

Viet Cong Brutality

Waterford, Conn.

The father of a freed prisoner of war said yesterday his son is returning home after ten months as a captive in the jungles of South Vietnam with a deep hatred for his Viet Cong captors.

George K. Wanat Sr. said his son, Army Captain George Wanat Jr., 27, told him a two-hour telephone call Tuesday that the Viet Cong repeatedly attempted to break him, leaving him chained in a cage with ants

and snakes for five months.

"I'd kill those bastards if I ever saw them again," Wanat quoted his son as saying. The elder Wanat made his remarks in an interview with *The Day of New London*.

Wanat said the remark by his son was the only change he could detect in the young officer's attitude, and that he was sure his son was in good mental health.

"Overall I'd say he was very much like the man who left two years ago," Wanat

said. "He was in good spirits, lugged a lot and said he was perfectly healthy."

Young Wanat suffered from a severe case of malnutrition, and his body is reportedly so distended that he cannot wear street clothes, his father said. He still is under examination and observation at Clark Air Base in the Philippines.

"He told me they (the Viet Cong) spent about three months trying to break him down," Wanat said. "One of his punishments was being

deprived of mosquito netting. He ended up with a base case of malaria, but they wouldn't treat him right away. About the time he thought he would die they finally gave him something."

Captain Wanat spent his first five months chained alone inside a bamboo cage, and his other five months were shared with another American, his father said. His diet consisted of rice and pork fat, rationed at one bowl a day, and water.

Associated Press

Boring Routine as Captive

'Hard' Life in POW Camp

Bien Hoa, South Vietnam

The first South Vietnamese prisoners of war to be returned to the government say that life in the Communists' jungle camps was hard, but never cruel, a boring routine of political indoctrination, menial labor and flight from allied bombs.

Nearly all the prisoners freed this week are suffering from malaria or some form of discomfiting skin disease, but the way they describe it, their captors shared what little medicine was available and fed them regularly although simply.

"It's very difficult with the other side," said a South Vietnamese private captured in the battles near An Loc last spring. "They were working all the time. It's amazing. I knew I couldn't do it. All I wanted to do was come home."

RECEPTION

The private and hundreds of other South Vietnamese freed this week are still some distance from home. The reception center in which they are being housed is a stripped-down barracks and mess hall left behind by a departing U. S. unit, and the men are receiving little of the lavish attention focussed on their American counterparts.

Each soldier has been given a fresh set of outlandishly

and inexplicably out-sized fatigues, a pack of cigarettes, a small bag of food and personal items, a blanket and a sleeping mat to put on the metal frames of the beds GI left behind.

Medical examinations are carried out assembly-line style on stretchers in the dank mess hall and there is a rudimentary effort at political re-education. Yesterday the men were assembled to greet a visiting brigadier general and chanted in unison: "Overthrow the Communists. Republic of Vietnam forever."

The private suffering from malaria said he was captured in April along with 100 soldiers in Tay Ninh province and marched for about a month to a site in Cambodia where many if not all of the Communist POW camps for the southern part of Vietnam are located.

FEAR

He said he was very frightened and remained

convinced until the very end that he would die a captive, even though the Communists in their propaganda sessions told the men they would not be harmed.

Most of the POWs time, he went on, was spent working in the vegetable patches and primitive animal farms kept by the Communist forces, carefully shaded to hide them from U.S. and South Vietnamese war planes. When food was distributed, the prisoners were often given small portions of pork and chicken to go along with the rice, salt and greens that were their staple.

"The Communists always told us we were getting the same diet as the soldiers," he said.

The hardest part of the life, said the private, was keeping up with the very tight discipline and organization of their captors. "Everything," he said, "had to be done at the same time, even eating a piece of meat."

He could not, however, remember a single instance of brutality. If prisoners tried to escape and were caught, their punishment was to be bound hand and foot, sometimes for months at a time, but they were not beaten.

Washington Post Service