

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

As experienced by **Arthur T. Ballard, Jr., Lt. Col., USAF (Ret.)**

My purpose in writing of my experiences as a prisoner of war is to add to our family history. The following pages represent the highlights of the first three or four years of my internment in the dungeons of North Vietnam.

This manuscript is dedicated to my wife, Ruth, who bore those seven difficult years with strength and dignity and took her place in the community. I am so proud of her and her accomplishments, and especially the way she raised our son, Kevin. I never would have written this had it not been for her encouragement, editing, and typing.

SHOOTDOWN AND CAPTURE

I was flying the number three position in a flight of four F-105's from Korat Air Force Base, Thailand. The weather was clear as we flew across the Red River Valley and toward the target which was a large oil storage area. Two minutes before we reached the target my aircraft was hit somewhere in the aft section, probably the engine. I called the flight and told them I had been hit. My wingman said, "Roger, three, you are hit."

The cockpit began filling with smoke. I attempted to stop it with the air conditioning control lever, but it had been knocked loose and was useless. The smoke obscured forward visibility, but I discovered I could see through the top of the canopy. I attempted to maneuver the aircraft to get closer to the target to drop my ordinance before ejecting. Shortly after moving the controls I became unconscious. Upon regaining consciousness I again tried to maneuver the aircraft to see the target and again lost consciousness. This happened three or four times. It was probably smoke inhalation that caused the unconsciousness, because I do not recall any associated pain. During one of the intervals I heard my wingman say, "Bail out, Ted."

When I next became aware of my surroundings I was on the ground. I have no recollection of the ejection sequence or parachute descent. Perhaps I subconsciously followed the instructions of my wingman.

As I opened my eyes I noticed that blood was dripping from my head onto my wrist. The time was 0735-approximately twelve minutes from the time my aircraft was hit until I awoke on the ground.

My first conscious thoughts were of my wife. I said, "Ruth, I'm sorry. It's going to be a long time."

Taking stock of myself, I realized that my left leg was broken and the right leg was badly sprained. I was lying at the foot of a tree, among what looked like ancient, gnarled roots. My parachute was draped over the tree, and, strangely, appeared to be black and white rather than the standard colors of orange and white.

I attempted to remove my radio from my vest and call the other members of the flight to let them know that I was alive but was unsuccessful. Perhaps shock had taken effect and I was in and out of consciousness for the next hour or so.

The next few scenes are fragments of memory.....Someone has his arms around me and is lifting my pistol from its holster.....The barrel of a rifle is stuck in my face.....I am wrapped in my parachute and tied to a long bamboo pole.....Many soldiers are making a lot of noise carrying me out of the wooded area.....

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

I became fully awake and realized that I had been stripped of all my clothing except for underwear. The North Vietnamese soldiers tried to get me to stand up. When I convinced them I could not, two of them, one under each arm, dragged me approximately 200 yards and laid me down in a small clearing near a village.

Thus began six and one-half years of pain, hunger, thirst, fear, anxiety, humiliation, and degradation.

There was also hope....and faith.

TRAINING CAMP

As I lay there in the grass, several hundred villagers gathered in a circle around me, but kept away and did not harm me. They appeared to be merely curious. Two soldiers kept guard. I asked for water and medical attention for my legs. The answer was “No” for medical attention. Not even a splint. About an hour later a small cup of hot water was brought to me, along with a cup of rice and sugar mixture. I eventually got the hot water down and later learned that all drinking water had to be boiled. I was also given bananas.

I was left there in the clearing all day until just after sunset. At this time a motorcycle arrived that had a sidecar attached. I was put in the sidecar, blindfolded, and tied. Just before we left someone dropped the stalk of bananas that I had not eaten onto my lap.

We rode for about one hour, stopping periodically at checkpoints, where someone would reach in and pinch me gently.

Finally we stopped at what I later thought to be a military training camp for boys. I was taken into a small room and placed in a chair, facing a table with a goose-neck lamp on it. A few minutes later three men came into the room and sat behind the table.

Two of the men were in civilian clothes; the other wore a North Vietnamese Army uniform with the insignia of the equivalent of our Warrant officer. One of the civilians was a young looking man, spoke fluent English, and was the only one to speak to me.

He asked the standard questions of name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I answered these questions as required by the Code of Conduct. I then asked for medical treatment and was ignored. The next question was “What type aircraft were you flying?” I told him that I could not answer any further questions. He said, “Why not?” I answered that under the terms of the Geneva Convention we were not required to go beyond name, rank, service number, and date of birth. He said, “We did not sign those agreements.” I knew that they had been a signatory of the Convention, but did not argue the point. I said, “Anyway, I cannot answer any other questions.”

The man in uniform made a motion with his hands, and immediately someone grabbed me from behind, tied me to the chair with a rope, and cinched my arms and hands very tightly behind me. A rope was put around my neck. Tight, but I could still breathe. Next, small rubber tubing was put around the muscles of both arms and twisted down tightly. This was painful and I yelled loudly. I was told to answer the questions, but I refused.

I remained this way for a few minutes, and then two soldiers untied me and dragged me outside. I had heard what sounded like a pep rally going on nearby--loud noises, cheering, etc. Outside, I noticed there were several

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

small buildings, similar to the one I had been in. There were two to three hundred young Vietnamese boys sitting on benches in a field. They appeared to be in their early teens, and were yelling "RAH, RAH, RAH." I could not tell the rank of the soldier who was speaking to them, but he was obviously their leader. The two guards dragged me to the area and threw me across one of the benches in front of the speaker's platform. Needless to say, I was quite frightened, with all the noise along with the pain in my legs. I stayed there for what seemed like five or ten minutes. I looked up at the kids on the front benches and from their bearing realized they were as scared as I and would not look at me. They were dressed in yellow jackets with a wide band that draped from the shoulder to the waist.

The two soldiers dragged me back to the room and threw me onto the floor. They picked me up, tied me to the chair, and used the same technique of torture as before. After a few moments I became concerned about the circulation in my arms and decided to answer some of their questions. I told them the truth about what type aircraft I had been flying and what target I had been assigned to hit. I was positive that they already knew this information. I lied about my home base, saying that I was stationed at Danang Air Force Base, South Vietnam. I also lied about my marriage and the names and numbers of my brothers and sisters. I told them I had two brothers named Charles and Frank; a sister, Ruth; and a cousin, Kevin. They seemed to be satisfied with my answers.

I again asked for medical treatment and was refused. Evidently it was time to go to Hanoi. They untied me, carried me outside, and placed me in the back of a small jeep-type truck with benches along each side. I was blindfolded with my hands loosely tied in front. The officer drove the truck and the English-speaking civilian sat in back with me.

It was a very long and extremely rough ride to Hanoi. We stopped several times at checkpoints. By the time we got to Hanoi my legs were in bad shape. We arrived just after daybreak on Tuesday morning, September 27, 1966.

THE GREEN ROOM

Several soldiers met us as we arrived at Hoalo jail in downtown Hanoi. They carried me to a room just outside the main complex of cells, laid me on the floor, and departed. I was left alone for approximately thirty minutes. The room was set up exactly like the other one I had been in--desk, three chairs behind, goose-neck lamp, one chair was in front. The walls were green with indentations.

The young English-speaking civilian returned, this time with two different men, both dressed in Army clothes with no insignia. Two guards were very gentle in helping me onto the chair.

The interview began with the questions of name, rank, service number, and date of birth, which I answered. The next question was about my aircraft. By this time I had regained my courage and thought that these people might not be as barbaric as the ones out in the field, so I told them that I was not going to answer any further questions, that it was not required under the terms of the Geneva Convention. I asked for medical treatment for my broken leg.

Immediately I was again tied to the chair in the same manner as before. This time the guard tied or looped ropes around both of my ankles and began pulling my legs back and around the chair. This bending and twisting action was extremely painful. When I began screaming, a rag was stuffed into my mouth. The pain was too

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

much for me to take, so I nodded my head and was untied. I answered the same questions that had been asked the night before.

After about an hour the men left the room. A few moments later one of the men returned with another man dressed in civilian clothes who called himself the Camp Commander. I asked for water and medical attention. He said, "You will not receive food, water, or medical attention until you have completed all camp formalities." He said that I must give some biographical and military information, and then write a letter to the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam condemning the United States government and confessing war crimes. He then asked the question, "What are your new tactics?"

Two or three weeks prior to my shutdown, my squadron had been employing a different method of delivering bombs to the target. We were attempting to minimize our losses and gain more accuracy in target destruction.

I attempted to evade the questions by saying that we just came in as fast as we could, dropped the bombs, and got out as fast as we could. He pressed for details with such questions as: "How far from the target do you drop the bombs? What climb angle do you use to drop the bombs? What altitude? What airspeed?"

When I continued to give evasive answers, I was again tied to the chair, and the torture resumed. I knew that if I answered the questions it would mean the shutdown and possible death of many American pilots, some of whom were my best friends. I refused to answer the questions. I lost consciousness from the pain. When I awakened, the interrogation and torture resumed. During the next three days, I estimate that I went through between ten and fifteen torture sessions, during most of which I passed out from pain or shock, or a combination of both. My left hip was broken during one of the sessions.

At times, when I awakened, I would find myself untied, on the floor, and alone in the room. Soon the same men would return and the interrogation would begin again, with more questions concerning my military and civilian biography. I gave more detail, but I believe I stuck generally to the same lies I had told earlier.

During this period I was given no food, no water, and no medical attention. I continued to refuse to answer questions concerning military tactics.

Sometime during the evening of September 29, I had again become unconscious from the torture. I looked up when I awakened and saw that the Camp Commander was the only one in the room. He looked at me and said, "Ballard, answer the question." At this time I was in bad shape and felt that I could not take any more torture. I was nervous, scared, confused, and in great pain. I said a silent prayer that went something like this: "God, please give me the courage to say 'no' to this man one more time." I looked up at him and said, "No." We continued staring at each other for a few moments, and then he gathered his papers and left the room. I was never again asked any questions concerning military tactics.

Later that night a guard brought me a small cup of water. I was placed on a stretcher, put into a truck, and taken to a nearby hospital. The guards laid me on a large table under an antique contraption that the doctor said was an x-ray machine.

