



Captain Gerald Coffee, U.S. Navy (Retired)

Born in Modesto, California, Gerald (Jerry) Coffee joined the Navy in 1957 after graduating from UCLA with a degree in Commercial Art.

In 1962, during the *Cuban Missile Crisis* as an *F-8 Crusader pilot*, Jerry was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for flying low level reconnaissance missions over Cuba, taking the photos ultimately used by the United States UN ambassador to prove the existence of Soviet missiles there. He was featured in the 2007 History Channel series *The Man, The Moment, and the Machine*, recounting his photo recon exploits during that dangerous time in US history. He was also featured in Michael Dobb's book, *One Minute to Midnight: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro on the Brink of Nuclear War*.

In February of 1966, while flying combat missions over North Vietnam, his RA5-C reconnaissance jet was downed by enemy fire. He parachuted safely but was captured immediately. For the next seven years he was held as a POW in the Communist prisons of North Vietnam. After his repatriation in February, 1973, Jerry returned to operation duties. He retired from active duty in the Navy after 28 years of service

His military decorations include the Silver Star, two awards of the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Bronze Stars, the Air Medal, two Purple Hearts, and the Vietnam Service Medal with 13 stars.

For the past 20 years, Captain Gerald Coffee, has been considered one of the nation's top speakers, addressing thousands of people a year across a broad spectrum of corporate America and to international groups as well.

In his message of going "Beyond Survival," Jerry draws not only from insights derived from the prison experience, but also from the perspective of his unique experiences since then: earning a masters degree in political science from Cal-Berkeley, studying at the prestigious National Defense University in Washington, D.C., Navy command and staff assignments, and his continuing interaction with hundreds of America's corporations and associations as a professional speaker.

In a poll of corporate meeting planners, Captain Coffee was selected as one of America's Top Ten Speakers. And, the prestigious Million Dollar Round Table selected him as one of its top twelve most popular, highest-rated, main platform speakers for the past 20 years.

He holds the National Speaker's Association's highest rating of CSP and membership in the Speaker's Hall of Fame (CPAE). His numerous civilian awards include the George Washington Honor Medal from the Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge.



WORLDWIDE
SPEAKERS GROUP

Jerry is a highly respected commentator on current political, economic, and social issues, seeing most in terms of opportunities yet to be seized by heroic leadership. He has appeared on Larry King Live (twice), Talk Back Live, NBC news, and numerous radio and TV talk shows. His book, [Beyond Survival](#), condensed by Readers Digest, is on audio-cassette by Nightingale-Conant, and was made into an award-winning play called “The Prisoner.”

Captain Coffee and his wife, Susan, a journalist, reside in Aiea, Hawaii. Between them they have 6 adult children, 7 grandchildren and 2 yellow Labs. Their lanai overlooks Pearl Harbor and is directly across from Camp Smith where a giant American flag dedicated to America’s POWs and MIAs waves 24/7.