



Twenty-five years ago this month, 332 Air Force POWs held by Communists in Southeast Asia left their prison cells, boarded USAF transports, and returned home from the war.

When the POWs Came Home

Joy and privation alike show in the face of POW and Medal of Honor recipient Leo K. Thorsness, a major when captured six years earlier, as he shakes hands with a US officer when his name is called on Feb. 12, 1973. A long day of release—both physical and emotional—began with an early morning inspection at the “Hanoi Hilton,” and continued with the handover, the first step in “Operation Homecoming.”





POWs peer between the bars of the Hanoi Hilton—within its walls some had endured eight years of torture, incessant interrogation, confession coercions, and near starvation. Communicating by tapping Morse code on the walls, the POWs were able to offer each other emotional and spiritual support and present a united front to their Communist captors.



Hoping to give the impression that the POWs had been humanely treated during their captivity, the North Vietnamese dressed them in brand-new clothes—provided the night before—and gave them a bag for toiletries and “personal effects.” In truth, most had tolerated years in rags, been fed poorly and intermittently, and were stripped of any possessions upon capture. Here, they step off the camouflaged bus that brought them to Gia Lam airfield outside Hanoi.

The POWs kept their composure during the handover process and even marched in formation toward the first American uniforms they'd seen in years. Their military bearing and sense of dignity had helped them survive and now served as a parting shot at their tormentors. Identified in this group of POWs are Lawrence N. Guarino, a major at the time of capture (at extreme left, about fifth in line), and Hayden J. Lockhart, a captain upon capture (third in line, seen between the first two POWs).



