

A Reunion at Camp Pendleton —

One-Man Rescue Mission Brings Out 'Family' of 23

By JON NORDHEIMER

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CAMP PENDLETON, Calif., April 30 — Nate Allen is a big man with a sunburned nose and one lens missing from his eyeglasses, the only casualties of his one-man, 20,000-mile odyssey to rescue his Vietnamese wife's family.

An engineer working on the Alaskan pipeline, Mr. Allen dropped everything last Thursday to fly to Saigon on one of the last commercial aircrafts going into South Vietnam. He left two days ago, during a Communist rocket attack on Tan Son Nhut, leading a frightened band of 23 men, women and children away from the war.

His wife, who had stayed at home, was reunited with her parents and 10 brothers and sisters today in the Vietnamese refugee quarters set up on the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps base — eight years after she had departed Vietnam with her American husband.

It was a moment for the Vietnamese to abandon the restraint that had characterized the refugees entering this detention camp in the past two days. The family exploded in shouts of greeting and wails of relief when Mrs. Allen, the long-lost daughter-sister stepped into their Quonset hut this morning. A sobbing younger brother, disturbed by his public display, buried his face in a green handkerchief.

And so it went in Camp Pendleton today. For most of the evacuated Americans and their dependents, who comprised the bulk of the nearly 2,000 persons processed through the camp in two days, the experience was less dramatic.

This was the dawning of a

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Vietnamese Restraint

new life, but the ordeal of the past week still hung heavily on them. They trudged dutifully from one checkpoint to another or lingered slack-jawed and mute while teams of Government officials handled the paper work that required completion before they would be free to face the world that awaited them outside the military reservations.

Some 'Asked for Dollars'

Mr. Allen described 18 tension-filled hours spent in Saigon at the beginning of this week. After he was able to contact his wife's family, he instructed them to meet him at a designated hour at the Caravelle Hotel and to bring with them what possessions and friends they could. He then spent a frenetic morning dealing with U.S. Embassy and Vietnamese officials to complete documents needed for their emigration from the country.

"Everyone at the embassy was great and they speeded up the paper work to get us out of there," he said. "There were some Vietnamese who asked for dollars, but for the most part everyone was very considerate.

"Some people I've talked with said they had to pay as much as \$20,000 to get out."

