

Freed Flyers Favor Aid to Hanoi

Ex-POW's Anti-War

Travis Air Force Base,
Solano county

A returned American prisoner of war conceded yesterday he signed an anti-war statement while in Hanoi.

Air Force Captain Lynn E. Guenther, 27, also said he had "mixed feelings" about the heavy B-52 raids against Hanoi last December.

Guenther was quick to defend his opinions, too, telling a news conference "you know as well as I do we allow free speech in this country."

Guenther was shot down near the North Vietnamese-Laoian border Dec. 26, 1971, while flying a prop-driven spotter plane.

SIGNATURE

His name was among eight signatures on a statement distributed in Paris in May 1972 by the North Vietnamese. The statement, reported by Reuters, called U.S. bombing "futile," asked for an end to the war, and praised the fighting spirit of the communist forces.

"At no time did any of these statements degrade the United States," he said, adding "I have my own personal opinions and I'd rather not discuss them at this time."

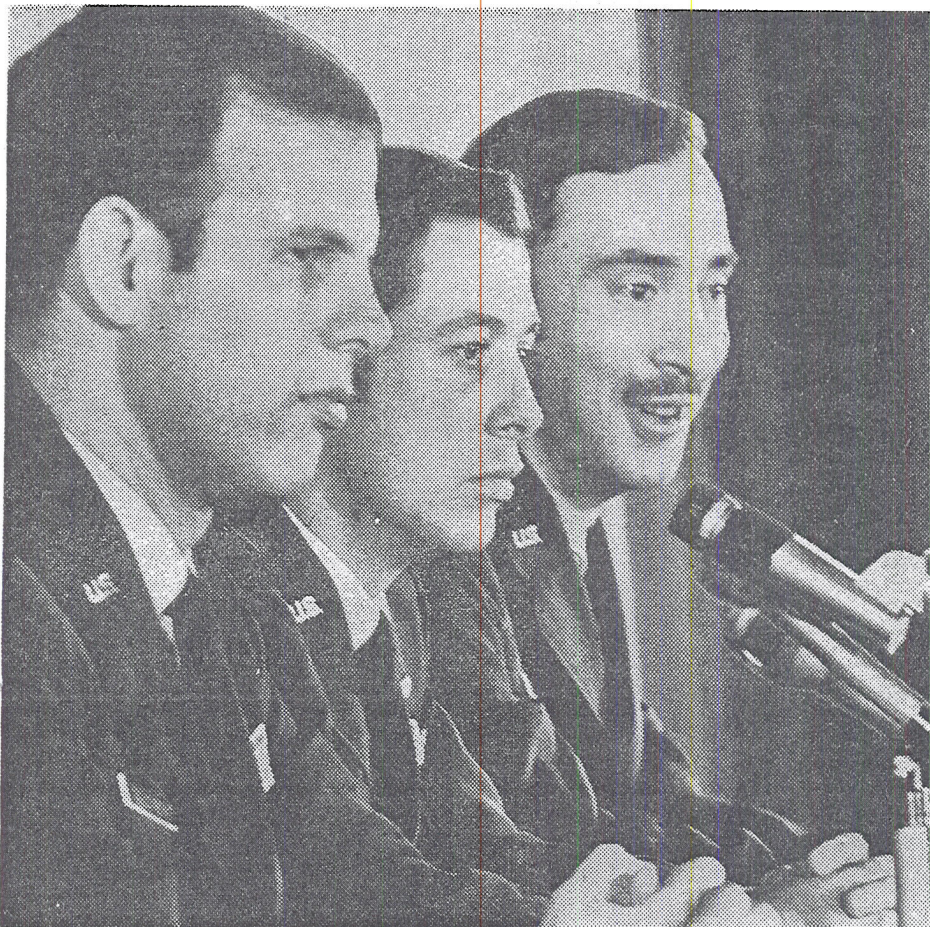
Of the bombing last December, Guenther said, "I was scared. Anyone would be. There was a lot going on in Hanoi."

Guenther sat at the half-hour press conference with two other returned Air Force flyers, Lieutenant William Arcuri and Captain Terry M. Geloneck.

The three officers were among the first to be returned to the U.S. from Clark Air Base in the Philippines and have since been released from the Travis hospital.

AID

All three fully supported U.S. aid to help rebuild North Vietnam.



Air Force Captain Terry M. Geloneck (left), Lieutenant William Arcuri and Captain Lynn E. Guenther at Travis Air Force Base press conference.

"This is the American way," said Geloneck. "Once we're through fighting we should do everything we can to improve relations."

As for charges that statements by POWs were orchestrated since their return by American officials, Geloneck said, "We discussed what we were going to say before we left Hanoi. We knew we would have to be cautious. The guidelines we're using are usually those decided upon by the prisoners themselves."

Both Geloneck and Arcuri said they want to remain in the Air Force, with Geloneck adding that he would be willing to fly B-52 missions over Laos.

Guenther said he has not yet decided about his career and called his plans "uncer-

tain."

Arcuri and Geloneck were flying in the same B-52 when it was shot down by an anti-aircraft missile during a night mission over North Vietnam last December 22.

Geloneck said he dislocated a shoulder during the ejection, but tried for half an hour after landing "in a grassy field" to evade capture.

He said he stopped when a man, carrying a rifle and accompanied by a young boy, started yelling at him.

INJURED

Arcuri said he injured his knee in the jump, landed in some bamboo, and was caught within ten minutes.

Except for a brief glimpse at the gate of the prison in Hanoi, Geloneck and Arcuri didn't see each other again

until two weeks after they were captured — a month before the release.

Arcuri said he acted as the camp "journalist," prov-

Plea

iding information to men who had been imprisoned for years.

"At first, men came to my cell door and I would talk to them," he said. "Then, later, they let me out into the yard with the rest of the prisoners."

All the men said they had been treated well by the North Vietnamese, even to the point of making a few friends among their captors.

"They were respectful of us, and we respected them," said Guenther. "If you live around individuals for an extended period of time, you're bound to develop friendships."

Arcuri, 25, of Yuba City, and Geloneck, 28, of Beale Air Force Base, have already had a week's leave with their families.

Guenther was released from the hospital yesterday after treatment for an eye injury and planned to spend 30 days leave with his wife, Susan, and two sons, Todd and Adam, in their hometown of The Dalles, Ore.