Name/Rank	Captured
Abbott, Joseph S. Jr. (Capt.)	April 30, 1967
Abbott, Robert Archie (1st Lt.)	April 30, 1967
Abbott, Wilfred Kesse (Capt.)	Sept. 5, 1966
Acosta, Hector Michael (1st Lt.)	Dec. 9, 1972
Alexander, Fernando (Maj.)	Dec. 19, 1972
Alpers, John Hardesty Jr. (Capt.)	Oct. 5, 1972
Anderson, John Wesley (Capt.)	Dec. 27, 1972
Andrews, Anthony Charles (Capt.)	Oct. 17, 1967
Arcuri, William Youl (1st Lt.)	Dec. 20, 1972
Austin, William Renwick (Capt.)	Oct. 7, 1967
Ayres, Timothy Robert (Capt.)	May 3, 1972
Bagley, Bobby Ray (Maj.)	Sept. 16, 1967
Baker, David Earle (Capt.)	June 27, 1972
Baker, Elmo Clinnard (Maj.)	Aug. 23, 1967
Ballard, Arthur T. Jr. (Capt.)	Sept. 26, 1966
Barbay, Lawrence (Capt.)	July 20, 1966
Barnett, Robert Warren (Maj.)	Oct. 3, 1967
Barrett, Thomas Joseph (1st Lt.)	Oct. 5, 1965
Barrows, Henry Charles (Capt.)	Dec. 19, 1972
Bates, Richard Lyman (1st Lt.)	Oct. 5, 1972
Baugh, William Joseph (Capt.)	Jan. 21, 1967
Bean, James Ellis (Col.)	Jan. 3, 1968
Bean, William Raymond Jr. (Capt.)	May 23, 1972
Beekman, William David (Capt.)	June 24, 1972
Beens, Lynn Richard (Capt.)	Dec. 21, 1972
Berg, Kile Dag (Capt.)	July 27, 1965
Berger, James Robert (Capt.)	Dec. 2, 1966
Bernasconi, Louis Henry (Lt. Col.)	Dec. 22, 1972
Biss, Robert Irving (Capt.)	Nov. 11, 1966
Black, Arthur Neil (Amn.)	Sept. 20, 1965
Black, Jon David (Capt.)	Oct. 27, 1967
Blevins, John Charles (Capt.)	Sept. 9, 1966
Bliss, Ronald Glenn (1st Lt.)	Sept. 4, 1966
Bolstad, Richard Eugene (Capt.)	Nov. 6, 1965
Bomar, Jack Williamson (Maj.)	Feb. 4, 1967
Borling, John Lorin (1st Lt.)	June 1, 1966
Boyd, Charles Graham (Capt.)	April 22, 1966
Boyer, Terry Lee (1st Lt.)	Dec. 17, 1967
Brazelton, Michael Lee (1st Lt.)	Aug. 7, 1966
Breckner, William J. Jr. (Lt. Col.)	July 30, 1972
Brenneman, Richard Charles (1st Lt.)	Nov. 8, 1967
Bridger, Barry Burton (Capt.)	Jan. 23, 1967
Brodak, John Warren (Capt.)	Aug. 14, 1966
Brown, Charles A. Jr. (Capt.)	Dec. 19, 1972
Browning, Ralph Thomas (1st Lt.)	July 8, 1966
Brudno, Edward Alan (1st Lt.)	Oct. 18, 1965
Brunson, Cecil H. (1st Lt.)	Oct. 12, 1972
Brunstrom, Alan Leslie (Maj.)	April 22, 1966
Buchanan, Hubert Elliot (1st Lt.)	Sept. 16, 1966
Burer, Arthur William (Capt.)	March 21, 1966
Burns, Donald Ray (Maj.)	Dec. 2, 1966
Burns, Michael Thomas (1st Lt.)	July 5, 1968
Burroughs, William David (Maj.)	July 31, 1966
Butcher, Jack M. (1st Lt.)	March 24, 1971
Butler, William Wallace (Capt.)	Nov. 20, 1967
Byrne, Ronald Edward Jr. (Maj.)	Aug. 29, 1965
Byrns, William G. (Capt.)	May 23, 1972
Callaghan, Peter A. (1st Lt.)	June 21, 1972
Camerota, Peter P. (Capt.)	Dec. 22, 1972
Campbell, Burton Wayne (1st Lt.)	July 1, 1966
Carpenter, Joe V. (Capt.)	Feb. 15, 1968
Carrigan, Larry Edward (Capt.)	Aug. 23, 1967
Cerak, John P. (Capt.)	June 27, 1972
Certain, Robert G. (Capt.)	Dec. 18, 1972
Chambers, Carl Dennis (1st Lt.)	Aug. 7, 1967
Cheney, Kevin J. (Capt.)	July 1, 1972
Cherry, Fred Vann (Maj.)	Oct. 22, 1965
Chesley, Larry James (1st Lt.)	April 16, 1966
Clark, John Walter (Capt.)	March 12, 1967
Clements, James Arlen (Maj.)	Oct. 9, 1967
Collins, James Quincy (Capt.)	Sept. 2, 1965
Collins, Thomas Edward III (Capt.)	Oct. 18, 1965
Condon, James C. (Maj.)	Dec. 28, 1972
Conlee, William W. (Lt. Col.)	Dec. 22, 1972
Cook, James R. (TSgt.)	Dec. 26, 1972
Copeland, H.C. (Maj.)	July 17, 1967
Cordier, Kenneth William (Capt.)	Dec. 2, 1966
Cormier, Arthur (SSgt.)	Nov. 6, 1965
Craner, Robert Roger (Maj.)	Dec. 20, 1967
Crecca, Joseph (1st Lt.)	Nov. 22, 1966
Crow, Frederick Austin (Lt. Col.)	March 26, 1967
Crumpler, Carl Boyette (Lt. Col.)	July 5, 1968
Curtis, Thomas Jerry (Capt.)	Sept. 20, 1965
Cusimano, Samuel B. (Capt.)	Dec. 28, 1972
Cutter, James D. (Capt.)	Feb. 17, 1972
Daughtrey, Robert Norlan (Capt.)	Aug. 2, 1965
Davies, John Owen (1st Lt.)	Feb. 4, 1967
Day, George Everette (Maj.)	Aug. 26, 1967

