

Ex-Prisoners Rushing for Gifts, Ice Cream and Home

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CLARK AIR BASE, the Philippines, Wednesday, Feb. 14 —The first two returned war prisoners departed for the United States last night and another plane-load were scheduled to leave for home today. Meanwhile the men who were released by the Vietnamese Communists on Monday were treated to beer, banana splits, a movie and a shopping trip to the base exchange.

Carefully planned measures for a slow, controlled transition from captivity to normal life went by the board as many of the men, looking healthy and spirited, refused to sleep and asked that medical examinations and military "processing" be hurried so that they could get home to their families.

One man, anxious to get home and too excited to sleep, got a dentist out of bed at 1 A.M. yesterday and insisted that his dental examination be completed, an informant at the hospital here said.

Many of the 116 prisoners released in Hanoi and flown here Monday afternoon had completed most of the tests and

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military formalities here by late yesterday afternoon, two days ahead of schedule, and Filipino seamstresses were sewing late into the night to have their tailored uniforms ready for a group departure today for Travis Air Force Base, Calif., and then on to local military hospitals. Daily flights home have been scheduled.

Things were going more slowly for the 19 soldiers and seven civilians who arrived here late Monday night after a delayed release at Loc Ninh, South Vietnam. Their physical condition, after five or more years imprisonment — in some cases in the jungle — was generally much worse than those who had arrived from prison camps in Hanoi, hospital officials said.

The two men who left last night were going home on a special flight to see their mothers, both reported to be critically ill.

'Added Gesture of Goodwill'

One of them, Comdr. Brian D. Woods of the Navy, who is 40 years old, was released by Hanoi as "an added gesture of goodwill" so that he could re-

turn to his ailing mother's side. In captivity since 1968, he had not been scheduled for release Monday but was added to the group of 115 after a request from United States officials passed through the International Commission of Control and Supervision four days ago. The other man who departed for the United States was Maj. Glendon W. Perkins, 38, whose plane was shot down by a missile and who was captured by North Vietnam on July 20, 1966.

In an airport departure statement prepared with the help of military public relations men here, Commander Woods said: "I feel that a comment is in appropriate due to personal imminent pending tragedy in the family of myself and Major Perkins. Our country has honored us through the efforts you are now watching. We will probably be the first P.O.W.'s to return home under the release agreement. We would like this opportunity to show pride that we have in service to our country and our Commander in Chief. Thank you."

Flight-Bag Passenger

Hospital officials found an unauthorized occupant there Monday—a puppy that Lieut. Comdr. Edward A. Davis had carried out of Hanoi in his flight bag. Commander Davis said that the puppy named Ma Co, had been given to him two months ago by a North Vietnamese prison guard whose dog had given birth to a litter a month earlier. The puppy was placed in quarantine, bathed and pronounced healthy by a hospital veterinarian.

Commander Davis and fellow prisoners had shared their food with Ma Co, who weighs seven and a half pounds. Officials have requested approval from the Air Force chief of staff to let the puppy fly home with Commander Davis.

A few other men brought back souvenirs from captivity. An informant at the hospital, which is off limits to newsmen, said that one prisoner from South Vietnam had carried back a chain with which his legs had sometimes been shackled by his Vietcong captors. Another man held in South Vietnam brought back a comb he had made out of jungle fibers while in captivity. Others carried back the hammocks they had slept in.

Although newsmen have been barred from talking to any of the returned prisoners, some bits of information about their long ordeal have begun to slip out through informants who have talked to the prisoners here.

No Conversation for 5 Years

One man captured and held in the jungles of South Vietnam had reportedly not carried on

a conversation with anyone for five years.

Prisoners released in the North reportedly said that they had received two meals of rice and fish a day for the last several months. They were reportedly moved out of Hanoi to camps near the Chinese border during heavy bombing raids; there, they said, Chinese-style food was excellent and plentiful. While in Hanoi, some prisoners received beer on special days such as Christmas, three or four times a year.

Frank A. Sieverts, the State Department's expert on prisoner-of-war matters, said that the men released in the South on Monday had taken their first hot showers in seven years. All telephoned their families Monday night. Letters they had written in captivity were never received.

"These are men, in other words, who have come out of oblivion," Mr. Sieverts said.

Mr. Sieverts especially praised a fellow foreign service officer, Douglas Kent Ramsey, the civilian held in captivity the longest. Mr. Ramsey, 38, who speaks Vietnamese fluently, was captured in January, 1966. For more than four years, United States officials had no word on whether he was alive or dead.

"He is a mountain boy from Nevada and we all said that

if anybody could make it, he could," said Mr. Sieverts. "He is a real hero as far as we're concerned."

