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When the POWs Get Home . . .

Plans for Slow Readjustments

SAN DIEGO — (CNS) — San Diego Naval Hospital officials, quietly making contingency plans for the long-awaited return of U.S. war prisoners from Indochina, want to hold off family reunions for as much as a month until the POWs are emotionally prepared for a return to American society.

They want no ticker tape parades for the POWs, no honeymoon suites in expensive hotels for reunions with wives, none of the Johnny-comes-marching-home welcomes typical of World Wars I and II. At least not immediately.

Cultural Shock

The officials are concerned over the cultural shock that will hit the men who have been deprived of any contact with the outside world except that allowed by their captors — some of them for as long as eight years.

Consider what the POWs will encounter:

- Younger, childless POWs may find a marriage that has deteriorated to the point where divorce is the only solution. Older POWs may find themselves impotent.

- Older POWs will have to readjust to children who

have matured considerably since they last saw them, like a daughter braless and in a miniskirt, perhaps in imitation of her mother.

- Conditioned not to answer back to their captors, they may find themselves involuntarily withholding normal displays of emotion.

- Some, confined for many years in isolation, may have trouble readjusting to such simple amenities of life as furniture.

The hospital authorities base their view primarily on the culture shock suffered by most of the 82 crewmen of the captured intelligence ship *Pueblo* after their swift flight to San Diego following 11 months in North Korean captivity.

Pueblo Team

Capt. Raymond Spaulding, the hospital's chief of psychiatry, feels the Navy made a mistake in rushing the crew to the United States. He thinks time should have been allowed for initial medical treatment and psychotherapy.

He was head of the six-man psychiatric team that worked with the *Pueblo* men after their arrival here Christmas Eve 1968.

"I was very much against the precipitous return of the *Pueblo* people," Spaulding said. "It was a psychologi-

cal crime.

"Crewmen later told me they didn't know if they'd be stoned in the streets or taken to a federal prison. They certainly didn't expect the heroes' welcome they received."

Egress Recap

Although there is no official indication of when the Southeast Asian releases will come, the Pentagon has launched "Operation Egress Recap."

The Defense Department, reported earlier to have advocated family reunions within 72 hours of a POW's release, now says there could be longer periods becoming "based on the physical and emotional condition of individual POWs."

Noting that some of the more than 500 known Indochina POWs have been in captivity as long as eight years, Spaulding estimated it would take a month to ready them for their families.

"I would say it's going to take a minimum of four weeks for the POWs to say things like, 'Go to hell!' or to express anger or a negative feeling.

"They have not been able to do that for years — because if they did, they might get their heads bashed in or not get their ration of rice."