He met his wife's family at

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Gives Way

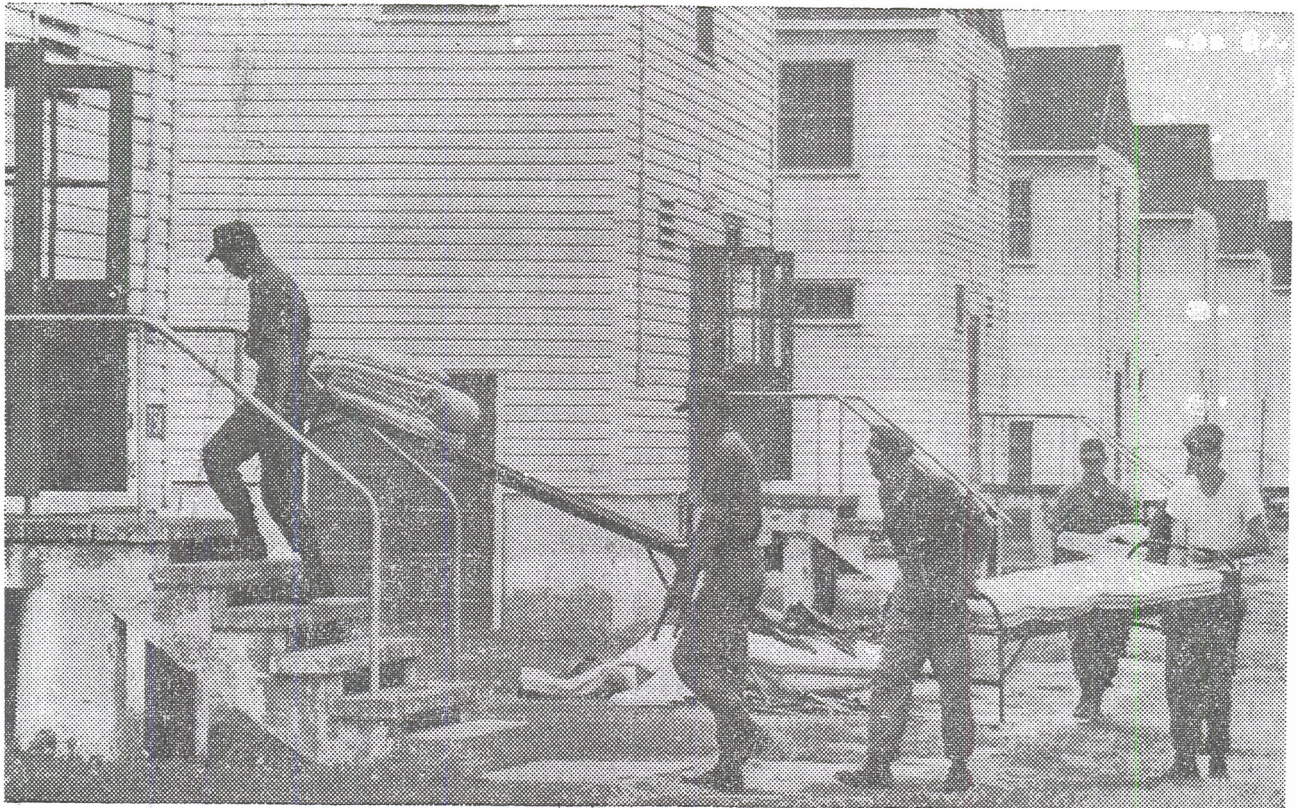
the hotel and started counting heads. There were 23, from young boys to a frail grandmother, to a young orphan who had tagged along.

The group spent the night in a hotel outside the center city, and headed the next morning to Tan Son Nhut airport.

Mr. Allen said he had to "smuggle" some of his brothers-in-law past Vietnamese security guards who were preventing draft-age Vietnamese men from boarding evacuation planes. As they prepared to board an Air Force C-141, Communist rockets struck the airport, destroying one plane and killing two United States Marines, he said. However, within a few hours Mr. Allen's entourage was aboard a plane that carried them first to the Philippines, and then on to Guam.

At Camp Pendleton today, reporters and photographers descended on the incoming Vietnamese, seeking out those who spoke English. Television cameras dogged the steps of every family.

Nearly everyone moved here



The New York Times/Gary Settle

Soldiers at Fort Chaffee, Ark., carrying cots into one of the barracks buildings that are to house refugees from South Vietnam. Mess halls and other structures also are awaiting the first arrivals, set for tomorrow.

so far from Guam has a destination beyond these gates, whether in the homes of relatives married to Americans, or with sponsors or sponsoring agencies. For most, the stay is brief, only a few hours before transportation is arranged to a new home.

"It seems to me that 80 per cent of the people I've been traveling with are wealthy enough to take care of themselves," said Lorem Strohmyer, an American expatriate who had resided in Vietnam. "The rest will need some kind of welfare."

One radio commentator said today that although the majority of persons in the area opposed the refugees' placement here, local residents should justify the country's reputation as "the most patriotic community in the country" by treating the Vietnamese with courtesy, compassion and respect.

Camp Government

James Magellas, an official of the United States Agency for International Development, said he anticipated that Vietnamese with American heads of family would continue to be the first ones transported to the United States. But, he said,

when refugees with meager resources and no guarantees of assistance from private quarters arrived here—presumably for longer periods—a community government would be organized to involve the refugees in the management of the camp.

The initial arrivals today seemed unconcerned with such mundane affairs. Some were crying as they stepped off the plane from Guam. They had just been informed that Saigon had fallen and the surrender of the South Vietnamese Government had been accepted.