



UPI photo

MAJOR HUBERT K. FLESHER AND WIFE SUE
She jumped into his arms at Travis yesterday

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18 More POWs-- Informal Greeting

By Charles Howe

Military protocol collapsed slightly yesterday as 18 American prisoners of war arrived 20 minutes behind schedule at Travis Air Force Base after their airplane did a bit of sight-seeing over Golden Gate Bridge.

And once the big C-141

was down at 3:30 p.m., the wife of Major Hubert K. Flesher, 40, a prisoner since February 2, 1966, promptly leaped right into his arms.

"Hello, baby!" Flesher shouted at his wife as he stepped off the plane and came down the red-carpeted runway.

Before Flesher, of Rancho Cordova in Sacramento county, could even salute the color guard, his wife had bounded through the crowd and jumped into his arms.

RELAXED

Equally informal was Air Force Captain John H. Nasmyth, a prisoner for more than five years, who strolled through the reception area with a can of beer in one hand.

Nasmyth, 32, of South San Gabriel in Los Angeles county, collected a clutch of POW bracelets from the crowd and philosophized:

"I found several things

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most inspiring," he said. "One of them was President Nixon's landslide victory. The second was the anti-anti-war stickers on car bumpers. One of them that I remember as the most important was a bumper sticker of an American flag saying: 'These colors don't run.'"

Wearing dark glasses, Nasmyth said, "the reason I didn't cry when I got off this plane was that I was just too tired."

CROWD

At least a half dozen of the men walked directly into the crowd of some 300 persons at Travis, shaking hands and kissing friends and strangers as well.

Spokesman for the group was Navy Commander James G. Pirie, 37, who was shot down on June 22, 1967.

"We're really glad to be back," Pirie told the crowd. "They even let us circle the Golden Gate Bridge."

Before the plane took off from Honolulu on its final leg home, Pirie had told a crowd of about 1000 persons: "In just a few hours we'll be crossing that Golden Gate, and it will be a mighty welcome sight, I'll tell you!"

WIFE

Pirie, whose family lives in Lemoore, was taken to Oakland Navy Hospital, where he was united with his wife, Barbara Ann and their sons, James, Bradley and David.

Grinning broadly he told a crowd of some 100 persons that: "It's almost over now. I went a lot of miles to get here. We overflowed the Golden Gate and the sight was breathtaking!"

FROLIC

Before yesterday's group of 18 departed from Clark Air Base in the Philippines, a number of the men took time off to frolic with some 1000 schoolchildren there.

Air Force Captain Herbert B. Ringsdorf, 33, blushed and chuckled when a 16-year-old girl impulsively kissed him.

The latest group of returning POW's brought the number of released Americans to 164, with another 430 still to be repatriated.