Despiegler, Gale A. (Maj.)	April 15, 1972
Dingee, David B. (Capt.)	June 27, 1972
Donald, Myron Lee (1st Lt.)	Feb. 23, 1968
Doughty, Daniel James (Capt.)	April 2, 1966
Dramesi, John Arthur (Capt.)	April 2, 1967
Driscoll, Jerry Donald (1st Lt.)	April 24, 1966
Drummond, David I. (Capt.)	Dec. 22, 1972
Duart, David Henry (Capt.)	Feb. 18, 1967
Dutton, Richard Allen (Maj.)	Nov. 5, 1967
Elander, William J. Jr. (Maj.)	July 5, 1972
Elias, Edward K. (Maj.)	April 20, 1972
Ellis, Jeffrey Thomas (Capt.)	Dec. 17, 1967
Ellis, Leon Francis (Capt.)	Nov. 7, 1967
Everson, David (Maj.)	March 10, 1967
Fer, John (Capt.)	Feb. 4, 1967
Finlay, John Stewart (Lt. Col.)	April 28, 1968
Fisher, Kenneth (Capt.)	Nov. 7, 1967
Fleenor, Kenneth Raymond (Maj.)	Dec. 17, 1967
Flesher, Hubert Kelly (Maj.)	Dec. 2, 1966
Flom, Fredric R. (1st Lt.)	Aug. 8, 1966
Flynn, John Peter (Col.)	Oct. 27, 1967
Forby, Willis Ellis (Capt.)	Sept. 20, 1965
Ford, David Edward (Capt.)	Nov. 19, 1967
Fowler, Henry Pope (1st Lt.)	March 26, 1967
Francis, Richard L. (Capt.)	June 27, 1972
Fraser, Kenneth J. (Capt.)	Feb. 17, 1972
Fulton, Richard J. (1st Lt.)	June 13, 1972
Gaddis, Norman Carl (Col.)	May 12, 1967
Galati, Ralph W. (1st Lt.)	Feb. 16, 1972
Gauntt, William A. (Capt.)	Aug. 13, 1972
Geloneck, Terry M. (Capt.)	Dec. 20, 1972
Gerndt, Gerald Lee (1st Lt.)	Aug. 23, 1967
Gideon, Willard Selleck (Maj.)	Aug. 7, 1966
Giroux, Peter J. (Capt.)	Dec. 22, 1972
Gotner, Robert A. (Maj.)	Feb. 3, 1971
Gough, James W. (MSgt.)	Dec. 28, 1972
Granger, Paul L. (1st Lt.)	Dec. 20, 1972
Grant, David B. (Capt.)	June 24, 1972
Gray, David Fletcher (1st Lt.)	Jan. 23, 1967
Greene, Charles E. (Capt.)	March 11, 1967
Gruters, Guy Dennis (Capt.)	Dec. 20, 1967
Guarino, Lawrence Nicholas (Maj.)	June 14, 1965
Guenther, Lynn (Capt.)	Dec. 26, 1971
Gutterson, Laird (Maj.)	Feb. 23, 1968
Guy, Theodore Wilson (Lt. Col.)	March 22, 1968
Hall, George Robert (Capt.)	Sept. 27, 1965
Hall, Keith Norman (Capt.)	Jan. 10, 1968
Hanson, Gregg O. (1st Lt.)	June 13, 1972
Hanton, Thomas J. (Capt.)	June 27, 1972
Harris, Carlyle Smith (Capt.)	April 4, 1965
Hatcher, David Burnett (Capt.)	May 30, 1966
Hawley, Edwin A. Jr. (Capt.)	Feb. 17, 1972
Heeren, Jerome D. (Capt.)	Sept. 11, 1972
Heiliger, Donald Lester (Capt.)	May 15, 1967
Henderson, William J. (1st Lt.)	April 3, 1972
Hess, Jay Criddle (Capt.)	Aug. 24, 1967
Hildebrand, Leland (Maj.)	Dec. 18, 1971
Hill, Howard John (1st Lt.)	Dec. 16, 1967
Hinckley, Robert Bruce (Capt.)	Jan. 18, 1968
Hiteshew, James Edward (Maj.)	March 22, 1967
Hivner, James Otis (Capt.)	Oct. 5, 1965
Hoffson, Arthur Thomas (1st Lt.)	Aug. 17, 1968
Horinek, Ramon Anton (Maj.)	Oct. 25, 1967
Hubbard, Edward Lee (1st Lt.)	July 20, 1966
Hudson, Robert M. (1st Lt.)	Dec. 26, 1972
Hughes, James Lindberg (Lt. Col.)	May 5, 1967
Hughey, Kenneth Raymond (Maj.)	July 6, 1967
Ingvanson, Roger Dean (Maj.)	May 28, 1968
Jackson, Charles A. (1st Lt.)	June 24, 1972
James, Gobel Dale (Maj.)	July 15, 1968
Jayroe, Julius Skinner (Capt.)	Jan. 19, 1967
Jefcoat, Carl H. (Maj.)	Dec. 27, 1972
Jeffrey, Robert Duncan (Capt.)	Dec. 20, 1965
Jensen, Jay Robert (Capt.)	Feb. 18, 1967
Johnson, Harold E. (Capt.)	April 30, 1967
Johnson, Kenneth (Maj.)	Dec. 19, 1971
Johnson, Richard E. (Maj.)	Dec. 18, 1972
Johnson, Samuel Robert (Maj.)	April 16, 1966
Jones, Murphy Neal (Capt.)	June 29, 1966
Jones, Robert Campbell (1st Lt.)	Jan. 18, 1968
Kari, Paul Anthony (Capt.)	June 20, 1965
Kasler, James Helms (Maj.)	Aug. 8, 1966
Keirn, Richard Paul (Capt.)	July 24, 1965
Kerr, Michael Scott (1st Lt.)	Jan. 16, 1967
Kirk, Thomas Henry (Lt. Col.)	Oct. 28, 1967
Kittinger, Joseph W. Jr. (Lt. Col.)	May 11, 1972
Klomann, Thomas J. (Capt.)	Dec. 20, 1972
Kramer, Galand Dwight (1st Lt.)	Jan. 19, 1967
Kula, James D. (Capt.)	July 29, 1972