Several civilians came through the open door to stand around and look at me. One young man had a small child in his arms. The child was holding a toy machine gun and, when his father pointed me out, turned it toward

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

me and began cranking a handle that made a popping noise. That child had the maddest, meanest look on his face that I have ever seen on anyone so small. I smiled at him and winked. This really surprised him. His eyes opened wide and his mouth dropped open. He looked at his father who quickly took him outside. The other onlookers stood without expression and seemed not to have noticed the incident.

Several x-rays were taken of my left leg and left hip. The doctor indicated to me that they were both broken. Then there appeared to be an argument between the doctor and the Camp Commander. I was then put on a stretcher and taken back to the camp. This time I was placed on a cement bed in a small cell in "Heartbreak Hotel", part of the Hoalo jail complex. There were shackles for legs embedded in the bed.

It was a very miserable night for me. I don't remember much about it except that I couldn't sleep, sit, lie, or stand. I pleaded for water and medical attention. I cursed the guards when they walked by the room.

Early the next morning I heard a voice asking me my name. How wonderful to hear another American's voice! We exchanged names. He was evidently in the cell next to mine. He calmed me down and told me to try to keep as quiet as possible because it was dangerous for everyone. At this time a guard came by and I heard no more for several hours.

Later that day the POW attempted to contact me by tapping on the wall. I did not know the tap code, but I thought of using one tap for "A", two taps for "B", three for "C", etc. After establishing communication I told him what they were doing to me. He advised me to write a confession and they would take me to the hospital. We were again interrupted by the guard and I had no more contact with him. I had already made up my mind that I would have to write something, because I could not stand any more torture.

That night I was taken back to the "Green Room". The stretcher was left in the room for me to lie on. The Camp Commander came in, asked a couple of questions, gave me some papers to read and departed. There were three separate statements signed by American POW's, two of whom I knew. I glanced through them but could not concentrate. It was another miserable night for me.

The next day was marked with more interrogations concerning my biography; mostly a re-hash of previous questions, and briefings explaining to me why I was a criminal and the United States was wrong in becoming involved in South Vietnam. I was again told that I would receive no medical attention until I had confessed my crimes and condemned the United States government.

Sometime during the day I was given some rice and a bowl of greens soup. I could not eat but managed to drink the broth.

That evening I decided to write, thinking that if I wrote just anything they would at least leave me alone. I do not recall the exact wording of my first letter (I had to address it to the people and government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.) In general, I agreed with the policies of our government. The Camp Commander read it, tore it into small pieces, and said I was wasting his time. I thought I would give it one more try and write a statement similar to one that I had read earlier which really didn't say much of anything. I wrote the following:

"I can understand why the Vietnamese people believe the United States is wrong in being in South Vietnam. Since I am a devout Christian, each night I pray that God will forgive me of all my sins."

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

I could hardly grip the pen, and my hand writing looked like a childish scrawl. He read it and made me scratch out the phrase "Since I am a devout Christian." I signed it and he said, "Now I take you to hospital."

At the hospital more x-rays were taken, and then I was laid on a platform that was about four feet high with a vertical rod between my legs. A screw-on device was strapped to my feet and was used to straighten my legs. The right leg did not straighten, but remained slightly bent at the knee. My left leg, buttocks, and upper torso were put in a cast. I was left in this position for about thirty minutes to dry.

I was then taken by truck to a camp on the outskirts of Hanoi that was later referred to as the "Zoo". We arrived there about 0100, 2 October 1966.

PIGSTY, ROOM SIX

I was placed on one of two wooden beds in a small 12 x 12 cell. When the guards departed I realized I was shaking the hand of Ensign George McSwain, US Navy. George had been living in solitary confinement for about two months and was as glad to see another American as I. George took care of me for a long time under most difficult conditions. I owe a great debt to him.

I do not recall very much of the next few weeks. I was extremely weak and in much pain. My mind was fuzzy and I had to ask George to repeat things that he told me. He tried to make me as comfortable as possible, getting up at frequent intervals throughout the night to attend my needs. The guards had given me a bedpan and I used this to prop up my left leg because it was too painful to lie flat.

We were issued two sets of pajama-like clothing and two sets of underwear. We also had a pair of tire sandals, toothbrush, toothpaste, mosquito net, tin cup, soap, wash cloth, pitcher for water, and a straw mat. There was also a waste bucket. We shaved once a week which was quite an experience with the dull blades! I found out later that I was number eight to use the blade. The guards gave us a haircut every forty-five days. For the first few weeks George had to shave me because my hands were still almost useless. I seem to remember that he also had to feed me for a while, although George denies this. I could drink the broth from the soup and could eat a little rice. George kept encouraging me to eat more and I eventually could.

George gave me a briefing on the layout of the camp. There were nine buildings with a total of about 50 to 60 POWs, none of whom could we contact until February, 1967. We learned later that the building we lived in was called the Pigsty. It had eleven rooms, or cells, all about the same size. Directly behind our cell was a shower room, and next to it was a latrine--the bowl was used to dump our waste buckets. The cell next to ours was empty. In each room was a loudspeaker with no volume control, which was hooked up to the camp radio. Twice each day we had to listen to "Hanoi Hannah" over the Voice of Vietnam, a local radio station. There was also much propaganda from the camp officials. Frequently we were told that we were criminals and must obey the camp regulations or be punished.

I soon became used to the daily routine. A gong would awaken us at 0500. George would get up, fold our nets and clothing, and sweep out the room with a small whisk broom. He would then begin exercising, doing some sit-ups and pushups. The turnkey would come around about 0600 and give us each a cigarette and light (we were not allowed to keep matches). At 0700 a guard, usually female, would bring some water for our jugs. Then the turnkey began letting each room out to bathe for about fifteen minutes. When it was our turn, George

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

would bathe himself, empty the waste bucket, wash our dirty clothes, return with a bucket of water and bathe me.

Around 1100 hours the chow girls would bring soup and rice and dish it up for us on the porch. George would then be let out by the guard to get our food and bring it back to the room. When we were finished the guard picked up the dishes and placed them outside. Soon two POWs would collect all the dishes and wash them in the shower room. Then another cigarette and another light.

From 1200 to 1400 was "quiet hour". During this time we were required to lie on our beds. It was quiet in the camp, with only the guards periodically checking on us by silently opening the hatch in the door to peer in.

The gong would clang again at 1400 and the camp would come alive. Those rooms that had not bathed in the morning would do so. Water and chow again at about 1700, followed by the last cigarette of the day. George smoked very little, so I usually had the luxury of an extra cigarette each time.

At 2100, the gong would sound, signifying bed time. George would put up our mosquito nets and then he would lie down and try to sleep. Because of the pain and being so uncomfortable I could sleep for only ten to twenty minutes at a time for a total of about two hours per night.

Periodically, throughout the day, the routine was broken by the guards harassing the prisoners. We could hear them yelling at the POWs and beating them up. Every time a Vietnamese came into our room, or just looked in, George stood up and bowed. I asked George why he did this and he said, "They tied me up and beat the shit out of me until I agreed to bow." I was to learn later just what he meant. All the POWs were forced to bow.

Once each week an inspection of the room was held. A Vietnamese officer and several guards would come into the room and check every article of clothing, the beds, and windows. George would have to stand facing the wall and be searched.

At night, while lying awake, I would observe lizards which inhabited our room. They were geckoes and could change their shades of color. Over the years I became very fond of these creatures and could write a small book about them.

Our cell was dimly lit with a twenty-five watt bulb. The cord came in through a vent near the ceiling, and the bulb lay against the wall. The lizards spent most of their time there to catch insects and to keep warm in the winter.

It was quiet in the camp at night. I could hear the guards making their rounds, checking the cells. One guard's favorite position was just outside our window. Sometimes I could hear his snoring. Several dogs were in the camp. They were not watchdogs but were raised and fattened to be eaten by the Vietnamese. As far as I know we were never fed dog meat. It was evidently a delicacy reserved for the Vietnamese.

Sometimes the quiet of the night would be disturbed by a long convoy of trucks that passed nearby, heading south. An occasional air raid would liven things up. I had a feeling of helplessness when the bombs were dropping nearby, but I comforted myself with the belief that the pilots knew the location of the POW camps.

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

Mostly my thoughts centered around my wife, Ruth, and our son Kevin, wondering how they were and how the news of my shutdown had affected them. I knew that my wife was a strong person and that I would be very proud of her.

During the day, George and I exchanged biographies and talked of many things. I grew to love George and thought of him as a brother. I have often considered writing a book and entitling it, "Ensign George McSwain". Briefly, he is about six feet tall with black hair and brown eyes, a bachelor from Montrose, California, just turned twenty-five years old. George spent two years with the Army paratroopers, two years in college, and was shot down by a SAM missile just a few months after being commissioned.

We felt that it was going to be a long war and talked about how to conduct ourselves. We agreed to follow the Code of Conduct as best we could and to give the enemy as little as possible. If we were temporarily broken by torture, as soon as we recovered we would begin resisting again.

About once a week George was taken to one of several rooms in an administration building. There he would be interrogated by a Vietnamese officer. These quizzes usually lasted for one hour. Very little new information was sought. It was a short rehash of biographical information followed by a recitation of propaganda decrying the presence of the United States in South Vietnam.

One day in early November 1966, an officer, whom we called "J.C." sat down next to my bed, holding a pen and paper, evidently ready to take dictation. Of the Vietnamese interrogators, J.C. was known to be one of the meanest and most ruthless. He never came around the POWs without an armed guard.

J.C. began by asking some simple biographical questions, which I answered. Then he told me that the United States was the criminal in South Vietnam and should get out. He said, "What are your feelings about that?" I said, "The United States is right being in South Vietnam and will stay there to prevent the North Vietnamese from taking over the South."

J.C. curled his lips and said, "The Camp Commander at the other camp told me about you. You are a die-hard. You have not confessed your crimes!" I said, "No, and I am not going to. I am not a criminal." He jumped up and shouted. "Your future is very dark! Soon you will be punished!" He stormed out of the cell, shouting to the guards.

After the door was locked, George said that I had probably made a mistake, and that the Vietnamese were stupid, that one could usually talk around some topics and not really say anything.

