

Gala Party to Fete Ex-POWs

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — A huge red and yellow striped tent was prepared on the south lawn of the White House today for a gala celebration honoring 680 former POWs from the Vietnam War.

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John Wayne Hates Politics

NASHVILLE — (AP) — “I hate politics. I hate politicians. I hate being labeled as a right-wing extremist,” John Wayne says.

“I have openly supported six people running for office and three of them were Democrats. I go with the man, not his label,” the actor told newsmen on his arrival here yesterday.

“I don’t like the label of superpatriot. I think I feel just like about 160 million other people do out of the 200 million people in the U.S. I’m talking about the middle class. If it weren’t for them, this country would collapse. I’m glad to be associated with the middle class.”

Having said that, Wayne flew to Washington to attend President Nixon’s banquet tonight for former U.S. prisoners of war in Vietnam.

A total of 1300 guests were expected to attend the evening affair, which will include an hour of entertainment by many big-name Hollywood stars.

Only 34 POWs declined the invitation, according to the White House, most of them because they are undergoing medical treatment for injuries they suffered as captives.

Under the tent, the guests will be seated at round tables with floral centerpieces. The large gilded chandeliers were hung inside the tent to illuminate it.

The entertainment, with comedian Bob Hope as the master of ceremonies, will be provided by Sammy Davis Jr., John Wayne, Jimmy Stewart, Martha Raye, Phyllis Diller and Roy Acuff. As a grand finale, composer Irving Berlin will conduct the playing of “God Bless America.”

White House chefs prepared a menu of sea food supreme, roast sirloin of beef, strawberry mousse and California wine for the dinner. During a reception preceding the dinner, the POWs and their families will be permitted to roam freely through the White House, including the family rooms.

Billed as a day-long affair and financed by the Defense Department, the gala begins with a briefing of POWs by the President during the afternoon in the State Department auditorium.

While the POWs are being briefed on the prospects for peace in Indochina, Pat Nixon and the wife of Vice President Spiro Agnew invited the prisoners’ wives to tea on the top floor of the State Department building.

Prior to the White House dinner, there was to be a march-on of colors, including an American flag made out of scraps by Air Force Col. John A. Dramesi while he was a captive.

At the end of the evening, the guests will be invited to dance in the East Room to the music of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps dance bands.