 1966. Author Bruce Henderson was a veteran of the Vietnam War and served with Dengler on the USS Ranger, yet Henderson manages to maintain objectivity while relating Dengler's story, and in lesser hands a subject like this could have easily devolved into an unreadable hagiography, something Henderson neatly avoids. What emerges is a truly inspiring and harrowing account of how Dengler escapes from his Pathet Lao captors, drawing off of his prior survival training, and manages to find his way to freedom, never once giving in to feelings that he would never make it. "Hero Found" points out that not everything associated with the Vietnam War falls into the stereotype of "lost cause" narratives that point to the numerous failures in that conflict, but instead point to how there was a far wider range of events occurring during the war, from the positive and uplifting to the truly mortifying. Henderson's research combines interviews with archival material to create a truly fascinating and spellbinding narrative that not only captures man's inhumanity to his fellow man, but one man's refusal to be crushed by such cruelty. In the end "Hero Found" becomes a testament to overcoming adversity. To give away much of the story and Dengler's escape would ruin the book, but suffice to say it's a lively page-turner that is hardly dull. Nevermind the insipid television show "Survivor", Dengler is a genuine survivor!

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