The next day, while George was outside bathing, I noticed an armed guard looking through the door at me. He had a rifle slung across his shoulder and his right hand was fondling a knife that was in its sheath. He looked around the courtyard and then slowly walked into the room. He came to my bed and suddenly drew the knife and came down toward my face with it. Just as the tip of the blade touched my face, it was as if an invisible shield stopped the thrust. Immediately the guard returned the knife to the sheath and left the room. I never blinked an eye during the entire ordeal.

A few days later, on November 5, 1966, a loose nail was found in a crack in the wall near a window in our cell. George was accused of "plotting the blackest of crimes against the Vietnamese people," and for punishment had to stand facing the wall with his arms straight up over his head. This form of torture was for fourteen hours

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

each day, seven days a week. It lasted for seven weeks. He was allowed no bath nor shave. For variation they made him stand in the same position in the middle of the room. He was frequently beaten and slapped by the guards.

After about a week of this, George was taken to quiz and returned with pen and paper. J.C. had told him that if I would confess to being a war criminal and condemn the United States government, George would be taken off punishment. George looked at me and said, "Don't do anything on my account. I can take it."

I thought about it for a while and decided to write the same statement that they had tortured me for in the "Green Room". I figured it would not satisfy J.C. but it was worth a try. George took the paper with him to the next quiz. When the guard brought him back and put him "on the wall", George said, "He didn't buy it."

I said, "I'm sorry, George."

George said, "I know. Don't sweat it."

Lying on my bed in my cast, I was facing the door. This was a big advantage for us because I could clear for George to allow him to rest his arms. This was infrequent, though, because the guards seemed to hang around most of the day to harass George.

To keep our minds occupied and to encourage George, we would tell each other of our experiences. And we played word games. I can still picture George "holding up the wall" and naming all the girls he could think of that started with the letter A, then B, etc. Then I would name those I could think of. One day it was my turn and we were working on the R's. I was tired, sleepy, and extremely uncomfortable in my cast. I named a few but then couldn't think of any more. George said, "There's one more." I thought for a few minutes and said, "I've exhausted my supply. What is it?" He said, "Ruth, you blockhead!"

The weather turned cold in November. George had tied my shorts around my feet to keep them warm, but J.C. made him take them off, saying that we were committing crimes against the "People's Clothing". In late November we were given two blankets each, a sweatshirt, and a pair of socks. That was not enough to keep warm but it was better than nothing.

On November 26, 1966, a guard came in, pulled out a pocket knife, and cut off my cast. He handed me a pair of crutches and said, "Walk." I was so weak I could not sit up nor move my left leg. When George thought the guards were not nearby he would come "off the wall" and gently exercise my leg, massaging it and moving it very carefully. Sometimes the guard would catch him, come in, and slap him around.

It took several days for me to get enough strength to sit up and then use the crutches. Slowly I began to walk around the room. I cannot describe the happy feeling I had to be free of that bed and to be able to hobble around the room on those crutches. I thought to myself, "Someday I'll walk without the crutches. Maybe I can use them as weapons to escape."

George said he would give me a bottle of booze if I could walk without the crutches by the end of the year. I said, "Okay, I'll accept that bet." He said, "It's not a bet. I'll give you a bottle."

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

December 24th came and George was still “holding up the wall”. As evening approached, a guard came and took George to quiz. While he was gone I suddenly felt inspired to walk without the crutches. I carried them with me, but did not use them. I made it all the way around the room. I had given myself a Christmas present and waited impatiently for George to come back so I could tell him.

When George returned he had a few pieces of sugar candy and an extra cigarette for each of us. This was a pleasant surprise since I never thought the Vietnamese would recognize Christmas. George said the quiz room was full of oranges and bananas and we would receive some later. We never did.

Later some Christmas music was played over the camp radio. A POW sang two or three songs. I wondered who he was but never found out.

It was a sad Christmas Eve for us. As we went to bed, George was silent and despondent. We did not talk as we normally did. I could imagine his thoughts. Mine were of my family and Christmases past.

The gong did not clang as usual Christmas morning. However, a guard came by and told George to “get on the wall”. About three hours later he was taken to quiz and J.C. told him that the Camp Commander had forgiven him of his “crimes” and that George must obey the camp regulations. We were both jubilant at this news. George’s long ordeal was over. In a way we felt it was a victory for us since I did not have to write a confession or condemn the United States. Several times I came close to calling a halt to the torture and writing the statement, but George was a tough man and he took it as he said he could.

It was quite a sight watching George shave that long beard off!

The Vietnamese gave us a good Christmas dinner--a piece of meat, lots of rice, and for the first time, cabbage soup.

In January I ventured outside for the first time with George during our daily ten to fifteen minutes bathing period. Sometimes we used a slow-running faucet in the shower room. No hot water. There was also a well near our building that we used periodically. It surely felt great to get outside, however briefly. George had described the layout of the camp to me, but I was surprised to see how close the buildings were to each other. They looked similar to ours with the same number of cells. Each cell, except for the building called the “Pool Hall”, had a window with louvered shutters.

The guards began harassing me about bowing. I got by with only a slight lean forward, complaining that it hurt my hip to bend over, which it did.

In January I had my first quiz in the administration building. I was still using one crutch when I went outside and also I went barefoot because it was difficult to walk in those tire sandals. The officer sitting behind the desk, later known as the “Rat”, was a small skinny man, about five feet tall. I nodded to him, leaned my crutch against the desk, and sat down on a small stool in front of the desk. The quiz started with a few biographical questions, followed by forty-five minutes of propaganda. I did not argue any of his points. In fact, I said nothing at all. When he finished he said, “Now, go back to your room.”

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

Later, when communications were established between rooms and buildings, we referred to this type of interrogation as "B.S.". Example: "Today Joe had BS quiz with Pig." If the quiz varied significantly we would give details.

George and I both lost a great deal of weight during those first few months. I was in good physical condition when I was shot down, 180 pounds, waist 33 inches. In February 1967, I estimated my weight to be about 125 to 130 pounds, and my waist about 24 inches.

In late January and early February, more POWs moved into the Zoo from other camps. The total in the camp was about 120. Three men moved in next to us, so George and I finally could communicate with other Americans. This was a big morale boost for us. There were thirty POWs in our building, the Pigsty.

It was announced over the radio that all POWs were to receive injections for cholera and some other diseases. George and I never received any.

Communicating with other POWs was strictly forbidden and many men were tortured because of it. In our cell, George would hang onto the bars in the window and watch for the guards while I tapped on the wall to our neighbors. This was standard clearing procedure throughout the camp. Some men could not see out of their room and would have to rely on hearing the guards approach or seeing the shadow move under the door. We communicated between rooms by using a tap code, and between buildings by using a hand code.

Harassment by the guards was a continuing thing, along with beatings and other forms of torture. Many men were in leg irons for various reasons.

TET, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, came in February and we were again given a good meal. Everyone was given about two ounces of wine that the guards said was made from oranges. I began to wish for more Vietnamese holidays!

Another important event occurred in February. I quit using my crutches entirely! Even though my leg and hip continued to ache, I felt I could improve by exercising and walking without them.

One morning in early May, I was looking outside through a crack in the door and saw my old friend Burt coming to empty his "Bo" (Vietnamese for waste bucket). Burt was the first pilot in my squadron to be shot down. I wanted to whisper to him as he passed our window and give him news about his family. I told George to climb onto the other window and clear for me. Just as George looked out the window a guard came around the corner and saw him. They were face to face. Ten minutes later George was in leg irons and tight wrist cuffs, with his arms behind him. The leg irons were tied to the bed. George was in a most painful position and stayed that way for two days and nights. The cuffs cut into his wrists. I attempted to make him as comfortable as possible by propping him up with blankets, but the guards would have none of this.

The cuffs were taken off long enough for him to eat but were back on again as soon as he finished. George was not given any cigarettes but when the two POWs came by to pick up the dirty dishes, they would throw their cigarettes into our room provided the guards were not looking. Words of encouragement came from the other POWs in the Pigsty. There was always a warm feeling of brotherhood knowing that when one POW was in trouble, all the others were concerned and praying for him. The simple message, "Keep your chin up," or "Our prayers are with you," meant so much.

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

On the morning of the third day George was taken out of irons and was told to write a letter of apology to the Camp Commander. George wrote, "I apologize for climbing onto the window to clean off the spider webs."

Toward the end of May, immediately after a particularly close-by air raid, the Rat opened our hatch and yelled at me, "You have not yet confessed your crimes!" I said, "No." He said, "You will be punished!" and slammed the hatch closed. The Rat was obviously frightened by the bombing and was very nervous and excited.

An hour later he returned and said to me, "Write your feelings about the war and explain why you are a criminal." He handed me a pen and paper and departed.

George said, "You might as well write it and save yourself some torture. Everyone else has."

I decided not to mince any words and wrote the following statement: "I have not killed any women or children or bombed any hospitals. I am not a criminal. I am a prisoner of war." George read it and said, "Boy, that ought to bring some action." A guard came by and took the paper.

The next evening I was told to pack up. I was moving out. As George helped me roll up my few belongings, I thanked him for all he had done for me. We shook hands. I did not see him again for more than three years, but I kept track of him. He is a tough man, that George McSwain.

PIGSTY, ROOM ELEVEN

A turnkey we called the "Frog" took me to Room 11 on the back side of the Pigsty. This room was also adjacent to the shower. Shortly, two more men moved in with me. We soon learned that a major room shuffle had taken place throughout the camp.

My two new cellmates were Bob and Tom, an F-105 Wild Weasel crew shot down in August 1966. Their job had been to locate and destroy surface to air missile sites. Anti-aircraft fire got them while they were tracking a target.

Bob was a short, well-built man, about my age, married with one son the same age as mine. Tom was a few years younger and had been married for only three months before going to South East Asia. They both had been tortured with ropes.

Tom had developed appendicitis shortly after being captured and the Vietnamese used this as a tool to gain concessions. When they finally agreed to give him medical treatment, Tom walked from his bed to the truck, and was taken to a hospital. He walked from the truck to the operating table where his appendix was removed. No anesthesia was given. After he was sutured he walked back to the truck, went back to the Zoo, and finally walked to his bed. Tom was still weak but, like me, could do a few exercises in the mornings.