The scene inside the hospital where the former prisoners are living was described by informants as lively and full of chatter, with nurses being patted on their bottoms occasionally, and a special ice cream counter, always with customers.

Three-fourths of the men were healthy enough to eat regular diets instead of bland meals, and some men seemed to be eating endlessly. One reportedly ate an entire loaf of bread, one slice at a time, with two pats of butter on each slice.

"They never seem to want to go to sleep," said one hospital staff member. Many stayed up all night and reported without sleep for 5 A.M. blood tests.

Ice cream was so popular that the hospital kitchen ran out of bananas for banana splits. More were rushed in.

Green salads, another luxury missed in captivity, were gobbled down.

The men were taken on school buses last night to the base exchange to buy gifts for their families, stereo equipment, civilian clothing and other things.

One of them emerged from the exchange puffing a cigar and carrying a box that ap-

peared to contain a portable television set.

Each man was given a catalogue of base-exchange merchandise that they will be allowed to buy tax-free and duty-free for three months. Newsmen watching from outside the store saw most of the men clustered around stereo and camera displays.

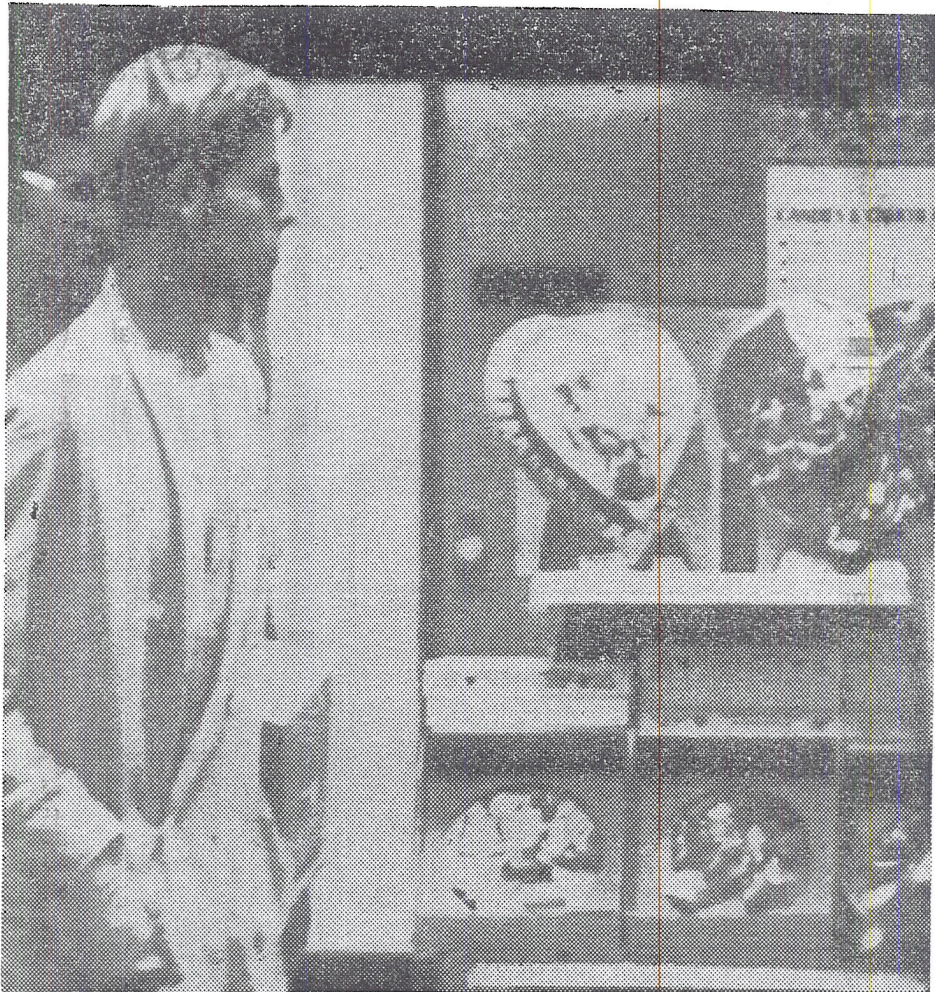
Several bought heart-shaped boxes of Valentine's Day chocolates to mail.

Prisoners Flying to the U.S.



United Press International

Comdr. Brian D. Woods, left, and Maj. Glendon W. Perkins at Clark Air Base just before they left early for their homes because their mothers were very ill.



Associated Press

A former prisoner of war and his escort pass a valentine display at Clark Air Base