

# 40 More POWs Arrive at Travis

By Charles Howe

The first sharp words about conditions of imprisonment in Vietnam were heard at Travis Air Force Base yesterday when one of the returning prisoners of war described his captivity as "the ultimate bummer."

Unlike the rest of the 60 repatriated servicemen who have landed at Travis this week, Captain George K. Wanat, 27, did not limit his conversation to a few pleasantries.

Apparently violating what some have interpreted as military orders to go easy on conditions of confinement until all captured Americans are back in the U.S., Wanat decided to unburden himself.

"They (the Viet Cong) called it good, humane and lenient treatment," said Wanat, who was captured on April 8, 1972.

"But I would not agree with that," he continued. "It was like I imagined it would be for a POW. It was a hard piece of cheese."

## CAPTIVITY

Wanat, an Army adviser whose position was overrun near An Loc, was held for ten months in the jungle by the Viet Cong. He appeared gaunt and deeply tanned as he spoke briefly in a lounge before boarding a plane to

return to his home in Foxboro, Mass.

"Everybody received the same treatment. They sort of kept us in isolation."

Other prisoners have limited their comments to expressing thanks to being back and praise to both President Nixon and the American people.

Wanat said he and his comrades lived on a diet of rice and pork fat. "It was pretty hard," he said.

In a mildly humorous aside, Wanat asked if comedian Dick Gregory was still on a liquid diet in protest over the war.

"If he is, I know how he

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UPI Photo

CAPT. WANAT  
'It was pretty hard'



AP photo

CAPT. STOCKDALE  
'We're home. We're home'

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feels now," Wanat remarked wryly.

Wanat arrived from Clark Air Base in the Philippines in one of two planes carrying a total of 40 former prisoners. The welcome at Travis remained — by design — low-keyed. Several hundred spectators watched the planes land, about an hour apart, and all the men had arrived by noon.

Three planeloads carrying 60 former POWs are scheduled to land at Travis today. Times of arrival will be at 9 a.m., noon and 3 p.m.

Six of yesterday's ex-prisoners, all residents of the Bay Area, were taken to military hospitals. Two were met and embraced by their wives.

"We're home, we're home," said the first man out of the first plane, Navy

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Captain James B. Stockdale, 49, of Coronado, in San Diego county.

## WOUND

Limping badly from a leg wound caused when his plane was shot down over North Vietnam, Stockdale said he and his comrades have been "living on loyalty for the past several years."

One of the most touching moments at yesterday's reunion came when an Air



CAROLE SMITH  
'Some readjustments'



CMDR. SHANKEL  
'With honor'

Force pilot who was shot down in 1965 met his son, for the first time.

Major Hayden Lockhart, 32, of Alexandria, Va., was caught in mid-salute when his wife, Jill, and his seven-year-old son, Hayden Jr., reached his side.

After finishing his salute to a color guard, Lockhart embraced his wife and then, with a smile on his face, bent down to shake hands with his son.

#### CONDITION

Military hospitals in the Bay Area issued reports at press conferences on the condition of some of the men who returned Wednesday afternoon.

At Letterman General Hospital at the Presidio the wife of Army Captain Mark A. Smith, 26, captured ten months ago, said her husband seemed in good condition.

Carole Smith had spent Wednesday evening in seclusion with her husband, who was captured on his third tour of duty in Vietnam.

At a press conference, she said that Smith kept himself busy while in captivity "making brooms and preaching religion." A practicing Methodist, Smith became known as "The Preacher," while in confinement, she said.

"His mind is very good," Mrs. Smith added. "There will be some readjustments to make but it's just normal."

Later yesterday Major Albert E. Carlson, held in captivity for ten months by the Viet Cong, joined Smith at Letterman within two hours after arriving at Travis.

Looking pale and walking stiffly, Carlson, whose home is in San Lorenzo, spoke briefly before going inside the hospital to meet his wife, Nancy.

"It's certainly good to see Americans again.

"It's overwhelming. Words are hard to come by but I certainly want to thank you all for all you have done to bring me back. There were times when I never thought I'd make it back," he said.

At the Oakland Naval Hospital, three Navy pilots among yesterday's arrivals made brief statements be-



CMDR. KOPFMAN  
'Thanks'

fore they joined their families for private reunions.

"I want you all to remember we walked out of Hanoi as winners," said Lieutenant Commander William L. Shankel, 33, a prisoner since Dec. 23, 1965.

"We're not coming home with our tails between our legs. We return with honor."

#### THANKS

Commander Theodore F. Kopfman, 31, and Lieutenant Commander Rodney A. Knutson, 34, expressed thanks to all who worked for their release.

Like Shankel, they appeared so pale that their faces were almost gray.

An escort officer at Travis said that the men on yesterday's planes spent a great deal of time talking about their next duty assignments. None, apparently, expressed a desire to leave the military.

Lieutenant Commander Milton R. Baker, who accompanied some of the prisoners to Travis from Clark, said that of a wide choice of literature aboard, most of the men chose automobile magazines.