

A Mixed Welcome

20 More POWs Land At Travis

By Charles Petit
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Travis AFB,
Solano county

A sign-waving crowd of nearly 1000 persons gave a mixed reception here yesterday to 20 returning prisoners of war.

The 17 officers aboard all got loud cheering welcomes — ten were greeted by their families as they stepped off the big C-141 hospital plane — but two enlisted men got nothing and a third just polite applause.

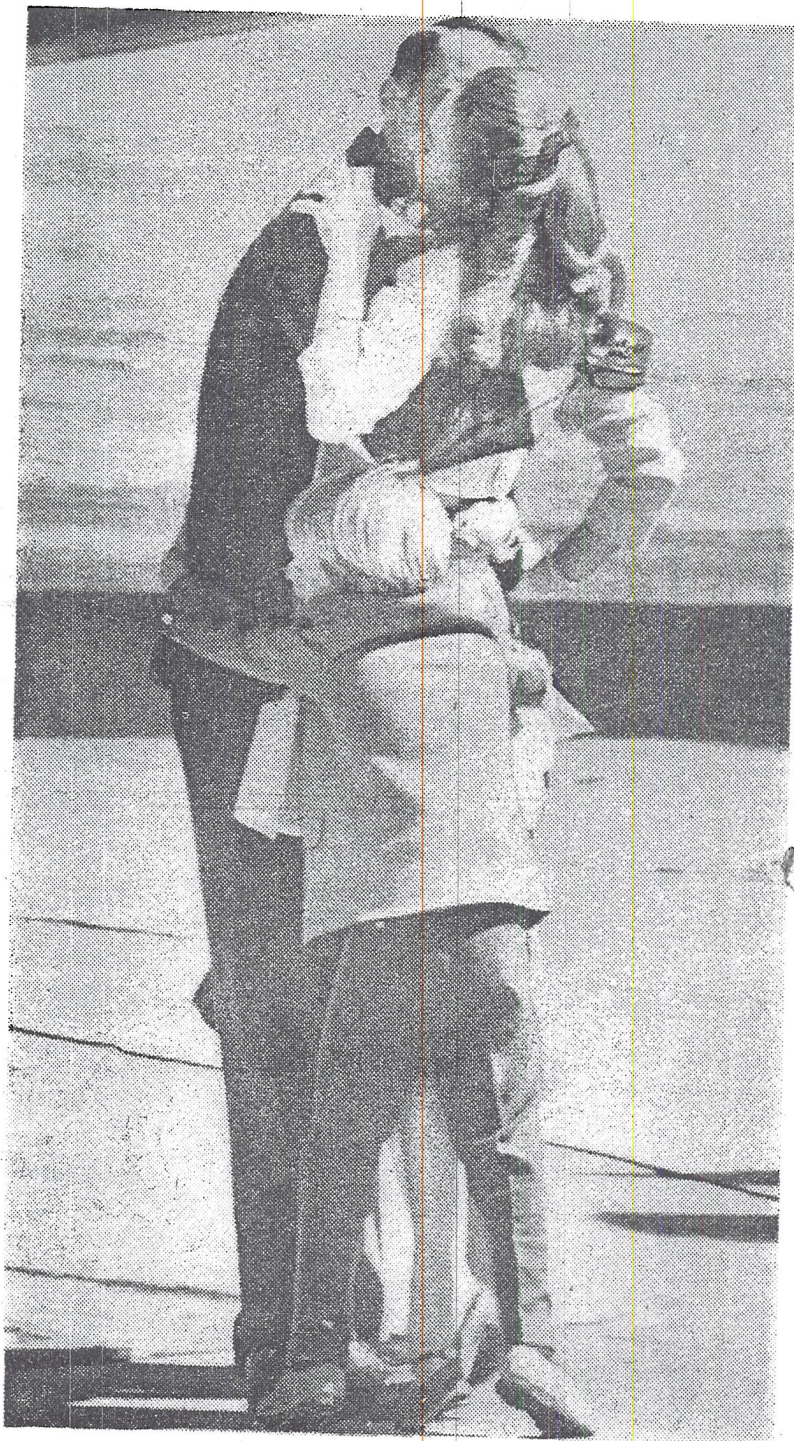
The subdued welcome given the two Marine sergeants and an Army sergeant reflected reports the three men engaged in anti-war activities as part of a "Peace Committee" while they were imprisoned.

