

Ehrlichman Freed — Bounces Into S.F.

John Ehrlichman returned to freedom yesterday after 18 months in a desert prison and — tennis racket, briefcase and canvas bag in hand — promptly flew to San Francisco.

He posed cheerfully for photographers at San Francisco International Airport, gave a couple of reporters a lift back to the city and then drove off in a taxi to an undisclosed location.

The Watergate conspirator told reporters he wouldn't answer their questions because he had promised to give his first post-prison interview to Margaret Osmer of ABC News.

"I believe I'm a different and a better person today because of all this," Osmer reported Ehrlichman as saying. Ehrlichman also told Osmer that he would be flying to New York to negotiate a book deal before settling down in Santa Fe.

Ehrlichman looked tanned and healthy. He was thinner than when he went into prison for crimes connected with the Watergate cover-up, and he had a bounce to his step.

He was wearing a baseball cap and a windbreaker.

Ehrlichman seemed amused when he encountered a group of newspaper and television repre-

sentatives waiting for him when he left Swift Trail Prison, about 150 miles from Phoenix, at sunrise.

One of them asked Ehrlichman how he felt.

"Can't you see how I feel?" he asked in turn before driving off with a friend, reporter Lois Boyles of the Phoenix Gazette, to catch his flight to San Francisco.

A second group of press representatives was waiting when Ehrlichman stepped off the plane at the San Francisco airport.

"You tell me when you're done, and I'll be on my way," Ehrlichman told the press photographers.

He wouldn't say why he was in San Francisco or how long he planned to stay. Prior to going to prison in October, 1976, Ehrlichman had lived in Santa Fe, N.M., where he wrote "The Company," a novel based on what he learned about Washington as a key aide to former President Nixon.

His briefcase apparently contained the uncompleted manuscript of his second novel, a book that is to be published later this year about a young, idealistic lawyer who falls into corrupt ways in Washington.

Although Ehrlichman has steadfastly declined to talk to the

press since beginning his sentence, prison superintendent Charles Montgomery provided a few details about the 18 months of incarceration.

Ehrlichman worked the 3 a.m. to 7 a.m. shift in the prison powerhouse, Montgomery said, overseeing four large boilers and receiving \$10 to \$15 a month in pay.

Instead of sleeping like most of the prison's 350 other inmates on a bunk bed in a large dormitory, Ehrlichman shared a small room with two other prisoners — a privilege Montgomery said he got because of his "job assignment, conduct and seniority."

He spent his free time reading, writing and playing volleyball. He also gave legal advice to other prisoners.

Ehrlichman, who received an eight-year sentence for conspiring and lying in the Watergate case and for ordering the burglary of the offices of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, will remain on parole until released from his sentence.

He is expected to report at intervals to a federal parole officer in Tucson, Ariz. The 53-year-old ex-prisoner, a native of Tacoma, Wash., is separated from his wife, who lives in Seattle.



JOHN EHRLICHMAN OUTSIDE ARIZONA PRISON
He looked tanned, thinner and jaunty

AP Wirephoto