We had no contact with a few of the buildings in the camp, but we had an accurate count of the number of POWs. Attempting to acquire the names of every American was top priority for me. I knew this would be important information to have in case of an escape or eventual release. At this point I had about seventy-five names on my list. I used a memory technique I had learned in a book written by Mr. Harry Lorayne. It took me a long time to recall and formulate the different methods of memorization. In later years this was a very useful tool

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

for many POWs. (I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Lorayne in the fall of 1973 when we both appeared on the "To Tell The Truth" television program in New York. I also was honored by his printing an excerpt from a letter I had written him on the cover of his next book. Further, in a *Reader's Digest* article about Mr. Lorayne, he mentioned that his most prized letter was the one he received from me.)

We felt that it was important to have visual identification also. We spent many hours looking through cracks to catch a glimpse of POWs as they passed by going to bathe.

One day, the guard took the three of us around to the front side of the building to sweep off the porch. Tom told him we did not know how to sweep, so the guard proceeded to demonstrate. Tom asked him to show us again. This happened several times. While this was going on I slowly backed up to the window of Room 6 for identification purposes. One of the men who lived there was Norm McDaniel, a black American from North Carolina. As I reached the wall, I heard this voice from above my head whisper, "Look up to yo' right." I looked up over my left shoulder and he said, "Yo other right!" All I could see was the whites of two eyes staring down at me. I told him who we were and what room we lived in. Norm said, "Rogah, Room Leben!"

The summer of 1967 was a bad one for the POWs. Two men were caught communicating and were tortured with ropes. They eventually gave the Vietnamese the tap code we were using, and the long, torturous camp purge began. Daily beatings were frequent throughout the camp. Our captors wanted to stop the communicating and also get the POWs to write propaganda statements. Many men were put in solitary confinement, tortured with ropes, or placed in irons.

One morning Bob was told to pack up. He was being moved to another room. That afternoon Tom also moved out. I was left alone to wonder what they were going to do to me. Early the next morning I was taken to quiz with the Rat. He gave me a thirty minute lecture on why I was a criminal. He then handed me a sheet of paper and a pen and told me to write a letter to the people and government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, confessing to be a war criminal and condemning the United States government.

I was nervous and really scared. I thought, "Here we go again." I was still quite weak and knew that I could not take much more torture, if any. It would be so easy just to write whatever he wanted. I had been through enough torture. But, I decided I would go down fighting. I wrote the following: "I agree with and support the policies of the United States government. I consider myself to be a prisoner of war, not a criminal." I signed it and handed it to the Rat.

I could see the tension build up in the Rat's face as he read the statement. When he finished, he took a swing at my head, but I ducked. He ranted and raved and threatened me with much torture. He then grabbed the paper and ran out of the room. I thought he had gone to get the "goon-squad", but apparently he went to consult with his superior, because he returned about ten minutes later and appeared to be calmed down somewhat. He said, "I will explain to you again why you are a criminal." Another thirty minute propaganda lecture. He handed me pen and paper and said, "Now, write your confession or you will be severely punished."

I wrote the same statement again, word for word.

The above scene repeated itself four more times before the day was over. By nightfall the Rat was really chomping at the bit. Finally, sometime in the evening, he handed me pen and paper and said wearily, "Go to your

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

room and think about your crimes. I will come in the morning for the paper. If you have not written your confession, your future is very dark.”

The next morning I wrote the same statement for the seventh time. Bob and Tom moved back to my cell and I let them read the statement.

A little later the Rat came by and opened the hatch. I handed him the paper. He read it and then silently closed the hatch. I was never again asked to write a confession or condemn the United States government.

I passed a message to the building senior ranking officer (SRO), Major Alan, and advised him of what had taken place. He had recently been severely beaten and was presently solo in leg irons and tight wrist cuffs. His arms were swollen more than twice their normal size. Yet, he still had the courage to tap out a message with the cuffs, encouraging the rest of us, and telling us to resist as long as possible without incurring permanent physical or mental damage. He also initiated a “Home for Christmas” prayer. Each day after the noon meal a signal was passed to all rooms. We would then recite the Lord’s Prayer.

Harassment by the guards was continuous. Bob was the senior ranking man in our room and was slapped around by the guards periodically. Several times we had to stand with our arms over our heads for a couple of hours at a time. Sometimes Bob and Tom would have to kneel down. Due to my hip injury I could not kneel, so I had to stand at attention for long periods.

In back of the Pigsty was a small building we called the “Outhouse”. This building was used for solitary confinement and torture. Earlier, when I lived with George McSwain, I had discovered that the light to the Outhouse was controlled by a switch located in the shower room of the Pigsty. We used the switch to flash coded messages to the occupant--news of the camp and words of encouragement. J.J. lived there for a while. He had lost the use of his hands from torture and would use his wrists and arms to pick up his soup and rice bowls that the guard had placed on the ground in front of the door. A few times he was allowed to bathe in the shower next to our room. When the guards left him alone he would tap messages to us by using his wrists or elbows.

Food rations were meager that fall. For a short period of time we were given bread instead of rice. Also a small ration of sugar. We were always the last ones to be let out of our room to pick up our food. I would put some of my sugar or other food into J.J.’s plate. The guard saw me do this one day and was very angry at first, but he never stopped me.

J.J. was a very courageous young man. I wish I could have met him personally, but this was not to be. He died in camp some time later, probably from injuries received from torture or lack of medical attention.

THE STABLES

The following camp regulations were posted in each cell:

1. All criminals must show polite attitude at all times to the officers and guards in the camp or they will be severely punished.
2. All criminals will bow to all officers, guards and Vietnamese in the camp.
3. Any criminal who attempts to escape, or help others to do so, will be severely punished.

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

4. Criminals are forbidden to communicate with each other in any way, such as signals and tapping on the walls.

5. All criminals will truthfully answer orally or in writing any question, or do anything directed by the camp authorities.

6. Criminals who follow these camp regulations and who show a good attitude by concrete acts and report all those who want to make trouble, will be rewarded and shown humane treatment.

All the POWs had a rough time during the summer and fall of 1967. The Vietnamese had many different programs going at the same time. Some men were forced to go downtown Hanoi and be interviewed by foreign delegations. Some went without being tortured. The guards took groups of two or three POWs to dig foxholes in the courtyard. Some men refused and were tortured until they agreed to dig. Others dug without being tortured. Announcements were made over the camp radio that all POWs would be required to work both inside and outside the camp. All POWs would be put on trial as criminals. The Vietnamese never referred to us as prisoners of war--we were criminals--sometimes the "blackest of criminals". We were told that we would be tried as criminals and our statements would be sent to the Bertrand Russell War Crimes Trial as evidence. Some POWs would go home after the war, some would spend various periods in prison after the war, and others would be executed.

Bob, Tom, and I had some fairly heated discussions about what to do if we were asked to do any work. I was in favor of not doing anything for them without being tortured. Bob said we would be tortured and would end up digging the foxholes anyway, and would also have to write propaganda statements.

The days and weeks passed. The guards were taking one room at a time out to work or to be tortured. The hardest part of all was wondering when we would be next. For some unknown reason we had received no guidance or orders from the senior ranking officer.

Finally, the Rat came into our cell and said, "What work will you do for the Vietnamese people?" Bob said, "We are not going to do any work." The Rat and the guards departed without saying anything else.

I was very proud of Bob that day.

There were many signs posted around the camp on which were painted such things as "What have you done for peace?" I assumed that whoever did the signs had been tortured to do them. One day at quiz I was asked what I would do to work for peace and end the war. I said, "Nothing." No more was ever said about it.

Tom was asked, "What have you done to help end the war?" Tom said, "I keep my room clean."

The men next door had seen us once while we were outside and asked who was who. Tom tapped, "The short, well built one is Bob. The tall, thin one is Ted. The good looking one is Tom!"

The bombing was heavy that fall. We were told to get under our wooden beds during all air raids. One day the U. S. bombed an ammunition dump nearby. I was under the bed with my bad legs sticking out from

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

underneath. Suddenly I had the feeling I should draw my legs up. As soon as I had them underneath the bed a huge clump of plaster fell from the ceiling and hit right where my legs had been.

Later we found some small pellets from anti-personnel cluster bombs that had ricocheted into our cell. The ammo-dump burned for several days. As far as I know no POW was ever injured from the bombings.

Food was rather meager during this period. For several weeks we had nothing but a small bowl of rice and some fish scales and bones twice each day.

Harassment by the guards was continuous. The Camp SRO and his cellmates were isolated and tortured with wrist-irons and leg-irons for thirty days, then tortured with "ropes". Ultimately the Camp SRO was kept in irons more than eight months.

Sometime during that summer we received messages that two Spanish-speaking Caucasians (we assumed they were Cubans) were in the camp and had selected about twelve POWs to exploit. The POWs were housed in a building we called the Stables. The apparent leader of the two man team was a big man, six feet one inch tall, and burly. We called him "Fidel". Evidently he was influential with the Vietnamese because he had been given free reign with that group of POWs. The other man was smaller, about five feet eight inches, with salt and pepper hair. We called him "Chico". Fidel spoke English very well and had a good understanding of American slang. He also had a very bad and quick temper. Chico seemed to be more even tempered and played the role of the "nice guy" most of the time.

Various cells in the camp were used as torture cells to get each POW to "submit" to Fidel. The first two men were "submitted" within a few days by the use of extreme torture. This quick and sure method was taught to Fidel by the Vietnamese. Fidel experimented with more sophisticated methods with the other men and took notes of their reactions. He wanted to gain submission without using torture but was unsuccessful..

The methodical submitting of the remaining ten POWs took about four months. Fidel wanted a complete surrender to the point where the POW would do anything Fidel told him to do, including making tape recordings and writing propaganda material and "Call L.B.J. a son of a bitch."

All during the four months the entire group was interrogated daily on an individual basis. The tactics employed ran the gauntlet from Chico's nice guy approach to Fidel's tirades. They were keeping the men off balance and under constant stress. Fidel would proclaim that the POW must submit totally. There was no middle ground. The POW must see the justness of the struggle of the Vietnamese people. If he supported the U.S. Government, then he was a murderer of women and children. If he did not believe in the murder of women and children, then he supported the just struggle of the Vietnamese people. When the POW remained silent or supported his government Fidel would go into a tirade and proclaim that tomorrow he would turn the POW into a "pile of sheet". The POW was then taken back to his cell and left to worry about the next day's events.

