

Both, your Mar 5 notes on shrinkery: Thanks to you I can see two other possible uses for all of this quackery, especially the stuff on Segal. One is in connection with the "evaluations" of Oswald and the second is a potential in our damage suit. One of the more likely sources of government "expert" witnesses is the National Institute of Mental Health. So, anything that can crumble those cookies on the witness stand could be of some real usefulness at that time. If you don't see Military Medicine perhaps Howard's library has it. If you don't have it, I'll ask him for two copies, one for you. Aside from its separate merit, the fine Sterba piece relates to this. If the piece was killed or changes, I hope Howe kept his. Crack-of-the-mont is rhyming thinking with Finck-ing! HW 3/12/73

Don't know if this adds to Times story.
Please return, no rush. I've not followed
this closely because I've not had time,
but one thing I recall seeing nothing
about is the fake, scare shrinkery that
was part of the whole phoney structure.
If there is any legitimate basis for all that
frightening stuff that was all over TV, I
know of no basis for it, no new conditions,
nothing to make this different for prisoners
and their wives and families from previous
wars, except for the length of captivity of
some. But there was no distinction made for
time.

HW:

Returning the Post piece as per your request, after pasting up and copying. Sending also the Times' Sterba, a remarkably informative piece which should be of interest.

jdw 5mar73

We have several clippings on "fake, scare shrinkery," and if you want them I can dig but it'll take time. Stuff about the probability that the POWs will be afraid of daylight, etc. Unbelievable. The latest clipping and easiest to lay my hands on is a tame sample, a story by Charles Howe in SFChronicle 31 Jan 73. Howe had phone intv with Dr. Julius Segal, a psychologist, about an article by Segal scheduled for publication in February issue of Military Medicine. Howe: "Years of living in an alien environment will have deeply changed some of themen. These tendencies may even include a tendency to eat at first only with a spoon, prison-fashion. In other cases some may be more comfortable squatting rather than sitting. A few initially may prefer sleeping on the floor. [Then a quote from Segal's article.] 'It is a fair assumption that some brief period will be necessary to allow the POW to begin relearning basic social skills, to adapt to a society in which he has become unaccustomed - even where rudimentary activities as eating and sleeping are concerned.'" Segal is chief of the Program and Evaluations Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda. He suggests military "halfway houses" for some POWs to help them adjust to civilized living.

In addition to the interview, Howe apparently based his article on an advance text of Segal's "study," which would have appeared about the time we were all seeing pictures

Robert C. Maynard

Part 2/21/73

Return of the Prisoners: Script by the Military

When important news events involving deep human emotions occur, those of us who are witnesses gain an opportunity to identify with the principals and wonder how we might react under similar circumstances. In this age so dominated by the electronic eye and high speed word transmitters, we who are at a distance seem sometimes almost obscenely close at hand.

For example, when Mrs. Robert Purcell of Louisville, Ky., spoke to her returning prisoner husband for the first time in seven and a half years, I felt like a stranger intruding at a family reunion; it seemed the wrong place for strangers to be as intimacies were exchanged. That is an issue of taste and ethics which undoubtedly will be debated in many places, including I'd guess, the Purcell household.

What concerns an observer of the way we receive our news is not so much this instance in which the mass media may have overstepped the bounds of good taste, but rather the fact that the press was such a passive participant. True enough, the networks went to Clark Field live and cameras dashed here and there to catch a glimpse of an emotional moment. But those were rare. The fact of the matter is that the return of the prisoners of war was a militarily-managed event down to the last "God bless America."

Even after it was clear that these were men perfectly capable of speaking for themselves, the entire event

The writer is the Ombudsman of The Washington Post. In this capacity he monitors news and editorial operations and offers in this space his own views on the performance of the news media in general and of this newspaper in particular.

continued to be handled as if the 163 returnees had no minds of their own. If the military had stopped at that, it would have been questionable enough. But it is now beginning to emerge that the Air Force did its best to shut off the press from any independent reporting at Clark Air Force Base.

