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**Civilian Prisoner, Object of Big Search,**

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CLARK AIR BASE, the Philippines, Feb. 13—He came off the plane shyly like most of the 26 other Americans released by the Vietcong yesterday.

He blinked in the glare of the television lights. His tall frame was slightly stooped and his face hollow and he walked a little unsteadily. But a small, happy smile came to his face when an American official clasped his shoulders to help him along the red carpet to a waiting hospital bus.

This was Douglas K. Ramsey of Boulder City, Nev., and the many other addresses, including Washington and Saigon, befitting a career officer in the United States State Department. The 38-year-old Mr. Ramsey's address for seven years has been somewhere in the jungles of South Vietnam.

The shy smile he revealed as he reached freedom late last

night hid an inner fortitude and endurance that sustained him through the most terrible years of the Vietnam war.

Some spectators thought he was almost obsequious in his manner, particularly when he seemed to bow to the line of American officials. Doug Ramsey was always a polite, gentleman. His stoop could be attributed to the cruel existence in the jungles, living in tunnels and forever on the run with his captors.

It was Mr. Ramsey's fate to be captured by the Vietcong on the lonely road to a ranger training camp at Trung Lap, northwest of Saigon, on Jan. 5, 1966. As a reporter covering the war then, I had come to know and respect Mr. Ramsey for his quiet confidence, his proficiency in the Vietnamese language and his success in winning the people's confidence.

Just the day before his capture Mr. Ramsey, then an area development officer with the

United States aid mission, had expressed concern about the increasing use of firepower by the American infantry then pouring into Vietnam.

It was this concern that took Mr. Ramsey up the lonely dirt road to Trung Lap. He wanted to urge the American brigade commander using it as a command post for a major field operation to be more cautious with his artillery because of the population density.

Mr. Ramsey never did reach

**Friends Pursued Search**

the camp. His pickup truck was stopped by a guerrilla roadblock and he was led into the jungle.

He disappeared, but his friends did not. In fact, the search for him became one of the legends of the Vietnam war.

Mr. Ramsey was blessed with the friendship of most of the brilliant American Government field operatives attracted to Vietnam then. His closest

## Shuffles Back to Freedom

friendship was with the late John Paul Vann, the energetic, volatile former military officer who was to rise to fame as the war grew longer.

Mr. Vann had been Mr. Ramsey's boss in Hau Ngia Province. The day he disappeared Mr. Vann rounded up several other Americans, and they began a week-long search of every hamlet in the province.

"We rode with grenades on our laps," Mr. Vann related. "We drove over paths that had not see a vehicle in 10 years. We found Vietcong lazing on roadsides. We were shot at. But we did not get a hint of Doug's whereabouts."

As the months rolled on and the war widened, Mr. Vann became almost obsessed with the search for his protégé.

"He's like a son to me," Mr. Vann said, explaining why he was offering tens of thousands of dollars as a reward.

By late 1966 Mr. Vann had learned that Mr. Ramsey was

in the hands of a battalion operating along the Saigon River. Later he learned that the Vietcong were using Mr. Ramsey as a teacher. Then there was solid information that he was seriously ill.

An effort to buy his release, in which the captured wife of a Vietcong province leader was to be used as an intermediary, failed.

Until Mr. Vann's death last June in a helicopter crash, he never lost hope. When Mr. Ramsey's name appeared on the prisoner list provided by the Vietcong, my heart and, I know, that of many others jumped at the thought that Mr. Vann's faith had been justified.

When Mr. Ramsey stepped out of that hospital plane and the harsh lights picked up his gaunt features, his shuffle and his shy smile, I felt that at last the war might finally be over and that decent things could survive the worst kind of travail.



Associated Press  
Douglas K. Ramsey being aided by a State Department official as he arrived Monday at Clark Air Base.