

'Be Home Soon,' Say 3 POWs in Hanoi

By Louise Hickman Lione

Copyright Philadelphia Inquirer

HANOI — (AP) — Yesterday, after trying for days, I finally got a chance to speak with three American prisoners of war.

They all looked healthy and well fed.

"Tell everyone not to be worried," said Charles Jackson, 26, an Air Force navigator from Denver, Colo. "We will be home soon."

Joseph Kernan, a 26 year old Navy navigator from Washington, pointed to his own ample girth and added:

"As you can see, we're well fed. We get three meals a day."

The third prisoner I spoke with was Peter Callaghan, 26, of Long Island, an Air Force navigator shot down June 21, 1972.

All said they had been told

last Monday that a cease-fire had been signed the previous Saturday in Paris. "We've been kept well informed of the negotiations," said one officer.

But they were obviously less well informed on other matters of interest.

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"Tell us," asked Kernan, "who won the Super Bowl?"

Told the Miami Dolphins had defeated the Washington Redskins, Kernan said: "Oh well, I just lost three cases of beer."

The interviews with the POWs took place yesterday

in a small room off the lobby of a downtown hotel. The room was filled with guards.

The three officers said they had been held in different camps throughout Vietnam. But Jackson, a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, said everyone he

had met in detention camps seemed in good health. Jackson had been shot down June 24, 1972.

Kernan was shot down May 7, 1972, flying, he said, 45 miles north of Hanoi.

The interview with the

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prisoners was arranged for representatives visiting here from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Women's International Democratic Federation. I was with the delegation as a reporter.

The interview, we were told, was permitted as part of the Tet New Year festivities, which started Friday.

Earlier in the day, the delegation of women met here with North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong.

Major Concern

He said Hanoi plans to "scrupulously" follow terms of the agreement. He said the major concern of the Hanoi government is that the United States does the same.

The North Vietnamese people seem to have a different concern. They are interested in getting the country reunified so that long separated families can be reunited.

One woman I spoke to said she left her 18 month old daughter in Hue, South Vietnam, in the early years of the war. That daughter is now 18 years old.

Jubilance

Whether it is because of Tet or the peace agreement, the streets of Hanoi are filled with jubilation. Shop windows are filled with merchandise and decorations heralding the new year.

There is a conspicuous absence of military troops, such as those found on Spanish streets following the Civil War there. The North Vietnamese people seem relaxed, happy and well fed.

As one Swedish newsman told me:

"If you tell people what you see here in terms of spirit and well-being, people think you are buying propaganda."