The next day Fidel would tell him that it was time for him to submit and condemn the U. S. Government. Then Fidel would turn on a tape recording of classical music and say, "Ah, perhaps tomorrow you will surrender, but today you will enjoy the music, eh?" and he would leave the room. After about an hour the POW would be taken back to his cell to wonder again when the ax would really fall. The POWs did not submit until the actual beating and torture took place.

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

After all had “surrendered” they were allowed to live together in Room 3 of the Stables. Of course, none of the POWs really submitted to Fidel. They told him they did only when forced to do so.

Fidel told the men that they would now receive better treatment. They were allowed to do yard work and received four cigarettes a day. They made wooden toys for children. They began to receive mail from home and were allowed to write once a month. However, during this time daily beatings of one or all of these were common. Fidel introduced the rubber fan belt for whippings.

One of the POWs in the Fidel group was treated with unmerciful brutality. Eric had been badly beaten and tortured at “Heartbreak Hotel” before being placed into Fidel’s hands. The torture had apparently been allowed to go too far and Eric was no longer rational by the time he arrived at the Zoo. He would fantasize and project himself out of the real world. He would not bow to or even acknowledge the presence of Fidel or any of the Vietnamese. No amount of beating or torture would make him respond. He trusted no one, not even the POWs. Fidel would beat Eric until he was near death and would still get no response.

The nine men in the Stables had to force feed Eric to keep him alive. Finally the Vietnamese took him away from Fidel and attempted to give him medical help including electric shock treatments in an effort to save him. He was seen on occasion and was thought to be living solo. He was last seen alive in December of 1970. The POWs were later told by the Vietnamese that Eric had died.

In the summer of 1968, the Vietnamese were working on Jim Kasler to get him to talk to a delegation, but were unsuccessful. Jim was one of the true heroes among the POWs. The first time I saw him I thought he was dead. I was looking out the crack of the door in Cell Six of the Pigsty when two guards came by carrying a stretcher with Jim on it. His face was ashen. A couple of months later I saw him walking very slowly on crutches. Directly behind Jim was an armed guard with a bayonet pointed at his back. He took a lot of torture and abuse from the Vietnamese and was a source of inspiration for the rest of us.

Fidel decided to help the Vietnamese to get Jim to see a delegation. Fidel used ropes and irons in eleven torture sessions. Fidel then resorted to beatings, denial of sleep, and a starvation diet. Jim surrendered a number of times, but when the Vietnamese tried to get him to prepare to see the delegation, usually the day after surrendering, Jim would tell them to “cram it”. Fidel would then start a new series of torture. Jim was bed ridden for six months following the torture.

The Fidel program lasted for about one year. Fidel and Chico were not seen after August 1968.

Beginning in late 1967, the Vietnamese initiated what was commonly called the “Quiz-Kid Program”. After attending English classes, some young non-commissioned Vietnamese were selected to remain in camp, and these “Quiz-Kids” held quiz after quiz with some of the POWs. The purpose of the quizzes seemed to be twofold. First, the quizzes provided an opportunity for them to improve their English, and second, there was the ever present propaganda program. These “Quiz-Kids” soon started helping the officers with their programs and later they assumed some responsibility for the buildings, but still under one of the lower ranking camp officers. The “Quiz-Kids” later served more as turnkeys and were with the POWs until release in 1973.

I had only one quiz with them, probably because I never argued or discussed anything with any of the Vietnamese personnel.

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

One day I was in the shower room washing my clothes when one of the Kiddies came in and began tapping out the code to Room 6. Fortunately the POWs in Room 6 did not respond. The Kiddy (we called him "The Teenager") smiled at me and departed.

North Vietnamese Army personnel administered the prison camps. Basically the same functions were performed at all the camps. Camp commanders were involved in administration and policy, although it was impossible to determine who dictated the overall treatment of POWs. The officers in charge of buildings were responsible for POW interrogation/indoctrination and treatment. In the early days the turnkeys meted out most of the day to day punishment, but after 1969, had little authority. Their main responsibility was to tend to daily needs of the POWs. Armed guards patrolled the grounds and manned the towers.

We attempted to standardize the names we had for all the enemy personnel. The Vietnamese officers and guards occasionally moved from one camp to another, and thus would have more than one name.

Some of the Vietnamese officers' names were: J.C.; Dum Dum; Rabbit; Bug; Frenchy; Spot; Chester; the Paper Boy; Elf; Rabies; Rat; Fox; Goldie; Stag; Soft Soap Fairy; and Lump (the only civilian in the camp, and was believed to be a political man.)

Some of the guards' names were: Frog; A. B; Snake; Ichabod; McGoo; Joe Louis; Husky.

The female soldiers (chow girls) were: Nightmare Alice; Gravel Gertie.

There was also "The Goon Squad", a group of soldiers who did most of the more serious forms of torture.

I even had names for the lizards that lived in our cell: The Long-Tail Mama; the Short-Tail Mama; Big Daddy; and the Acrobat, a young one that was always being tossed off the walls by the bigger lizards.

Things quieted down somewhat for us after October. The communications purge seemed to have reached all the buildings in the "Zoo", and we had lost contact with some of them.

On Christmas Eve Bob, Tom, and I were taken to view a tree the Vietnamese had decorated. We were given some candy and extra cigarettes to take back to our room. Later in the evening we heard a guard opening the hatches to each of the cells. When he came to our cell he asked, "Protestant or Catholic?" We told him we were Protestants and he gave us each a small bag that contained an orange, several cookies, and small pieces of candy. This was our first "Gift from the Priest". We found out later that the Catholics received a tangerine instead of an orange. (Only the Lord knows why!) One POW who was living by himself told the guard that he was neither Protestant nor Catholic. The guard closed the hatch without giving him anything. Next Christmas he decided to be a Protestant!

Some Christmas music was played over the camp radio. We also had to listen to a tape recording by a Vietnamese Catholic Priest who told us to pray to God for forgiveness of our crimes against the Vietnamese people.

It was a quiet evening for us as we reminisced about our families and other Christmases. Our prayers were for those POWs who were still in irons or in solitary confinement, and for those suffering from wounds.

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

Christmas day we had a good dinner of meat, vegetables, and rice. In quantity it was about the size of an average American meal, but about six times our normal ration.

Three or four times in early 1968 we were taken to the auditorium to see propaganda movies, usually documentaries of the Vietnamese version of how the war was being won. We sat on the floor and blankets were used as curtains to separate the POWs. I would touch the POW next to me through the blanket and tap messages to him. One day I attempted communicating by tapping on a foot and immediately received a hard slap across my head. It was a guard's foot!

There were at least two rooms in the auditorium that were being used to torture POWs. Our attempts to communicate with them failed.

For three days one week we were taken outside and told to make coal balls from coal dust and water. We did this gladly because the coal was used to cook our food. In fact, we would have loved to work in the garden or pull weeds or do things that would be beneficial to us. Just being out in the fresh air would be great.

Another major camp shuffle of POWs took place in March 1968. Bob, Tom, and I were moved to Room 2 of the Stables, next door to the Fidel group. We established communications with them and asked Al if the SRO had any orders or guidelines for us. Al said that the SRO had been tortured so badly that he would not give any more orders. He said that he just could not take any more torture.

The Snake, alias "Old Incredible" was our new turnkey. Al told us that the Snake was one of the meanest and most sadistic of the enemy. We found out how true that was a few days later. Tom was the first of us to get hit by the Snake. Tom bowed with a cigarette in his mouth. He was forced to kneel down and was slapped two or three times. One day, while we were outside bathing, I was kicked in my hip. No apparent reason.

Bob, being the SRO of our cell, took the brunt of Snake's wrath. Almost every day one of us was beaten or slapped. On Easter Sunday the Snake decided to teach me how to bow. He came to me and said, "Bow." I gave my usual nod and he hit me with his fist. He grabbed me by the arm and slung me outside the cell. Two more guards came running up and began beating Bob and Tom. The Snake continued hitting me about the head and kicking me. I rolled with the punches as much as possible. His next to last punch was a karate chop to the back of my neck that sent me to the floor. He yelled "Bow"! I struggled to my feet and bowed. He hit me across the head one more time and then sent me back to the cell. The other guards finished with Bob and Tom and sent them to the cell also. They left us alone for several days, but then the Snake continued as usual.

I was outside washing my clothes one afternoon and I saw Fidel and the Lump walk by. Fidel stopped abruptly and stared glaringly at me. He seemed confused as to who I was. I bowed and he immediately walked away in the direction he had arrived. Bob was of the opinion that we were being groomed to join the Fidel program. I disagreed, not only because of Fidel's reaction when he saw me, but also because POWs were still being moved from cell to cell. I thought we were just temporarily parked in the Stables.

I began to have doubts, though, as the days dragged on. I really dreaded to get up in the mornings, wondering if I was going to be beaten or worse. I regained my courage at night but it would begin to wane as daylight approached. I could still sleep only a few minutes at a time. Then I would have to rub my legs and hip until the pain eased somewhat.

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

One day while Bob was being worked over by the Snake I prayed, "Dear God, how much longer are You going to put up with this?" As it turned out that was the last time the Snake beat on us. I often thought about prayer during those days. I realized that every time I had prayed for courage, I received courage. Many times I said a prayer that went like this: "Dear God, please give me the courage to do what I have to do or say what I have to say." It always worked.

As things slacked off we relaxed somewhat and played word games in the evenings. "Ghost" was our favorite. One of us would think of a word and say the first letter. The next man would say another letter, possibly thinking of a different word. The game proceeded thusly until someone could not think of a word with those particular series of letters. He could fake it if he wished but would probably get challenged and if he were wrong would receive a "g". The first man to get to "ghost" would lose the game.

The TET offensive was the big news in the first few months of 1968. I had a quiz with the Elf (the ugliest little man I have ever seen!) who told me that the Vietnamese liberation fighters were pushing the U.S. into the sea. The war would be over soon and many POWs would be going home. I said nothing.

