

Returning P.O.W.'s Are Flooded With Offers of Gifts and Other Benefits

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By WAYNE KING

Returning prisoners of war are coming home with little public fanfare, but many of them will find an unexpected flood of homecoming gift offers from generous—and, some fear, self-serving—donors.

Across the country, public and private groups and individuals have offered the returning men all kinds of gifts, such as lifetime passes to baseball games, new cars for a year and vacations in Florida for themselves and their families.

Bills pending in Congress and in state legislatures would provide benefits ranging up to \$200 a month for life, tax exemptions, extended medical care and scholarship aid for the men and their families.

The deluge of gift offers from private sources has become so intense that some fear the offers might be inspired as much by public relations as by patriotism.

The Pentagon has assigned men to compile a list of the offers of gifts and benefits to be passed out to the men, probably as they leave hospitals where they will receive final examination and medical care.

'A Lot of Offers'

"A lot of offers of gifts are coming in from companies and private individuals," a Pentagon spokesman said. "Some are coming here, some are coming to the hospitals where the men will be taken."

The spokesman emphasized that the Pentagon listing was not a screening operation. "It will be up to the men whether they want to take part," he said. "The offers are made for a number of reasons, and we [the Pentagon] don't want to

put ourselves in the position of endorsing any of them."

President Nixon has issued a plea that receptions be quiet and tasteful, and that politicians refrain from seeking to capitalize on the homecoming with speeches and celebrations.

In most cases, reports from around the country indicate, patriotic groups and local officials are abiding by the requests for relatively quiet homecomings.

Typical of the reaction was that of John Swift of the Massachusetts American Legion.

"We are going to soft-pedal the return of these young men," Mr. Swift said. "They need time to themselves and to be with their families, to adapt themselves back into the main stream of community life."

But offers of gifts and bonuses from public and private sources are proliferating. Among them are the following:

¶ A gold lifetime pass to all major and minor league baseball games, offered by Bowie Kuhn, baseball commissioner.

¶ An all-expenses-paid week's vacation in Orlando, Fla.—including admission to Disney World and other tour spots—for the men and their families anytime this year, offered by the Orlando Area Chamber of Commerce.

¶ A one-year free loan, with maintenance, of a new LTD, Mustang or Torino by the Ford Dealers Organization.

¶ Proposals by Representative Paul Findley of Ohio to provide from \$30 to \$150 a month for life, depending on length of time in prison, for all P.O.W.'s. A Senate proposal would provide \$40 to \$200 on the same basis.

¶ A proposal by Representa-

tive Joseph Marazitti of New Jersey with 18 other sponsors, to provide tax credits of 10 per cent for all Vietnam veterans, 25 per cent for all P.O.W.'s and 15 per cent for an employer who hires a veteran as a trainee or in an educational program.

Proposals have also been advanced for compensation in the form of disability payments, ranging up to 50 per cent. Others would extend the time period that P.O.W.'s would be eligible for certain medical benefits.

A movement in some legislatures would provide tuition scholarships for the children of P.O.W.'s. Twenty-seven states, including New York, have

adopted such legislation, with bills pending in eight others.

Other states are considering various bonus proposals.

In Massachusetts, where each returning Vietnam veteran received a \$300 bonus, the state has incurred a \$16-million shortage and has been forced to call the plan to a halt with some veterans left empty handed.

In Maryland, the American Legion has arranged with the state's savings and loan industry to establish a \$100,000 scholarship fund for the children of the state's P.O.W.'s.

In San Diego, the Chamber of Commerce has arranged for free lodging for families of men who will need hospital care there and there are plans for free admission to the San Diego Zoo and other tourist attractions, with taxi companies pro-

viding free transportation. Some San Diego merchants, like others around the country, have made offers of gifts to the men.