A total of 351 Air Force members were at one time or another held captive by Communists in North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, or China. Most were returned during Operation Homecoming, which began in February 1973. What follows is a comprehensive listing of the 332 USAF returnees and one escapee. (Ranks are as of date of capture.)

Note: The illustration above, and on p. 18, represents the POW ribbon.

Source: Library of Congress database as of Dec. 15, 1997.



Among the 351 Air Force members who were at one time or another held captive by Communists in North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, or China, 18 reportedly died during captivity. They are included at the end of this list. (Ranks are as of the date of capture.)

Name/Rank	Captured	Name/Rank	Captured
Labeau, Michael H. (Capt.)	Dec. 26, 1972	Schierman, Wesley Duane (Capt.)	Aug. 28, 1965
Lamar, James Lasley (Lt. Col.)	May 6, 1966	Schwertfeger, William R. (Capt.)	Feb. 16, 1972
Lane, Michael Christopher (1st Lt.)	Dec. 2, 1966	Seeber, Bruce G. (Capt.)	Oct. 5, 1965
Larson, Gordon Albert (Lt. Col.)	May 5, 1967	Seek, Brian J. (1st Lt.)	July 5, 1972
Lasiter, Carl William (Capt.)	Feb. 5, 1968	Sehorn, James Eldon (Capt.)	Dec. 14, 1967
Latella, George F. (1st Lt.)	Oct. 6, 1972	Shanahan, Joseph Francis (Capt.)	Aug. 15, 1968
Latham, James D. (Capt.)	Oct. 5, 1972	Shattuck, Lewis Wiley (Capt.)	July 11, 1966
Lebert, Ronald Merl (1st Lt.)	Jan. 14, 1968	Shingaki, Tamotsu (Maj.)	Aug. 19, 1972
LeBlanc, Louis E. Jr. (MSgt.)	Dec. 22, 1972	Shively, James Richard (1st Lt.)	May 5, 1967
Lengyel, Lauren Robert (Capt.)	Aug. 9, 1967	Sienicki, Theodore S. (1st Lt.)	May 3, 1972
Leonard, Edward W. (Capt.)	May 31, 1968	Sigler, Gary Richard (1st Lt.)	April 29, 1967
Lewis, Frank D. (Capt.)	Dec. 28, 1972	Sima, Thomas William (Capt.)	Oct. 15, 1965
Lewis, Keith H. (Capt.)	Oct. 5, 1972	Simonet, Kenneth Adrian (Maj.)	Jan. 18, 1968
Ligon, Vernon Peyton (Lt. Col.)	Nov. 19, 1967	Simpson, Richard T. (Capt.)	Dec. 18, 1972
Lilly, Warren E. (Capt.)	Nov. 6, 1965	Singleton, Jerry Allen (1st Lt.)	Nov. 6, 1965
Lockhart, Hayden James (Capt.)	March 2, 1965	Smith, Dewey Lee (Maj.)	June 2, 1967
Logan, Donald K. (1st Lt.)	July 5, 1972	Smith, Philip E. (Capt.)	Sept. 20, 1965
Lollar, James L. (SSgt.)	Dec. 21, 1972	Smith, Richard Eugene (Maj.)	Oct. 25, 1967
Long, Stephen G. (1st Lt.)	Feb. 28, 1969	Smith, Wayne Odgen (1st Lt.)	Jan. 18, 1968
Low, James Frederick (Maj.)	Dec. 16, 1967	Spencer, William A. (Capt.)	July 5, 1972