In conjunction with TET (Vietnamese New Year) the Vietnamese released three POWs to a delegation from the United States. The Vietnamese attempted to use this release as an example to prove to the POWs that their fate was indeed in the hands of the Vietnamese. For the most part, it had no big effect upon our attitudes, other than disappointment in the behavior of the releasees.

In late April I was taken out of the Stables and moved to another building, the "Pool Hall". I stayed there one week with Ken. We were then moved to a camp next to the Zoo that I had named the "Annex".

THE ANNEX

Seventy-one POWs moved into the Annex. We were all junior officers, that is, Captains and Lieutenants, except for three enlisted men. The camp consisted of five buildings with two cells in each building. Our cell was twenty-one feet long by twenty feet wide. The beds were made of wooden boards with no legs. I lived with eight other men. Robert was the SRO.

Communications were established between all cells and buildings within a few weeks, but it was difficult communicating between the Annex and the Zoo. A wall separated the two camps. One of our cells was in sight of a building in the Zoo, but communications could be established only during outside time and usually the guards were around. Initially we had a problem discerning who was the Annex SRO. A Navy Lieutenant knew that he had been promoted to Lt. Commander and that the promotion had become effective after he had been shot down. Eventually we received orders from the Zoo that we would use the date of rank we had when we were shot down to determine camp and building SROs. This was the rule throughout all camps until some modifications were made in 1971.

Peace negotiations began in May and optimism was rampant throughout the camp. There was a dramatic improvement in our living conditions. Diet was better. Sometimes we had bread instead of rice. Living in a nine man room aided greatly in morale, organizations, and resistance postures. Each cell had a walled in courtyard and we were allowed to stay outside for one hour each day except Sunday. There was some improvement in medical treatment. Sometimes aspirin was available.

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

Chow was brought to us in huge pails and we would dish it up ourselves, as opposed to previous years when the guards did this for us. Each of us received one and one half loaves of bread along with the usual bowl of soup. The soup varied during this period--squash, turnip, cabbage, and sometimes bean broth, as well as the standard greens. Glenn tried to fatten me by giving me some of his bread each meal.

Many POWs thought we would be home within one year. I made the prophetic announcement: "Across the Sea in Seventy-three" and was roundly booed!

Periodically we gained some extra time outside by sweeping, pulling weeds, and fertilizing gardens inside the camp.

Cell inspections were held each week. We had to stand facing the wall with hands up until the inspection was over.

The old issue of digging foxholes came up again. Same arguments, pro and con. The Annex SRO issued orders to refuse to dig foxholes. Some POWs were asked by the Vietnamese to dig, but they refused and nothing more was said.

Well water was used for bathing. A bucket was tied to a long rope and we would haul the water up. Occasionally someone would drop the rope and it would fall ten to fifteen feet into the well. We would then call out, "Bao Cao" (Vietnamese term for assistance). The guard would bring a hook to fish it out. There was also an outhouse in the courtyard in addition to the waste bucket inside the cell.

Walking around inside our room was our main exercise. Some of the men jogged in place and did sit-ups and pushups. I could do a few of each, but no jogging. My legs began to get stronger from the increased amount of exercise.

It is important to note that the *inter* and *intra*-camp moves meant so much to the POWs. Reasons for shuffles were rather obscure and seemed self-defeating when the Vietnamese efforts to deny communications between POWs were considered. These shuffles brought men together from different cells and camps, and so we were able to exchange considerable information. We learned of camps called **Plantation** and **Farnsworth** and **Briarpatch** and **Son Tay**, and the names of some buildings associated with the **Hanoi Hilton--Little Vegas, New Guy Village, Alcatraz, and Skid Row**.

In July 1968, another group of POWs was released. The release was exploited by the Vietnamese through a program in which they actively tried to recruit a large number of POWs for release in the near future. The Vietnamese wanted to get letters from POWs requesting amnesty. This letter was necessary because no one would go home without writing for amnesty. They said that each POW who had been released had written one. A few POWs wrote the letters and the Vietnamese used them for propaganda. Later, when these POWs were being pressed for propaganda, the Vietnamese would threaten them with exposure of the letters to all POWs and the world. I was never asked to write such a letter.

Paul asked me one day if I would go home early. I said, "Paul, one of these days someone, probably my son, will ask me how I did as a POW. I want to be able to look him in the eye and say, 'I did the best I could.' No, Paul, I will not go home early. When I return it will be with honor."

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

Paul was nearly blind from some kind of disease. The Vietnamese would not give him any medical treatment. He and J.B. had been shot down in 1965 and had lived together most of the time. They had moved next door to George and me in the Pigsty and had taught us the tap code. J.B. was our room's representative from the Navy.

Neil had been shot down about three months before I. His left arm had been broken just below the shoulder. After the cast was removed he was tortured for something and the arm was again broken. They had not bothered to reset or recast the arm. The bone was completely broken and his arm was simply hanging by skin and muscle. He had lost all feeling in his hand and fingers and could not move them. Somewhere Neil had found a string that he had tied around his neck to hold his arm up and protect it somewhat. We took turns massaging his arm. One day he and I were standing in the open doorway. I had been giving him a massage when all at once Robert came charging by on his way to bathe. Robert slipped and began falling down the steps leading to the courtyard. Instinctively I grabbed him with my left hand. Neil said, "Ted! Ted! My arm, my arm!" I realized I was holding on to Robert and Neil at the same time. I had given him an uncalled for arm stretching!

Sometime later I was rubbing his arm and noticed tears in his eyes. I asked him what was wrong. He said, "I can move one of my fingers. Look!"

July and August were hot, miserable months. John, Glenn and I went into hibernation as far as exercising was concerned. I picked up my first case of heat rash and any type of exertion made it worse. I continued walking because it meant so much to me to try to get my legs back in shape. The hip hurt so badly. I still had visions of attempting an escape, but was grudgingly admitting to myself that in my physical condition survival would be impossible.

We had long discussions concerning escape. The odds were tremendously against a successful escape and evasion. Even if we could scrounge some basic survival equipment and keep them hid until the right time, get out of the camp unnoticed, where would we go? To the South were hundreds of miles of heavily populated flatland. To the West were the Red River Valley and mountains and jungles. North was more mountains and Red China. Possibly a slim chance existed to the East, where one might make it to the South China Sea, steal a boat, and paddle or motor a few hundred miles looking for a friendly Navy vessel. Some of us, myself included, thought it would be worth the effort to try to get a list of names out and to let the world know how we were being treated.

As the Christmas season of 1968 approached, some men were asked to go downtown Hanoi to attend Catholic or Protestant services. Most refused, some went. The issue was strongly debated in individual cells, but no orders or policies were set by the camp SRO. Some cell SROs left it up to the individual. Some thought it would be a good opportunity to receive information from other camps. No one in our cell went.

Even though peace negotiations had begun in Paris, our high hopes for an early settlement had vanished. We had continued our "Home for Christmas" prayer. One day one of the men said, "What will we do if we are not home for Christmas?" Someone answered, "We will continue to pray for next Christmas."

As the season grew nearer the men began writing down the words for holiday songs. We used toilet paper, pens made from strips of bamboo, and ink from a mixture of cigarette ashes and water. Of course we kept these carefully hidden from our captors.

Neil received a package from home. He shared everything with the rest of us. What a wonderful treat! Actual goodies from home!

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

Again we received a "Gift from the Priest."

I shall never forget that Christmas Eve. A group of men quietly singing such carols as "Hark, The Herald Angels Sing" and "Silent Night". Before retiring, Jim said, "Everyone who believes in Santa Claus, hang a stocking on your mosquito net. Remember, those who believe will receive!"

I did not hang up a sock because I needed to wear them to try to keep warm. We each had two thin blankets, but I had to use one of mine as a cushion for my bad hip.

In the quiet of the night, as I had done the two previous Christmas Eves, I mentally shopped for, bought, and wrapped gifts for Ruth and Kevin. How are they? Are they well? Please, God, let them live normal and happy lives, and know that my thoughts are with them. May God bless and keep them, as well as the other members of the great Ballard family.

When I awakened the next morning I found a Christmas card inside my net. The other men had one in their stockings. Jim had made them without any of us knowing about it!

More packages from home began arriving in January 1969. A receipt was required to be signed which contained a propaganda statement saying that we have received "humane and lenient treatment." This issue was hotly debated in most cells and caused ill feelings. I argued against signing the statement. I did not want to give them anything to use for propaganda purposes and thought that if we all refused to sign, the Vietnamese would take the controversial statement out. Nine men in the cell next to ours refused to sign. I was the only one in our cell to refuse. (Paul Kari told me he would not sign the statement, but he never received a package from home. His wife had divorced him after he was shot down.) Ken North, a friend of mine who lived in the Zoo, was tortured until he signed. John told me he would not sign; however, he came back from quiz one day with a package. He sat down next to me and said that he was sorry that he did not have the courage of his convictions. I told John not to worry about it. I thought that he could not take any more torture. His ankles and wrists had deep permanent scars from leg irons and wrist irons. He was thinner than I.

The SRO of the Zoo sent out word that it was okay to sign the receipt, that the U.S. Government wanted us to have the packages, and that it was good for our morale.

I was the last person in our cell to be offered a package. I was taken to the quiz room and shown a package from Ruth. I recognized Ruth's handwriting on the address label. I had such a good feeling when I saw her name, and at the same time I almost cried. The Vietnamese had obviously removed most of the items. There was some toothpaste, candy, a magnetic chess set, and a pair of bedroom-type slippers. I really wanted those slippers. The rubber thongs that I wore were warped and hurt my feet and legs to walk in them. The officer asked if I wanted the package and I said, "Yes." He then said that I must sign a receipt. I said, "Okay." He handed me a sheet of paper that had all the items listed on it. At the top of the paper was a statement to the effect that the undersigned had received humane and lenient treatment. I told the officer that I would sign a receipt but would not sign the propaganda statement. He said I must sign the entire statement. I refused. He said that I could not have the package and for me to go back to my room. I said, "May I look at the contents one more time?" He said, "Yes." I looked at the items and the address label for a few moments and then left the room. I was amazed that I was not even threatened with punishment. The officer acted as if he couldn't care less whether or not I took the package.

