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Saigon

Why did Richard G. Waldhaus stay in Saigon Monday when the other 142 American prisoners freed by the Viet Cong flew to the Philippines?

The answer, appropriately enough on this Valentine's Day, was love, according to an American source here.

The source said that Waldhaus, who is 25 years old, stayed here rather than proceeding with the other freed prisoners because he has a South Vietnamese girlfriend whom he wanted to see.

So far as could be determined, Waldhaus was the only one of the 143 released prisoners who was neither a member of the armed services nor a civilian employee of the United States government.

"I am not aware that he was employed," said a U.S. Embassy official when asked about Waldhaus' occupation. Another American source described Waldhaus as "a hippie" and something of a wanderer.

According to the information available here, Waldhaus was born on Aug. 18, 1947, and lists his home as Pittsburg, Calif. His mother, Mrs. George F. Waldhaus, still lives in the Contra Costa county town.

According to an embassy official, Waldhaus was captured by the Communists in August, 1971, near Lai Khe, about 35 miles north of Saigon.

American sources said Waldhaus was either hitchhiking or riding a bus toward the Cambodian border when the Communists seized him.

Speculation that Waldhaus might be some kind of intelligence agent was dismissed by American intelligence officials.

N.Y. Times Service