Luna, Jose David (Capt.)	March 10, 1967	Sponeyberger, Robert D. (Capt.)	Dec. 22, 1972
Lurie, Alan Pierce (Capt.)	June 13, 1966	Spoon, Donald Ray (1st Lt.)	Jan. 21, 1967
Madden, Roy Jr. (SSgt.)	Dec. 20, 1972	Stavast, John Edward (Maj.)	Sept. 17, 1967
Madison, Thomas Mark (Maj.)	April 19, 1967	Sterling, Thomas James (Maj.)	April 19, 1967
Makowski, Louis Frank (Maj.)	Oct. 6, 1966	Stirm, Robert Lewis (Maj.)	Oct. 27, 1967
Marshall, Marion A. (Capt.)	July 3, 1972	Stischer, Walter Morris (Maj.)	April 13, 1968
Martini, Michael R. (1st Lt.)	Dec. 20, 1972	Stockman, Hervey Studdie (Lt. Col.)	June 11, 1967
Mastin, Ronald Lambert (1st Lt.)	Jan. 16, 1967	Storey, Thomas Gordon (Capt.)	Jan. 16, 1967
Matsui, Melvin K. (Capt.)	July 29, 1972	Stutz, Leroy William (1st Lt.)	Dec. 2, 1966
Mayall, William T. (1st Lt.)	Dec. 22, 1972	Sullivan, Dwight Everett (Maj.)	Oct. 17, 1967
McCouston, Michael K. (Capt.)	May 8, 1967	Sumpter, Thomas Wrenne (Maj.)	Jan. 14, 1968
McDaniel, Norman Alexander (Capt.)	July 20, 1966	Talley, Bernard Leo (1st Lt.)	Sept. 10, 1966
McDow, Richard H. (1st Lt.)	June 27, 1972	Talley, William H. (Maj.)	May 11, 1972
McKnight, George Grigsby (Capt.)	Nov. 6, 1965	Temperley, Russell Edward (Capt.)	Oct. 27, 1967
McManus, Kevin Joseph (1st Lt.)	June 14, 1967	Terrell, Irby David (Maj.)	Jan. 14, 1968
McMurray, Frederick C. (Capt.)	Sept. 12, 1972	Thompson, Fred N. (Maj.)	March 20, 1968
McNish, Thomas Mitchell (1st Lt.)	Sept. 4, 1966	Thorsness, Leo Keith (Maj.)	April 30, 1967
Means, William Harley (Capt.)	July 20, 1966	Tomes, Jack Harvey (Capt.)	July 7, 1966
Mechenbier, Edward John (1st Lt.)	June 14, 1967	Torkelson, Loren H. (1st Lt.)	April 29, 1967
Merritt, Raymond James (Maj.)	Sept. 16, 1965	Trautman, Konrad Wigand (Capt.)	Oct. 5, 1967
Meyer, Alton Benno (Capt.)	April 26, 1967	Trimble, Jack R. (1st Lt.)	Dec. 27, 1972
Milligan, Joseph Edward (1st Lt.)	May 20, 1967	Tyler, Charles Robert (Maj.)	Aug. 23, 1967
Moe, Thomas Nelson (1st Lt.)	Jan. 16, 1968	Uyeyama, Terry Jun (Capt.)	May 18, 1968
Monlux, Harold Deloss (1st Lt.)	Nov. 11, 1966	Vanloan, Jack Lee (Maj.)	May 20, 1967
Morgan, Gary L. (SSgt.)	Dec. 22, 1972	Vaughan, Samuel R. (1st Lt.)	Dec. 19, 1971
Morgan, Herschel Scott (Capt.)	April 3, 1965	Vavroch, Duane P. (1st Lt.)	Dec. 26, 1972
Mott, David P. (Capt.)	May 19, 1972	Venanzi, Gerald Santo (1st Lt.)	Sept. 17, 1967
Murphy, John S. Jr. (Capt.)	June 8, 1972	Vissotzky, Raymond Walton (Maj.)	Nov. 19, 1967
Myers, Armand Jesse (Capt.)	June 1, 1966	Vogel, Richard Dale (Maj.)	May 22, 1967