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

All the men who received packages shared them with the rest of us. I felt uncomfortable about accepting the shared items, but I did not want to start any more arguments. Anyway, I thought that most of the men respected my decision and my courage.

When the next group of packages arrived (during the Christmas season) the propaganda statement was not part of the receipt.

The security of the camp was fairly lax in the Spring of 1969. There were some holes in the outside walls. There were only two guards at night and when it was raining they huddled by the main gate and did not come around to check the cells. So we were not surprised when we received word from the Annex SRO that an escape attempt would be made soon. By this time I had doubts about an attempt. It seemed futile. I assumed the attempt would be made on a rainy Saturday night, because usually the guards left us alone on Sundays. They would not even get a head count.

Sure enough, on Sunday morning, May 10, we received a message that two men, Captains Ed Atterbury and John Dramesi from Cell Six had left the building around midnight the night before. Robert and J.B. were ashen-faced at this news. They knew from experience that the Vietnamese would react harshly to such action.

Later that day we received word that the two men had been recaptured and had been brought to the Zoo. As the news filtered through the camp, a feeling of helpless frustration settled over all the POWs. Each man tried to prepare himself mentally as best he could for the expected crackdown.

The remaining seven men from Cell Six were split up and isolated in several cells in the Annex and Zoo, where they were subjected to an intensive torture program that was to last two weeks.

Sunday evening two guards came into our cell, looked around and removed a pair of tennis shoes that Paul had been given when he was captured in 1965.

The initial reaction of the Vietnamese camp personnel to the escape was one of dazed disbelief for the first two or three days. They could not seem to believe that anyone could or would try to escape, possibly because the Paris Peace Talks had just started, and also because they thought their camp security was superb.

Camp routine seemed to be normal on Monday morning except that the guards were very serious. There was usually some degree of chatter among them that was missing. On Wednesday, a thorough inspection of the Annex and the Zoo was made by unfamiliar Vietnamese under the supervision of high ranking staff officers. All materials of any kind that could possibly be used in an escape were taken. Each cell was checked for security.

At the end of the first two weeks the remaining seven men from Cell Six were put back together in Cell Nine and placed in leg irons. The Annex SRO and the SROs from all the other cells in the camp were removed from these cells. The Annex SRO was taken to the Hanoi Hilton and did not return until October 1969. When Robert was taken from our cell, we stood up and silently prayed for God to give him courage.

Bob and the other cell SROs were isolated in the Zoo where they also endured an intensive torture program that lasted two weeks. One of the escapees, Ed Atterbury, died from the torture. Eugene (Red) McDaniel, an

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

SRO, came close to dying. He received over nine hundred lashes from a rubber fan belt. One of his arms was broken. Several men attempted suicide but, fortunately, were stopped in time by the guards.

Immediate steps were taken to prevent another escape. The broken lights on the perimeter wall were replaced. The trees in the courtyard were cut down. A guard tower was built in the southwest corner of the camp. The guards checked the cells several times each night.

The wall vents were bricked up and the air holes in the ceilings were covered cutting off all air circulation in the cells. The bed boards were removed and we had to sleep on the floor. Outside time was cut and was generally limited to one wash period per day. This varied with cells. The men in leg irons were allowed out only once per week.

As the Vietnamese gained more and more information from the tortured POWs, a strong effort was made to stop all communications. Mats were put in all the back air vents of the two buildings (the Barn and the Garage) adjoining the Annex. All holes in the courtyard were plugged.

The camp officials were embarrassed by the escape and were determined to get revenge. They implemented a program of strict discipline and harassment. Harsh punishment was in store for any violation of camp regulations. Complete silence was demanded and enforced during outside periods. One man was beaten several times across the legs with a fan belt because he dropped his dish while washing it. Ken was given fifteen lashes for sleeping in the nude. Glenn was given six lashes for calling a guard an SOB. Glenn had some problems with his gums and had asked the guard for an aspirin. The guard refused.

A few weeks after the escape a group of camp officials went to each cell, had the POWs line up in the courtyard, then read them their punishment for violating the camp regulations during the escape. The punishment varied between cells but in general was a cutting off of cigarettes and bathing for two weeks.

Efforts were also undertaken to reduce POW physical capabilities to the point where escape would be impossible. We were not allowed to exercise in any manner or even to walk around in our cell. The quantity and quality of food were reduced. Very little protein, such as fish, pork fat, or soybean curd was put in our diet. Much harassment and trouble were caused by the no exercise policy because all the POWs who were physically able had always exercised daily to some extent. In addition, walking was an excellent means to pass the time as well as a good form of exercise.

The building and cell SROs and other senior POWs all received major torture to divulge communications links and procedures, camp organization, committees, etc. They were tortured to confirm information that had been gained from other POWs. Some false information had been given to stop the torture. When this was discovered the torture became more and more brutal. Torture sessions lasted from one to two weeks, or longer in some cases. The methods used included beatings, irons, ropes, sleep deprivation, no food or water, kneeling for long periods, and being hoisted by the feet and dropped on the head.

The Vietnamese began having the POWs fill out biographical forms. J.B. was tortured to do so. He was now our cell SRO and told the rest of us to fill the forms out as long as we did not give any new information. Paul was beaten because he could not see the form well enough to fill it out. I told the same lies as before about not being married.

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

J.B. was removed from our cell in late July. About a week later Jim, John, Ken, and I were moved to another cell in the Annex to live with Bill, Jimmy, Jay and Mike.

Jim was our cell SRO, with Jay second in command. Jimmy was in leg irons. It was amazing to watch him get in and out of his pajamas. The guards thought he had picked the lock until he showed them how he did it. He could do leg lifts with the irons on.

We were required to keep our clothing and thongs aligned a certain way during the ongoing purge. One day the Squirt, one of the quiz kids, did not like the way my thongs were aligned and told me to kneel down. I told him that I could not because of my bad hip. He insisted and I continued to refuse. This continued for a few moments with the Squirt threatening punishment. Suddenly I noticed a Vietnamese in civilian clothing standing in the courtyard. He called the Squirt outside. When the Squirt came back inside the cell he told me to obey the camp regulations, closed the door and left. About that time I remembered who the man was. He was the man who had called himself the Camp Commander and had supervised my torture in the Green Room, some three years earlier.

The results of the summer long purge and their effects on the POWs were of great importance. Many men had undergone major brutal torture resulting in all POW camp information being divulged to the Vietnamese. Much propaganda material was obtained. Some POWs were forced to write letters requesting amnesty and to make other statements during their torture sessions.

Before the escape we had to listen to the "Voice of Vietnam" radio broadcast twice each day. After the escape, some POWs were forced to read articles from a Vietnamese newspaper that were taped and played over the camp radio. The "Voice of Vietnam" was never heard again in the Annex.

In early September 1969, we were told to put on our long clothing and sit around the camp radio. We were told to sit at attention, listen carefully, and not to talk. The Vietnamese then announced that their president, Ho Chi Minh, had died.

A national thirty day mourning period went into effect. All Vietnamese guards and officers wore black arm bands or a black ribbon. There was virtually no camp activity for the first week or so except the necessities of daily living. There was a constant daily barrage of radio broadcasts about Ho Chi Minh's life. We had to put on our long clothes and sit down while the radio was playing. We were told by the officers to be very careful of our actions because the guards were very sad and might react with violence if aroused.

During the second week in October the men who were in irons in Cell Eight had a quiz with the "Fox" who had just taken over as camp commander. They were informed that their punishment was over. Their leg irons were removed and they returned to their cell. This signaled a complete change in POW treatment. At about the same time the senior POWs in the Zoo were taken out of irons and allowed to live with other POWs.

The guards slowly eased their constant harassment and over the following weeks, many of the most sadistic were replaced. I never again saw the Frog, the Snake, or McGoo.

Our cell vents were opened and the bed boards were returned along with a wooden bench for each cell. Each man received an extra mat and blanket and a new, large, colorful, striped towel. Outside time was increased and

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

restraints on making noise were lifted. Punishment during the first three or four months of this period was to confine a man to his cell during the outside time.

The Vietnamese gave the men cards and chess sets that had been taken from previous packages. They also gave out two quick rounds of packages in October and December. We were allowed to write a letter home. A few refused for personal reasons but the majority wrote a six line letter, highly censored by the Vietnamese, then recopied on a standard letter form. I had about eight hundred million things I wanted to say to Ruth and questions to ask. I started out, "Dear sister Ruth....." I asked about "Cousin" Kevin. I had given this false information to my captors after being tortured.

In November our cigarette ration was increased from three to six. Three of the men in our cell did not smoke so we usually had plenty of cigarettes. They were locally made and tough tasting. Occasionally we would be taken off cigarettes for a week or so. I would miss them for a couple of days, then it would not bother me.

Despite an overwhelming sense of relief that the pressures and tensions had finally eased, our initial reaction to the change in treatment was one of suspicion. Experience had shown that the Vietnamese could not be trusted. There were several possible reasons for the change. Some felt that Ho Chi Minh had been responsible for our harsh treatment and his death allowed the Vietnamese leaders to change that policy. However, most of us thought that the Paris Peace Talks, along with the fact that we were a powerful bargaining tool, made the difference. Our survival had taken on an added importance to the Vietnamese.

Several of us received packages from home, which we shared. I was thankful that the "humane and lenient" statement was no longer included in the receipt.

In my package was a set of thermal underwear for which I was most grateful. Jimmy had insisted that I take one of his blankets, and now, finally, I could at least stay warm on those long, sleepless, miserable nights.

During the week before Christmas a number of men from the camp (mostly Catholic) were selected to attend church services at a church in Hanoi. No one in our cell was asked. We discussed it and had decided that we would not go if asked. This turned out to be a massive propaganda program for the Vietnamese. The entire service was filmed and taped. Another group was taken to Protestant services in the Zoo where contact was made with the Zoo POWs and communications procedures were arranged.

We made Christmas cards for the men in the other buildings. These were "air-mailed" by tying a rock to the paper and throwing them from our courtyard to theirs.