As with all returning prisoners, military authorities permitted no questions by newsmen of Marine Staff Sergeant Alphonso R. Riate, 27, Santa Rosa; Army Staff Sergeant Robert P. Chenoweth, 25, Portland, Ore., and Marine Sergeant Abel L. Kavanaugh, Westminster, Colo.

CAMPS

No charges have been made against the men, but the Associated Press credited "highly placed sources" in Washington yesterday with saying they and five other enlisted men disobeyed orders of superior officers

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LPI Telephoto

Former POW Captain William W. Butler, San Rafael, hugged his wife while son Peter hugged them both.



Major David Ford greeted well-wishers at Travis as his wife looked on

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while in prison camps to stop their alleged anti-war activity.

After circling over the bay to give the men a view of the Golden Gate Bridge from the flight deck of the almost windowless plane, the aircraft touched down at Travis just after noon.

First down the ramp was Navy Captain Leo T. Profilet of Palo Alto.

Looking relaxed and happy, Profilet saluted welcoming officers and the American flag, then walked over to a battery of microphones.

"We're home, we really are home," he said in a quiet voice to the crowd, mostly women and children.

"We're back in our own land and we're back with our people," he said.

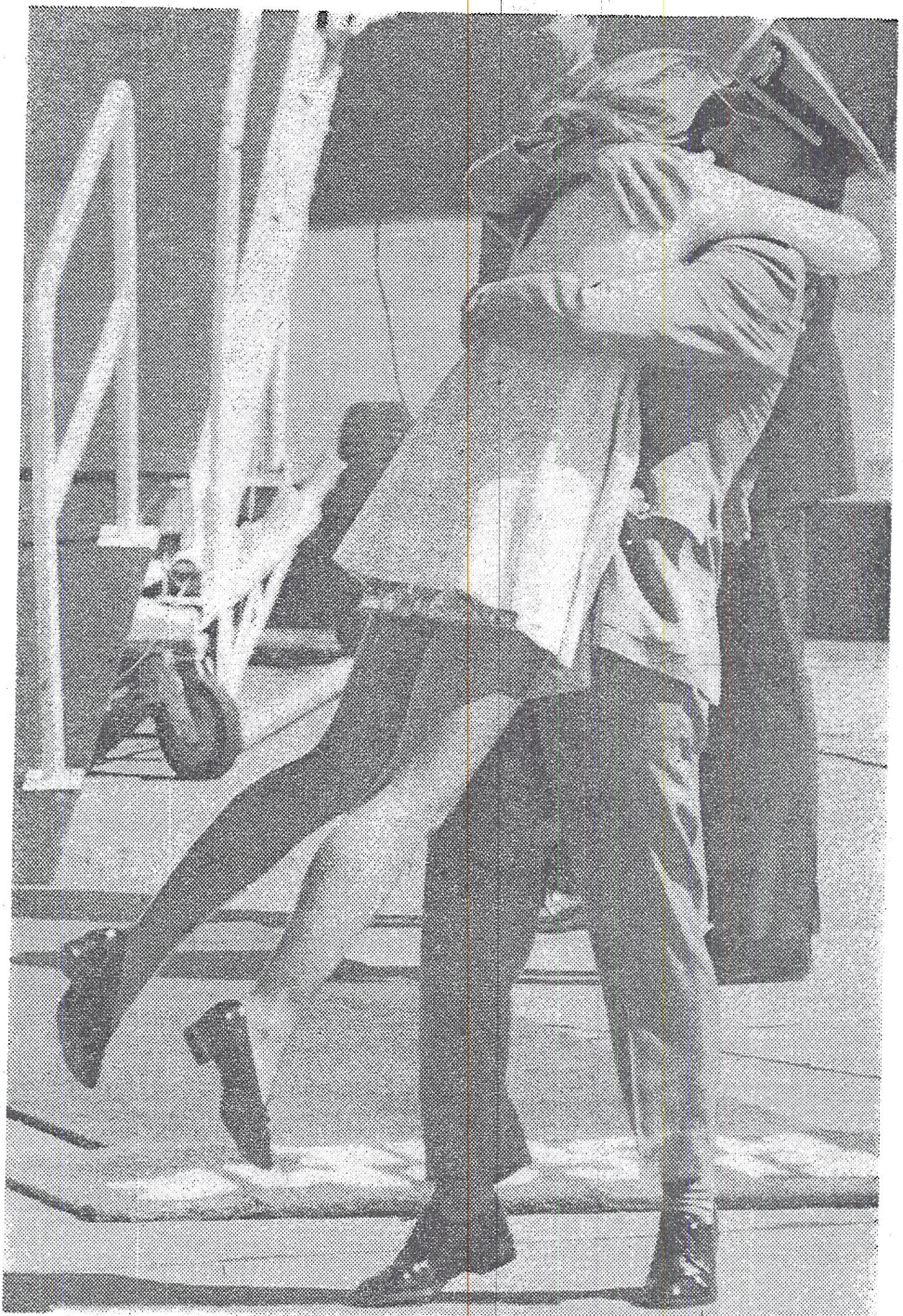
WELCOMES

Referring to earlier welcomes in the Philippines and stopover in Hawaii, Profilet added "we have looked at the upturned faces of so many children, and believe me, from what we saw there, there is nothing to worry about in the future of America."

Ten of the men following Profilet were greeted by wives, seven with children, and the crowd loved every minute of it.

The biggest welcome was reserved for Air Force Major David E. Ford, who was shot down in his jet on Nov. 19, 1967, over North Vietnam.

His wife, Eldora, who lives in Sacramento with five of his eight children (he has three by a former wife), organized a band of noisy, cheering supporters who be-



Photos by Dave Randolph