According to reporters on the scene, one written directive, posted on barracks bulletin boards, told personnel at Clark: "Don't talk to the press be-

cause they will distort everything you say." Besides, James Sterba of The New York Times has reported that even in cases where the returning prisoners requested an opportunity to speak with representatives of the hometown press, permission was denied.

We are thus provided with one framework in which to focus our empathy with persons isolated from any contact with their society for seven or eight years. They return to a society more surely programmed in "them-against-us" terms than the one they left. Even as the machinery for information makes it possible for us to see an event such as the return of prisoners live half way around the globe, the bases of concern are made more limited. We still don't know what these men actually experienced—only what the military wants us to know of their experience.

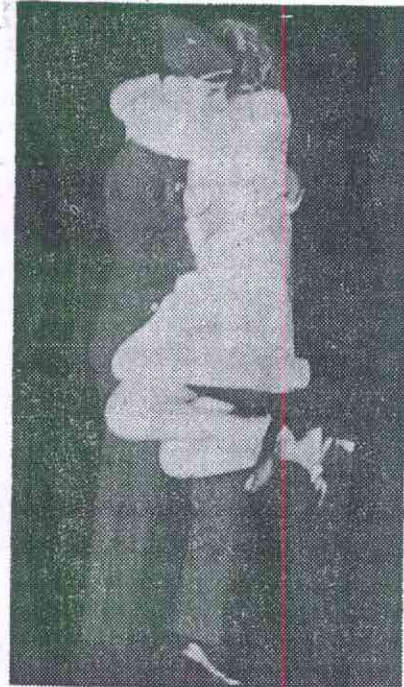
The consumers of information get to know what the returning prisoners can tell us after an armada of 80 military public relations agents briefed them first on how to communicate with their countrymen through the mass media. Not surprisingly, then, we received a number of paens to "honorable peace" and could only wonder how that very phrase happened to be among the first to pop out of the mouths of men in captivity for such long periods of time.

When it became clear that we were heading toward some settlement of enough of our disputes with North Vietnam as to allow for the return of prisoners, the Department of Defense prepared a booklet for the men. It was part of the large glut of material designed to help them catch up on the rapid changes in the time since they have been in foreign prisons.

The booklet tells them about the new hip language of "dude" and "right on" and brings them up to date on some of the major events of the past several years. But as I watched the militarily managed show unfold, I couldn't help wonder how they would be brought up to date on one of the fundamental issues of these times—the way we communicate with each other.

Perhaps, in the end, nobody really needed a primer on the subject of the relationship of the government and the press. The Department of Defense provided us all, prisoners and ordinary citizens alike, with an object lesson in what the issues are all about. If you start off believing that the press "will distort everything," then you have seri-

ously narrowed the options available for understanding what's going on.



Black Star Photo

Major Burer Returns

With that set of mind, it is not a "distortion" to provide returning prisoners with rough drafts of airport statements which praise an "honorable peace," but it would be a distortion to have candid give and take between the returnees and the press.

In the only interviews permitted at Clark Field, reporters were told beforehand that they could not ask the men any "controversial" questions. Those who need to catch up on how freedom and democracy are doing can look to the handling of the return of the prisoners by the military for some lessons in the act of news management, circa 1973.

Limited though we were in our access to any genuine information about how these men fared and what they really think about that, there was one spontaneous photographed instant that should win a prize. At Andrews Air Force base, when Maj. Arthur Burer returned, that spontaneous human response was when his wife and children broke military protocol and rushed across the tarmac to their man. The whole military honor guard arrangement disintegrated and human beings, in their frailty and their joy, took over. It is the lone photograph—with Mrs. Burer literally off the ground in exhilaration—that we can take away from this story as belonging to ordinary people, not to the managers.

of POWs sitting (in chairs!), and eating, perfectly normally. Perhaps Segal was too busy thinking (rhymes with Finck-ing) and writing to have seen news photos published some time ago of beds in the POW quarters.

You didn't ask for the Sterba piece but we're sending it because it's such a good one.
Je