For a Christmas tree, we decorated a small Swiss-type broom with strips of cloth and paper with various designs. Mike was quite a good artist and enjoyed doing things with his hands. He used one of his black pajama tops as a background and drew a tree on it. From paper and cloth he made stars and other ornaments and attached them to the tree. Small packages with each of our names were also attached. This was hidden during the day but was hung on the wall in the evenings for our enjoyment.

We exchanged gifts that Christmas, both real and imaginary. I gave away gift certificates and treated everyone to a dinner at the Fireside Inn in Las Vegas. One man, who had lost most of his hair, was given a wooden comb. I was given ear plugs and a nose clip so I would not be disturbed at night by nearby neighbors!

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

Christmas Eve the guards came around and gave us the “gift from the Priest”, also cookies and cigarettes. We were in a good mood and talked and quietly sang carols till fairly late.

Before retiring we each tied a stocking to our nets. I had saved some peanut butter candy from my package Ruth had sent and planned to put some in each man's stocking while they were asleep. I lay awake for about an hour and was just about ready to get up when I heard a noise and looked up. A POW was putting something in my stocking. He moved quickly from net to net and then sneaked back under his own. Ten minutes later another man got up and did the same thing. It took almost two hours for all eight of us to play Santa Claus.

Early Christmas morning I was awakened by a loud shout from Jimmy: **“Merry Christmas, everybody! Get up! He did it -- Santa Claus came! He did it! Get up! Get up!”**

What a sight -- Jimmy running from net to net pulling everybody out of bed, exuberant as a small child. Our stockings were full of candy, gifts, and greeting cards.

Later that day, the turnkey discovered the “pajama top” Christmas tree and took it away. That evening Mike was taken to quiz. The officers had Mike's art work spread out on the table and were admiring it. The Fox told Mike that they were going to take his work to the Art Museum downtown. Mike said, “No, you are not,” picked up the shirt, ripped it, and tore everything off it. An irate Fox threatened punishment and sent Mike back to his cell. Nothing else came of the incident.

In January, many men began receiving letters from home. They were not allowed to keep the letters. They read them and gave them back to the Vietnamese officers.

In February some high ranking officials came to each cell and informed us that we no longer had to bow. Instead, we need only to stand at attention and nod our heads in greeting. This was a pleasant surprise, and a long awaited event for us all. Shortly after this, Chester and Joe Louis started a program to have us lean forward fifteen degrees and then nod the head. At quiz one day I refused to do this, saying that the gesture was degrading and insulting. I had to stand in the corner for five minutes!

Eventually, in early summer, the head nod was eliminated and the only requirement was to stand.

One night everyone in our cell was taken to the administrative building and told to put on some civilian clothes, that we were going to visit the Army Art Museum. They said we needed to be in civilian clothes so that the Vietnamese people would not recognize us as POWs--they were very angry with us. All of us refused to put on the clothes or leave the camp. They did not seem surprised at our refusal and sent us back to our cell.

The period from January to August 1970, saw a general increase in Vietnamese attempts to give us better treatment. Packages and letters arrived more frequently, quality of food increased somewhat, and harassment became almost non-existent. No case of brutality or strong physical pressure was reported.

One day I was taken to quiz. I sat on a stool in front of Chester who appeared to be reading a letter. He asked, “You are not married?”

I said, “No.”

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

He asked, "Why not?"

I said, "Perhaps I am too ugly."

He looked at me, nodded, and said, "Perhaps you are right."

"You are not married?"

"No."

"You lie. I have a letter from a ten year old boy named Kevin who calls you 'Daddy'. What do you say now?"

I smiled to myself and said, "You are confused. He is my cousin. Let me read this letter and I will explain it to you."

"No. You will not receive any letters or packages until you tell the truth. Now go back to your room."

The next day I was taken back to quiz and was told that I must rewrite my biography and tell the truth or be severely punished. I told him that I had nothing new to add. He said, "You will be punished" and sent me back.

Later that week, Chester told me that I was very weak and thin. I agreed. He said that if I wished to receive some milk and extra meat, I would have to write a letter to the camp commander and request it. I said I would not write such a letter. He looked at me silently for a few moments. I said, "I will write a letter requesting that all POWs receive better food and medical treatment."

Chester said, "That is not possible. You will write for yourself?"

I said, "No."

"Go to your room."

At my next quiz, a few days later, the Fox told me to write a statement telling how I had been treated since being captured. He threatened punishment if I did not write. I wrote for about an hour listing the bad things and nothing good. I told about my many torture sessions, the breaking of my hip, and the complete lack of medical attention. The Fox came back into the room and read the statement. He became furious and said I would be tortured if I did not strike out the bit about the broken hip.

I said, "You will torture me?" This was the first time he had used the word "torture".

He yelled, "You will be tortured!"

I scratched out the bit about the broken hip.

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

After talking my situation over with my cellmates, I decided to tell the truth about my marriage. I asked Chester if I could now receive the letters from my wife and son and also the packages that had been denied me. He said I would receive them after I had rewritten my biography, which would be done later.

Every meal, for about a two week period, we received Irish potatoes. Jim was taken to quiz and was asked how he liked the food. Jim told the officer that the food had improved somewhat. He was asked what kind of food he would like. Jim said, "How about some sweet potatoes for a change?" The officer nodded. Sure enough, the next day we received sweet potatoes--Irish potatoes with sugar on them!

In early August 1970, the first indication of a possible move was sensed when the Vietnamese removed the bed boards from all cells. About ten men moved out of camp. On 20 August the remaining fifty-six of us were loaded on buses and taken to a camp called Camp "Faith." As far as we know the Annex was closed on that night and was never again used to house American POWs.

CAMP FAITH

Camp Faith was roughly twenty miles West of Hanoi and consisted of six separate compounds. Our compound was separated from the one south of us by a wall. We had no contact with the other four compounds which were several hundred yards to the west. There were five cells in one long building. I lived in a twelve man cell along with the compound SRO, Captain Konrad Troutman. Konnie had been the SRO of the Annex and had been severely tortured after the escape attempt.

We were allowed outside to bathe and exercise twice each day, one cell at a time. There was now open communication between all cells. We passed notes covertly to the compound next door. The officers and guards seemed to feel insecure with so many POWs in contact with each other, so they kept a wary eye on us.

Our bathing area was under a shed and consisted of a large tank that was kept full of water by a continuously running faucet. The tank was about fifteen feet long, four feet wide, and four feet high. We would dip pails into the tank and pour the water over our bodies. The outside privy was made up of five separate stalls.

All things considered, our living conditions had improved greatly. However, we were back to eating rice and mostly greens soup. The Vietnamese began building an outside stove in which they said we would be baking our own bread. I was looking forward to that. We began clearing an oval shaped track for the men to run or jog around.

My physical condition had improved a little. My legs still hurt so badly that I could not get much sleep at night. I continued walking every day as I had done ever since the cast was removed from my leg nearly four years earlier. I walked until I could stand it no longer. Then I would sit or lie down and rub my legs. When the pain eased I would walk some more. One day I told Glenn Nix that I was going to start a running program; that I would either ruin my legs completely or make them better. Glenn agreed but advised a cautious approach. As soon as we were outside again I jogged for about ten yards. I walked for a few yards, then jogged ten more. The pain did not seem to increase much so I thought I was doing the right thing. Gradually, over the next few months, I could feel myself getting stronger even though the pain persisted. By the time we were released in early 1973, I could jog about a mile.

After we had been at Camp Faith for a few weeks, all 56 of us were allowed outside at the same time. I suggested to Konnie that we act more militarily and initiate a saluting program. This caused a sometimes heated debate. Some POWs felt that we should postpone such action because of our improved treatment. They did not want to raise the ire of the guards. Some liked the idea; they would do anything to aggravate the Vietnamese. Konnie finally gave out orders for the SRO of each cell to report to him each day and salute. The officers

12 TFW Assoc. Special - Ted Ballard's Story - In the Dungeons

threatened torture. We continued saluting. Eventually, even the Vietnamese were acting more like soldiers, and began saluting each other!

Tom McNish was a big man from North Carolina. About six feet, two inches tall, and strong as a bull. One evening he accidentally bent one of the bars in their window and was accused of attempting to escape. He was put in solitary confinement, in leg irons, in a small room at one end of the building. His cellmates passed him a message that they were going to name the room "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Tom screamed bloody murder! The Vietnamese forgave him of his "crimes against the people" after about a week.

The Elf told me that I must rewrite my biography and tell the absolute truth. I rewrote it, giving the new information about being married. I then asked for the letters and packages that had been withheld. The Elf said, "Maybe later."

On 27 October, 1970, Kevin's birthday, I received my first letter from Ruth. Four years, one month, and one day after being shot down. There was a snapshot of Ruth and one of Kevin. I wish I could describe my feelings. I cannot.

A few days later I wrote my second letter home. In it I asked Ruth to send some vitamins, pipe tobacco, honey, and Knox Gelatin. George McSwain had discovered that the gelatin helped get rid of heat rash.

I was pleased to be living in the same cell with my good friend, Glenn Nix, once again. Glenn meant a great deal to me. He and John Brodak were two of the most intelligent men I had ever known. Glenn was an extremely well read individual and told us many stories when we had lived together in the Annex. He had learned to speak German from one of his earlier cellmates and had imparted his knowledge to us. I never could handle the grammar very well, but I had long vocabulary lists in my mind which I had made using Harry Lorayne's memory technique. I taught this system to more than one hundred POWs in the next year or so, and it was an invaluable aid to us, not only academically but also in memorizing all POW names and orders from the SROs. It was an outstanding way to keep the mind active.

In November there was an unsuccessful attempt by the United States to rescue some POWs from a camp at Son Tay, which was located about seven miles from our camp. We heard the choppers, gunfire, and other noises and wondered what was going on. Within the next few days all of the POWs were moved to downtown Hanoi to a large complex of jails named Hoalo Prison. We called it the Hanoi Hilton. Finally, after so many years, we were all in the same camp, with 25 to 56 men per cell. We became better organized militarily, academically, and religiously.

"To finish this story I must relive those years. Perhaps someday."

Arthur T Ballard JR.

This is a written record of one man's life experience as a true trial of fortitude, a stand on principal and perseverance, with the goal of never giving up and allowing his adversary to win.

E J Sherwood, 12 TFW Association.