

Happy Ending for 83 Stranded Refugees

The 83 Vietnamese refugees who were stranded in Oakland in October have all been placed with private sponsors, the Tolstoy Foundation said yesterday.

"Actually, the placements were completed on November 20," said Reed Nelson, West Coast director of the New York-based foundation, which has contracted with the government to resettle persons displaced by the Indochina war.

The 83 men, all of them former military personnel, were to be trained to as security guards by the Bay Area Maintenance Service Council.

On leaving the refugee center at Camp Pendleton, the 83 were first taken to Fresno where a training school had been set up. The training site was switched to Oakland after the refugees complained about living conditions in Fresno.

The trainees were housed in a 21-unit apartment building at 1757 26th avenue that also served as their school and, said Nelson, while most completed the scheduled 72 hours of training in how to perform a security guard's duties, only one was able to be placed in

a job.

a- The problem, said Nelson, was that none of the refugees spoke adequate English, even though instruction in English was to have been part of their training—"and it wasn't," the director said.

In October, the Bay Area Maintenance Service Council informed the refugees—"in a letter written in English," said Nelson—that the firm could no longer provide them lodging and meals.

"We had been responsible for processing them into the program," Nelson said, "so we took the responsibility of finding them sponsors and homes." Nelson said 55 of the men were resettled in Northern California and four in other states.

Most of the sponsors were private families or individuals who offered shelter and food and promise to help the refugees learn English and find jobs.

"We still have other refugees in need of help, and persons who would like information on what sponsorship entails should contact our San Francisco office at (415) 982-3159," Nelson said.