Lt. Cmdr. David Carey swept his fiancée Karen Nelson off her feet

gan whooping it up as soon as Ford appeared on the plane's ramp.

He met his wife and two of his children, Lisa and David, next to the plane.

After going briefly inside the terminal building, he and his wife reappeared outside and Ford plunged into the crowd shaking hands and grinning broadly. When he went back inside the terminal building, he was wearing seven POW bracelets inscribed with his name given him by admirers.

STEPS

One of the POWs, Lieutenant Commander David J. Carey, lifted his fiancée Karen Nelson a foot off the ground and took a few steps toward the terminal before putting her down.

Miss Nelson and Carey hadn't seen each other in more than five years. He was shot down Aug. 31, 1967, flying an A-4 Skyhawk over North Vietnam.

Riate was first of the three enlisted men off and warmly clasped the hands of greeting officers after saluting them.

He and Kavanaugh were transferred to a two-engine C-9 hospital plane and flown to Camp Pendleton Naval



AP Wirephoto

A girl kissed the cheek of Sgt. Robert Chenoweth at Clark AB in the Philippines as he left for the U.S.

Hospital near San Diego.

Chenoweth was taken by staff car to meet his family in Letterman General Hospital in the Presidio here.

The Defense Department has said it won't file any charges against returning prisoners but some returned prisoners themselves have indicated they will seek prosecution against fellow POWs.

The eight members of the "Peace Committee" in particular are said by some returning officers to have made anti-war statements over Radio Hanoi, refused orders, and informed on other Americans in the camps.

The other five enlisted men facing an uncertain future are Army Specialist Four Michael P. Branch, 25, West Virginia; Army Staff Sergeant James A. Daly, 25, New York; Army Private Frederick L. Elbert, 25, New York; Army Staff Sergeant King D. Bayford, 26, Chicago, and Army Green Beret Staff Sergeant John A. Young, 27, Illinois.

A C141 ambulance plane from Clark Air Base will arrive at Travis this morning at 10:30 o'clock with 14 released POWs destined for western hospitals.