

POWs Link Treatment to Death of Ho

There was a "marked improvement" in the treatment of American prisoners of war by the North Vietnamese after the death of Ho Chi Minh in the fall of 1969, returning POWs said in Oakland yesterday.

The P O W s — Navy flyers Commander Robert J. Schweitzer, 41, of Philadelphia; Lieutenant Commander David J. Carey, 31, of Greensburg, Pa.; Lieutenant (J.G.) Michael G. Penn, 27, of Fort Worth, Tex. — held a press conference at the Naval Hospital in Oakland.

Schweitzer and Carey, prisoners for five and six years, respectively, said they had been subjected to beatings mainly in an effort to draw military secrets from them.

"But not entirely," Carey said. "I was beaten for growing a mustache."

Penn, who was shot down on a mission northeast of Haiphong only last August, said he felt the North Vietnamese had switched to kinder treatment "to win our sympathy.

"Consequently," he said, "I underwent nothing. Oh, I was tied up with ropes and beaten a little bit, but nothing serious."

As for the anti-war movement in this country, Carey said: "Many of these people were sincere and I respect them, but my idea for achieving peace differs from theirs."

"That's a difficult area," Schweitzer said. "The duties of a citizen, you might say, against the duties of a military person."

He said their camp was organized along Air Force lines as the Fourth Allied POW Wing, with 99 per cent of them officers, so that "discipline was never really a problem."

"I've heard that two Thais, who were members of our wing, are still being held and that upsets me terribly," he said.