

## 1st Detailed Story

# 'Reds Treated Us Well': POW

LOS ANGELES — (UPI) — North Vietnamese showed no animosity to him when his plane was shot down on a bombing run, and jailers joked and got along well with American prisoners of war, Navy Lt. (j.g.) Norris Charles said yesterday.

The Los Angeles Times carried the first extensive interview with Charles in a full-page recollection of his eight months as a prisoner as told to writer Steve Jaffe and copyrighted by Jaffe.

Charles was released two months ago with two other prisoners in a gesture that the lieutenant said "was just to show the American people that if the war is ended the North Vietnamese will release all the POWs."

### Not Hostile

From the time of his capture after he parachuted unhurt, he ran into no personal clashes with the North Vietnamese, he said.

He described how a group of villagers who were "not hostile" took him into custody and he said:

"We had just boomed out of the sky, so there weren't any military around. My plane had fallen on a villager's hut. The owner was a woman, and she looked so hurt. All she wanted to do was to touch me and say something like, 'Why did you do this to my house?' She didn't have any hostility, just a question that would go unanswered."

### No Window

His room in an old French camp was 15 by 15 feet, containing a wooden plank bed and two desks. The only window was boarded.

"As I look back," he said, "the quarters were beautiful compared to the way most Vietnamese live, but certainly not beautiful compared to the way most Americans live. This was where I would spend 36 days of solitary confinement."

### 6 Cigarettes

Food was adequate and the POWs got big meals on six holidays a year including Easter and the Fourth of July.

On New Year's, he said

"they brought in boiled eggs, a nice salad, duck and a whole bunch of other stuff. I couldn't believe it. It was like something in the movies, but hardly what I expected in an enemy prison camp."

Normally he had his first meal at 7 a.m., consisting of fresh sweet milk, and half a loaf of bread. At that time he got his rations of cigarettes — six for the day.

The second meal at 10 a.m. consisted of cabbage or potato soup "really thick."

"In the soup," he said, "might be carrots or noodles, and you also got a side dish — soybean or fish cake, a half can of fish, Vietnamese pork or Russian pork, or maybe some kind of vegetables mixed with meat, like squash, with liver, or any number of things."

### First Raid

At a second camp he was taken to he had a roommate and plenty of reading material was available.

He and other prisoners were playing bridge on the morning of last April 16 when they went through their first bombing raid, Charles recalled.

He described the experience as "terrifying" and said:

"We stopped playing bridge when one of the guards came by and closed the shutters. 'Okay, now be quiet and get under the bed,' he said. So we all got under the beds. We wondered what the hell was going to happen to us. But nothing happened."

Most of all, Charles said, he missed "America itself" and his daughter and his wife.