

POW 'Brought Torment Home'

Quincy, Mass.

The brother of Air Force Captain Edward A. Brudno said yesterday that the suicide death of the former prisoner of war was "as much a war casualty as any of the others."

"We can never understand what he went through out there, but it changed him — he brought the torment back with him," said Robert Brudno, acting as spokesman for the family of the first POW returned from North Vietnam to take his own life.

In an interview in the captain's home with the Quincy Patriot-Ledger, Robert bitterly criticized North Vietnam as "a country that would so intentionally commit such torture and torment to people."

There were reports elsewhere that Edward, who died on the eve of his 33rd birthday, was despondent because his hopes of becoming an astronaut had been thwarted by his 7½ years of imprisonment after his jet fighter was downed over North Vietnam.

PROTESTS

Also, Robert said the captain was deeply disturbed by anti-war protests in this country.

But the brother added: "There was no specific thing that caused his depression, but because of his experiences he lost all flexibility. To him, disappointment and misfortune were disaster.

"All the normal problems of repatriation and rehabilitation to him were crises, and he magnified the problems in his mind. Perhaps this death was the only way he could get peace."

Edward was found dead in bed Sunday at the Harrison, N.Y., home of his parents-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Milton Gitenstein. He and his wife, Deborah, had been staying there, although she was visiting here at the time.

SUICIDE

The cause of death has yet to be pinpointed. However, police ruled it a suicide.

Brudno left several sealed letters to relatives and friends. He also left a two-line note in the French he had learned in prisoner-taught classes. It read in essence: "There is no sense in living anymore. My life is no longer worth living."

A friend in the service, Staff Sergeant Arthur S. Cormier of Bay Shore, N.Y., said Brudno had mentioned his astronaut dream after the two men got home from North Vietnam in February.

"He had given up hope on it," Cormier added. "It passed him up, he be-



EDWARD BRUDNO
'No sense in living'

lieved."

An official of Operation Homecoming, which has responsibility for returning POWs, confirmed Cormier's report.

REPORT

"He did have a leaning that way before he went to Vietnam. But when he came back he was a realist. He recognized that his time there, and changes in the program, made that impossible for him," he said.

"If he was despondent, we were not aware of it, but that's something only his family would know."

In his interview, Robert Brudno said of his brother:

"People may wonder how one can hold out and survive for 7½ years and then come back and take his own life. But they have to understand that while he was there, he was struggling against something.

"He would never have given in to his captors. He hated and resisted them. Maybe when he came back, there was nothing to fight against any more."

FREEDOM

The brother recalled that the captain's initial reaction to freedom was a feeling of being "reborn."

"There was euphoria, just being free," he continued. "That lasted for a while. But then it was a matter of a test of his ability to read-just.

"After the hell he went through for 7½ years, it was just too much. The imprisonment obviously took its toll. The thing that's scary, that is so sad, is that he was almost acting like a book.

"All the problems fore-

seen in adjusting and communicating with others were all there. We knew it and he knew it. And he sought help. But I guess it just wasn't enough.

PSYCHIATRIST

Capt. Brudno has been seeing a psychiatrist since his return from prison.

"I hope this country — and perhaps the rest of the world — doesn't continue to show the benevolence or apathy to a country that would so intentionally commit such torture and torment to people. The word humane just does not apply to his life during those years . . .

"He made an honest substantial attempt to understand what motivated people to oppose the war, and he tried to understand the antiwar movement. But he remained very bitter just the same.

"It hurt him very deeply that so many were against the war. The belief that it was right, that he was fighting for a purpose, was what kept him alive. He had to believe the war was right, or he never would have survived."

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