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Painful Eye Operation

POW's Ordeal by Surgery

Eugene, Ore.

Air Force Captain Lynn Guenther of Eugene says his most anxious moments as a prisoner of war were when he underwent eye surgery without sedation.

The surgery came about two weeks after he was shot down while flying a reconnaissance mission over the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos on Dec. 26, 1971. Guenther said he was told later by American doctors the surgery

probably saved the eye.

"My eye operation was a type of acupuncture, except I felt a great deal of it. In fact, I felt the whole thing," Gunther said.

"I was not under sedation of any sort when they sewed up my eye. It was a little painful. In fact, I don't think I'd want to go through that much pain again in any way.

"I had a little Vietnamese guard that went with me

and when I went in there he said, 'You will have much pain but you must try to suffer quietly and not scream too loud.'

"He said, 'Hold my hand and squeeze when it becomes too painful,' and his hand was white by the time I finished.

"They inserted a needle in the top of my eye and back into the base of the skull to hold the eye still.

"They put in — I believe,

if I counted right — seven stitches in my eye and then they also injected some fluid into it.

"The whole operation took, I guess, about 20 minutes but I was damn glad when it was over. . . . It was an experience I wouldn't want to go over again."

Treatment during much of his 14-month stay in Hanoi wasn't bad, he said.

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