

Navy Chief on Guam

George Stephen Morrison

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AGANA, Guam, April 29— In the closing days of World War II a young naval officer named G. Stephen Morrison pushed the stick of his Hellcat forward and dived on some Japanese-occupied islands from 1,500 feet. Now a rear admiral, he is the military commander for those sandy specks.

And last Wednesday the lives of up to 50,000 South Vietnamese refugees sent here to Guam became his responsibility.

Admiral Morrison, whose headquarters is on Guam, is commander in chief of United States naval forces in the Marianas, part of the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific. In his post, known in the Navy as COMNAVMAR, the 56-year-old admiral with the soft Southern accent is in charge of an ocean area the size of the United States that is dotted with over 2,100 islands, fewer than 100 inhabited.

Last Wednesday Admiral Morrison was awakened with the news he had expected for three weeks. "Bringing the refugees here made a lot of sense," he said.

From Saigon it is a five-hour flight, which is not far in this area. Guam, a 30-mile-long island that is American territory, is always well stocked with supplies and skilled people at Andersen Air Force Base and the naval air station.

A Task of Supervision

Wednesday afternoon the refugees started coming; they still are. It is Admiral Morrison's responsibility to oversee their 10 major camps, their transportation, their feeding, their medical care and their personal needs, plus all the unexpected problems that accompany thousands of human beings.

The refugees sleep on the cots that the admiral had flown from Utah. Their diet, which includes rice, is shaped

by his staff health experts. Their eventual journey to the United States will be made on planes he arranged for.

The result has been a long series of 18-hour days in which he rarely sees his wife except at lunch, when she takes him a sandwich or two.

Despite the pressures and fatigue, Admiral Morrison has maintained some sense of humor. During a news briefing on the refugee situation he was asked how he was handling the many orphans. "Very carefully," he replied.

Cutting the Red Tape

The admiral, who has said he was first exposed to the plight of refugees during a visit to Tokyo shortly after the war, has little patience with bureaucracy. When an immigration official suggested that his men could process about 3,200 people a day, Admiral Morrison, who had has 6,000 arriving daily, suggested bluntly, "How about 6,000?"

Tokyo is a long way from Rome, Ga., where George Stephen Morrison was born on Jan. 7, 1919. He spent much of his youth in Leesburg, Fla., near Orlando, where his mother, who is 84, still lives.

Blind Date in Hawaii

In 1941 Ensign Morrison graduated from Annapolis, where, among other things he had studied Italian. Promptly stationed in the Pacific, he has remained there for most of his career, serving on a mine layer, an oiler and a number of aircraft carriers, including the Lexington, the Valley Forge, and the Midway and the Bon Homme Richard, which he commanded. He was in the Tonkin Gulf during the incident that led to United States retaliation against North Vietnam in 1964.

In Hawaii at the start of the war he went on a blind date. "He was pretty nice," his wife, Clara Clarke Morrison, says now. Soon after



U.S. Navy

Too busy for bureaucratic cautiousness.

the meeting they exchanged marriage vows, including a special one never to talk at home about his frequently secret work. They have two children, Anne, 28, and Andrew, 26; another son, James, who played with the Doors, a rock group, is deceased.

Colleagues describe the admiral, who will retire to Chula Vista, Calif., on Aug. 1, as an unassuming, open man who is highly considerate of staff members. During a recent game of golf, his favorite sport, he was struck by a petty officer's drive; he apologized for being in the way.

The other day when Mrs. Morrison was en route to volunteer work with the refugees, she drove the family car into a coconut tree. When she appeared to confess, her husband said, "I know." He has not mentioned it since.

Admiral Morrison does have some bad habits. His wife says he is always reading dictionaries or encyclopedias for relaxation and then leaving them about the house. Decades after his mother gave up on his lessons, he persists in playing the piano.

"He is not a good piano player," his wife said. "In fact, he is awful."