Myers, Glenn Leo (1st Lt.)	Aug. 9, 1967	Waddell, Dewey Wayne (Maj.)	July 5, 1967
Nagahiro, James Y. (Lt. Col.)	Dec. 21, 1972	Waggoner, Robert Frost (Capt.)	Sept. 12, 1966
Nasmyth, John Herbert (1st Lt.)	Sept. 4, 1966	Walker, Hubert C. (Capt.)	Jan. 14, 1968
Neuens, Martin James (1st Lt.)	Aug. 12, 1966	Waltman, Donald G. (Capt.)	Sept. 19, 1966
Newcomb, Wallace Grant (Capt.)	Aug. 3, 1967	Ward, Brian H. (1st Lt.)	Dec. 27, 1972
Nix, Cowan Glenn (Capt.)	Oct. 1, 1966	Webb, Ronald John (Capt.)	June 11, 1967
Norris, Thomas Elmer (Capt.)	Aug. 12, 1967	Wells, Kenneth (1st Lt.)	Dec. 18, 1971
North, Kenneth Walter (Capt.)	Aug. 1, 1966	Wells, Norman Louross (Capt.)	Aug. 29, 1966
Odell, Donald Eugene (Maj.)	Oct. 17, 1967	Wendell, John Henry (Capt.)	Aug. 7, 1966
O'Neil, James W. (Lt. Col.)	Sept. 29, 1972	Williams, James W. (Capt.)	May 20, 1972
Overly, Norris M. (Maj.)	Sept. 11, 1967	Wilson, Glenn Hubert (Capt.)	Aug. 7, 1967
Padgett, James P. (Maj.)	May 11, 1972	Wilson, Hal K. (Capt.)	Dec. 19, 1972
Page, Jasper N. (TSgt.) (escaped)	Oct. 30, 1965	Wilson, William W. (1st Lt.)	Dec. 22, 1972
Parrott, Thomas Vance (Capt.)	Aug. 12, 1967	Winn, David William (Col.)	Aug. 9, 1968
Peel, Robert D. (Capt.)	May 31, 1965	Writer, Lawrence Daniel (Capt.)	Feb. 15, 1968
Perkins, Glendon William (Capt.)	July 20, 1966	Young, James Faulds (Maj.)	July 6, 1966
Peterson, Douglas Brian (Capt.)	Sept. 10, 1966	Young, Myron A. (Capt.)	Oct. 12, 1972
Pitchford, John Joseph (Capt.)	Dec. 20, 1965	Yuill, John H. (Lt. Col.)	Dec. 22, 1972
Pollack, Melvin (1st Lt.)	July 6, 1967	Zuberbuhler, Rudolph U. (Capt.)	Sept. 12, 1972
Pollard, Ben M. (Capt.)	May 15, 1967		
Price, Larry D. (1st Lt.)	July 30, 1972		
Purcell, Robert Baldwin (Capt.)	July 27, 1965		
Pyle, Darrel Edwin (1st Lt.)	June 13, 1966		
Pyle, Thomas Shaw (Capt.)	Aug. 7, 1966		
Ratzlaff, Brian M. (Capt.)	Sept. 11, 1972		
Ray, James Edwin (1st Lt.)	May 8, 1966		
Reich, William J. (1st Lt.)	May 11, 1972		
Reynolds, Jon Anzuena (Capt.)	Nov. 28, 1965		
Riess, Charles F. (Capt.)	Dec. 24, 1972		
Ringsdorf, Herbert Benjamin (1st Lt.)	Nov. 11, 1966		
Risner, Robinson (Lt. Col.)	Sept. 16, 1965		
Robinson, Paul K. (Maj.)	July 1, 1972		
Robinson, William Andrew (SSgt.)	Sept. 20, 1965		
Rose, George A. (Capt.)	June 21, 1972		
Ruhling, Mark John (Capt.)	Nov. 23, 1968		
Rumble, Wesley L. (1st Lt.)	April 28, 1968		
Runyan, Albert Edward (Maj.)	April 29, 1966		
Sandvick, Robert James (Capt.)	Aug. 7, 1966		
Sawhill, Robert Ralston (Maj.)	Aug. 23, 1967		

