



## **Lawrence James Stark** **Prisoner of War in Vietnam, 1968 to 1973**

Lawrence James Stark was working for the Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. when he was invited to go to Vietnam and work for a consortium of contractors (RMK-BRJ) under contract to DoD. Stark accepted the invitation and went to Vietnam in April 1966 and spent a year with RMK-BRJ before returning to the United States. After a couple months, Stark returned to Vietnam and was hired as a U.S. Navy civil service employee.

Stark was later assigned to work in the city of Huế in December 1967. In the early morning hours of January 31, 1968, a division-sized force of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and Viet Cong (VC) soldiers launched a coordinated attack, known as the Tet Offensive, on the city of Huế. After fighting off attacks for two days with practically no ammunition left with which to defend himself, Stark was finally captured on February 1, 1968. Stark was one of only two Department of Defense civilian employees who were captured.

Stark has said that a typical day in prisoner camp was as follows: "We would rise at 6:30 a.m. and after washing would have breakfast which usually consisted of bread and a teaspoon of sugar with hot water. From about 7 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. we would do various things such as read (if material was available which was not very often) or work on little projects such as learning a foreign language. Lunch generally consisted of a bowl of soup with a spinach-like vegetable and bread or rice. There was a little pork fat in the soup. After lunch we would take a siesta from noon to 2:30 p.m. and then we would work on our mental stimulation projects. Dinner would be the same as the lunch and during the rest of the day we would just pass the time in conversation with our roommates. Our conversations would be centered around our families, friends, interesting experiences as well as hobbies, interests and discussions of the fairer sex. At 9 p.m. we would retire for the night. I was seldom asked to work and had very little recreation."

Stark was held captive for five and a half years, with five of those months in solitary confinement, prior to his release on March 5, 1973. After his release, he worked in the human resources office on the Washington Navy Yard. In 2010, Stark was awarded Purple Heart and Prisoner of War medals.

Stark was drafted into the Army in February 1958 and after spending two years in Germany was honorably discharged.

Stark currently resides in Bethesda, Maryland.