

A Brooklyn P.O.W. Meets New Niece and Nephew

By DONALD JANSON
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PHOENIXVILLE, Pa., Feb. 16 —Pvt. Ferdinand Rodriguez of Brooklyn, a prisoner of war in Vietnam for the last five years, ate lunch with his family at Valley Forge General Hospital today and met his niece and nephew for the first time.

And 20 miles southeast of here, at the Philadelphia Naval Base, Comdr. Robert B. Doremus of Montclair, N. J., who had not seen his wife and children for seven and a half years, got the names of his two daughters mixed up, greeting 11-year-old Barbara as Karen, who is 16.

Commander Doremus and Private Rodriguez were among the prisoners of war from the New York area who arrived in Philadelphia at 11:15 P.M. after a 25-hour flight from Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines.

The two men had been flown first to McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. From there, Private Rodriguez was taken by helicopter to the Valley Forge Hospital and Commander Doremus was driven to the Naval Hospital here.

Stricken With Malaria

Private Rodriguez, a 24-year-old draftee, arrived in Valley Forge early today. Col. William S. Mullins, who accompanied him from McGuire, said the young soldier was suffering from malaria and exhaustion.

But his doctors said the former prisoner's spirits had soared after his reunion with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jesus Rodriguez; his older brother, Juan; Juan's wife, Dorcas, and the young couple's two children, Debra, 5, and John, 3.

The soldier's father and brother dashed through the cold night air to the helicopter after it landed on the hospital grounds at 12:10 A.M. When Private Rodriguez was carried out, on a stretcher, Juan reached over the shoulder of a waiting hospital corpsman to grasp his brother's hands, which were folded on his chest. Both broke into big grins. The ambulance sped him to the hospital, where his mother, wearing a



United Press International
Pvt. Ferdinand A. Rodriguez on arrival at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey Thursday.



Associated Press
Cmdr. Robert B. Doremus arriving at the Naval Hospital in Philadelphia early yesterday.

white orchid corsage from President and Mrs. Nixon, was waiting.

The family was kept in Private Rodriguez's newly carpeted room for two hours. After his relatives left for a motel in nearby Lionville, the patient slept for four hours, then rose for his heartiest breakfast in years.

Colonel Mullins said doctors had found him malnourished. He made progress toward recovery by having four scrambled eggs, two hot cakes, cereal, ham, bacon, toast, pineapple juice, coffee and milk for breakfast. He repeated the performance, with a change in menu, when his family came for lunch.

No Mail Received

This afternoon, doctors began medical tests and continued the treatment for malaria begun at Clark Air Force Base. Capt. George K. Wanat Jr., 27, of Foxboro, Mass., the Valley Forge hospital's second released prisoner of war, arrived in a helicopter minutes after the one bearing Private Rodriguez. Captain Wanat also was suffering from malaria.

Neither man, Colonel Mullins said, will be permitted to talk

to newsmen until medical evaluations are completed in three or more days.

Captain Wanat ate lunch in his ward today with his wife, Gretchen; his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George K. Wanat Sr. of New London, Conn.; his brother, Robert, 19, and six sisters, Mrs. Jean Power, 25; Mrs. Gail O'Hara, 22; Susan, 17; Nancy, 15; Catherine, 13, and Elizabeth, 9.

Army Treatment 'Royal'

Dorcas Rodriguez said the excitement of the reunion with Private Rodriguez had been heightened because the family had received no mail from him throughout his lengthy imprisonment, which began 19 days after he was sent to Vietnam. "He hasn't changed a bit," she said.

Juan Rodriguez, a supervisor in the corporate trust department of the Chemical Bank branch at 770 Broadway in Manhattan, said he had last seen his brother in 1967, at the banker's wedding.

The brothers, who were born in Ponce, P.R., have a half-brother and three half-sisters, their mother's children. Juan Rodriguez and his family live with the parents on Grove Street in Brooklyn. Jesus Ro-

driguez is a dishwasher at a restaurant at Kennedy International Airport.

Juan said the family would stay in the area and visit his brother daily for a while. The Army is their host. "They have treated us like royalty," he said.

And in a 12th-floor suite at the Naval Hospital in Philadelphia, Commander Doremus, who was shot down on Aug. 24, 1965, while flying an F-4 Phantom jet over North Vietnam, held his first reunion with his wife, Dinah; his daughters, Karen and Barbara, and his son, Robert, 11, who is Barbara's twin. Also present were his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Doremus of Montclair, and his brother and sister-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Doremus of Rochester, N. Y.

The commander, who is 40 years old, and his family had a lunch of lobster tails, tossed salad, coconut cake and coffee in his suite. The commander's sister-in-law gave this account of the reunion:

"The first person to tap him on his shoulder was his daughter, Barbara. He turned around and said 'Hello, Karen.' The children got a big kick out of his not being able to sort them out in his mind. He held onto his wife's hand all the time. He couldn't take his eyes off his children he was so hungry for them."