The following 18 were reported to have died in captivity:

Adams, Samuel (Sgt.)
Atterberry, Edwin Lee (Capt.)
Burdett, Edward Burke (Col.)
Cobeil, Earl Glenn (Maj.)
Dexter, Bennie Lee (A1C)
Diehl, William C. (Capt.)
Dodge, Ward K. (Maj.)
Dusing, Charles Gale (SSgt.)
Grubb, Wilmer N. (Capt.)
Heggen, Keith R. (Lt. Col.)
Martin, Duane Whitney (1st Lt.)
Moore, Thomas (TSgt.)
Newsom, Benjamin B. (Maj.)
Pemberton, Gene T. (Maj.)
Schmidt, Norman (Lt. Col.)
Sijan, Lance P. (1st Lt.)
Storz, Ronald Edward (Capt.)
Weskamp, Robert L. (1st Lt.)

Note: The illustration above, and on p. 18, represents the POW ribbon.

Source: Library of Congress database as of Dec. 15, 1997.

There were no "parting gifts" or special outfits for POWs (right) who had been held by the Viet Cong. Released at a rural site in the south, away from any cities, these prisoners were handed over wearing the prison pajamas they had worn for the duration of their ordeal. Only a few of those held by the Viet Cong survived.



Tension is obvious as Army Brig. Gen. Stan McClellan (center), representatives of Hanoi, and international monitors hash out the details of a transfer.

Two USAF ground crew members direct a C-141 almost right up to the transfer table at Gia Lam, to make the last steps to freedom as short as possible. This Starlifter—tail #66-0177—still operates and, dubbed "Hanoi Taxi," serves as a flying memorial to Operation Homecoming and its precious cargo of that day.



Norman A. McDaniel, a captain at the time of his capture, tries to restrain a grin and a tear as he is called to board the airplane that will take him from Hanoi to the Philippines. Fresh clothes couldn't hide the gaunt faces and frail bodies of some of the POWs, many of whom suffered severe malnutrition in captivity.



Once their names are called, and they file past the transfer table, the POWs continue to receive greetings from US personnel as they walk to waiting aircraft at the Gia Lam airport.

The repatriation was an emotional experience for everyone involved. A USAF nurse offers a nonregulation, but heartfelt, welcome as Capt. Norman L. Wells comes aboard.



Aboard the C-141, the excited POWs start catching up on years of missed news and the simple pleasure of conversation with fellow Americans.



The C-141 could probably have flown on high spirits. The magic moment: A deliriously happy cheer goes up as the Starlifter departs North Vietnamese airspace and the former POWs know they're really going home.

The first taste of "home" was a throng of well-wishers who greeted the POWs upon arrival at Clark AB, Philippines.



Supporters and a red carpet greeted each arrival of a planeload of returnees, no matter the time of day or night. The tumult, usually highlighted by children chanting, "Welcome home!" brought most of the travelers to tears. The applause was followed by a real shower, clean clothes, medical checkup, and the inevitable meal—usually beginning with ice cream, followed by steak and other treats only dreamed of during years of suffering.



Repatriations continued through March 1973, with Travis AFB, Calif., being the usual first stop in the US. Here, 1st Lt. Melvin Pollack holds up a card noting his birthday and the greatest gift he could receive: returning to American soil after nearly seven years as a prisoner.

Scenes like this one at Travis, where Maj. Robert L. Stirm embraces his waiting family on the tarmac, were the happiest of Operation Homecoming, for it marked the successful conclusion of the mission.





1st Lt. Carl D. Chambers (above) offers a spiffy salute upon his arrival at Clark and long-delayed return from his last combat mission in Vietnam. Tearful, yet joyous family members embrace Lt. Col. Alan L. Brunstrom (left) and Lt. Col. Louis H. Bernasconi (below) as they arrive at Travis. ■

