

P.O.W.'s Greeters Told to De-emphasize the Military

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CLARK AIR BASE, the Philippines, Jan. 31—He will come from a quiet, slow-motion world. There, in the endless hours, days, years, sounds were probably events and changes in temperature and humidity were experiences. There, food, clothing and shelter were basic, drab and bare. Language was simple.

The moment he is transferred from North Vietnamese captivity to United States military custody, the change will be radical.

He will be back in the military world, with its speed and shine, its customs and bureaucracy and machinery, its rules and regulations and peculiar language.

For months military men have been preparing to make the transition as quiet, gentle and smooth as possible—like slowly moving a diver up from the depths to prevent the bends. Yet the P.O.W. will be emerging not simply from captivity to freedom but from slow to fast, from relatively primitive to utterly modern, and from a martial system built around people to a military system built around machines.

Not a Rip van Winkle

Treatment will depend on the man, his time in captivity and a variety of personal factors, military officers here say. He will not be a Rip van Winkle figure, they insist, but some add privately that in many cases emergence from captivity through the military system to freedom will not be without jolts.

Operation Homecoming, as the repatriation procedure is now known, has been designed to take the sting out of re-entering military life. There will be buffers and safeguards. Even the name was changed by Melvin R. Laird near the end of his term as Secretary of Defense, from Operation Egress Recap to make it sound less mili-

tary. Many officers here still refer to it by the old name nonetheless.

There has been a quiet attempt to relax, to instruct those who will be dealing with the returnees to act as un-military as possible, to avoid the service jargon.

On the medical evacuation jets that will ferry the men here from North Vietnam, they may meet Capt. Linda Huebner, a 25-year-old flight nurse who wears granny glasses. She has been told to act herself. Or Capt. Marianne Kizak, a 27-year-old flight nurse who wears blue-green eye shadow and a peace symbol ring and does not expect to have to take off either.

Cheery Or Cavellike

The evacuation plane could be cheery, bright, twin-engine C-9's, which are like commercial planes converted into traveling hospitals, or they could be dark, cavellike and noisy C-141's adapted from cargo planes. Either way the people aboard who will deal with the returnees will be most important.

The same applies when they arrive here. The jargon could be chilling after years away from it. Staff members say they will try to avoid it, but it often slips out.

When Maj. C. J. Schumaker, associate administrator of the hospital, was asked how many people his cafeteria would seat, he did not say, "I don't know"; he said, "I do not have that statistical capability."

For the military men handling Operation Homecoming, the task will consist of "medical evacuation, off-loading, medical processing, personal processing, debriefing, briefing, onward processing, monitoring of personal processing progress, and evacuation" to the continental United States "for detailed processing."

Unless such jargon intrudes, the returning prison-

ers will know it as "going home."

When they arrive at the hospital here they will undergo "medical processing" under a physician's supervision, including X-ray, electrocardiogram, tuberculosis skin test, dental examination and a variety of blood and urine tests.

The next step, called "non-medical processing," will probably be the most sensitive. The returnee will meet his escort, a man of the same rank and comparable background and experience who has learned the returnee's history.

The escort will act as a buffer against the military bureaucracy. He will bring his man up to date on family news, good and bad, and on personal affairs. Then the returnee can telephone his family if he wants to.

The escorts assigned here will stay with the men through the "onward processing" to Travis Air Force Base, in California. There new escorts will guide them on to hospitals in their home areas and through more detailed medical and mental

tests and more briefings and debriefings before they can rejoin their families.

Here each man will be issued a kit containing a toothbrush and toothpaste, a razor, a can of shaving foam, a spray can of deodorant, a tube of shampoo, a bottle of after-shave lotion and a bar of soap.

Toiletries and a Uniform

As soon as each man is able he will be measured for a specially tailored uniform that he will wear if he can.

Including the toilet kit, each returning prisoner will be issued 35 items valued at \$78 that he will not have to pay for. These range from a \$23 uniform coat to a 22-cent belt buckle. Ribbons for awards previously received will be ready to pin on the uniform opposite a plastic name tag.

The returnee's uniform will bring back memories. The shoulder patch of the unit with which he was serving when captured will be seen on the right sleeve.

Each man will be issued a \$250 cash advance that will be deducted later from accrued pay.