

No China Charges --Freed Bay Girl

PHILADELPHIA —(AP) — An attractive young woman who was a prisoner of the Chinese Communists for 3½ years said today she was never charged with a crime.

Mary Ann Harbert, 25, of Palo Alto, said she was held in farmhouses in southern China and never in a prison.

"I was threatened that if I didn't cooperate I would be sent to prison," she said in

her first meeting with newsmen since she and Richard G. Fecteau, 43, Lynn, Mass., were released Monday in Hong Kong.

Both are undergoing medical tests at nearby Valley Forge General Hospital.

Anti-U.S. Demand

She said the Chinese "wanted me to obey the security rules and do what I was told. They wanted me to

make anti-government statements. But I declined to make an anti-government statement or anything concerning support of Communism."

She said that "after awhile they stopped pressing me about it and I was treated well."

Miss Harbert, who celebrates her 26th birthday two days after Christmas, was captured on a yacht off the Chinese mainland in April 1968 with her companion, Gerald Ross McLaughlin, also of Palo Alto.

"We were on a boat going from Hong Kong to Manila, the Philippines," she said.

Friend a Suicide

"Of course we had no intention of trespassing in Chinese waters. We thought we were sailing a legal course. The Chinese who captured us said we had intruded. We were outnumbered and so we agreed it was possible we were in Chinese waters. We don't know."

The Chinese reported that McLaughlin committed suicide in 1969.

Miss Harbert, an outgoing, gregarious woman who showed no visible signs of her ordeal, smiled often during the 18-minute news conference, answering questions in a firm voice with a slight English accent.

She said she and McLaughlin were held in the same house, she upstairs and he downstairs, for the first nine months. She never saw him after that.

Asked if she was a spy, replied:

"Oh, no! The Chinese government would never have released me or held me in detention if they thought I was a spy."