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DESPONDENT P.O.W. APPARENT SUICIDE

New Yorker Was Among
First North Vietnam Freed

By WOLFGANG SAXON

Capt. Edward A. Brudno of the air force, who spent more than seven of his 33 years in a North Vietnamese prisoner-of-war camp, was found dead yesterday in the home of his wife's family in Harrison, N.Y., apparently of a suicide.

Pentagon officials, reached in Washington, said Captain Brudno was the first of the American military personnel released from captivity in the Indochina war to have taken his own life after returning home. Earlier, they had declined to comment pending notification of the captain's wife, Deborah, who was reported to be "en route home" or "on vacation."

The Harrison police said the captain, who was freed in one of the first prisoner releases last February, had been staying with his mother-in-law, Mrs. Milton P. Gitenstein, who found the body early yesterday afternoon. The police said Captain Brudno apparently died from asphyxiation caused by a plastic bag pulled over his head.

The police said Mrs. Gitenstein told them that Captain Brudno, who would have turned



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Capt. Edward A. Brudno

33 tomorrow, had been despondent ever since returning from North Vietnam.

Col. C. D. Kelly, an Air Force information officer, said Captain Brudno's death was the first suicide among the American military personnel released from captivity in the Indochina war.

In a news conference last Friday, Dr. Richard S. Wilbur, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for health and environment, cautioned that the 566 returned P.O.W.'s were prone to serious adjustment problems and would have to remain under some degree of observation for five years to avoid the high rate of violent deaths that had been noted among returned American prisoners of World War II and the Korean war.

Dr. Wilbur spoke of the "stress reaction" affecting such men and of the depression, fright and euphoria that had resulted in the suicides, murders and accidental deaths of P.O.W.'s returned from those earlier wars.

Captain Brudno was a native of Quincy, Mass. He graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1963. In April of that year he joined the Air Force. He was married to Deborah C. Gitenstein early in 1965 as a 24-year-old lieutenant. Months later, on Oct. 18, 1965, he was shot down over North Vietnam while on a mission from Korat Air Base in Thailand aboard an F-4C Phantom fighter plane.

Released Feb. 11

Captain Brudno was released by North Vietnam last Feb. 11 in one of the first groups of American P.O.W.'s freed following the conclusion of peace negotiations between the combatants in the Indochina war. He arrived at Westover Air Base in Massachusetts six days later for processing. His current home address was listed by the Harrison police as that of his mother-in-law.

The police said Captain Brudno had left several letters or notes behind, but they declined to disclose their contents or to whom they had been addressed.

Dr. Henry Ryan, deputy chief of the Westchester County medical examiner's office, said the official cause of death could not be stated until the completion of "further studies," including chemical tests. But Dr. Ryan said he saw no reason for throwing doubt on the statements by the police and the Defense Department that Captain Brudno had taken his own life.