

eight months

rough copy

TO: The City Editor and the Religion Editor

RELEASE AT WILL

Date:

An American couple and a Canadian couple recently ^{freed} ~~released~~ by the Communist regime of Hanoi, North Vietnam, will be speaking at the _____ church of their experiences while detained after the fall of South Vietnam. The public is invited to hear their presentation at _____ (time) _____ (date). The church is located at _____.

Dr. and Mrs. Richard Phillips of Albany, Oregon and ^{Rev.} ~~Mr.~~ and Mrs. Norman Johnson of Hamilton, Ontario are missionaries with The Christian and Missionary Alliance. They had been working at the Alliance medical center in Banmethuot, South Vietnam in mid-March 1975 when military forces moving into that area seized the town and led them into captivity.

Until May 31 they experienced primitive and bare survival conditions as they were moved from one camp to another in Pleiku Province. At no time were they willfully mistreated, physically punished or tortured. ~~But they shared with their captors and with other prisoners,~~ ^{including} South Vietnamese military officers, the hazardous conditions in this war devastated area and under almost uninterrupted tropical rains. ~~§~~

Malaria, respiratory illnesses, malnutrition, the irritation of insects, the ever encroaching jungle, and poor shelter from the weather turned their captivity into a fight for survival ^{which} ~~with~~ Rev. Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Phillips almost lost. Some of the South Vietnamese officers did not make it.

On May 31 they were taken to Thanh Binh near Pleiku where they remained till August 15. Conditions improved considerably at this more permanent camp. On August 15 they were taken by truck first to Quinhon and then to Son Tay near Hanoi. For the next nine

weeks they were under a kind of "house arrest." Here they were provided good Vietnamese meals. The North Vietnamese officer in charge of them spoke ~~good~~ English and was affable and kind.

Suddenly on October 28 they were informed that they would be released on October 30 and flown to Bangkok, ^{Thailand.} On departure day ^{in Hanoi,} a farewell meal was served by the camp officials, speeches were made, and gifts were given to them.

Also freed with them were eighteen others detained in Hanoi--including another Alliance missionary, Mrs. Betty Mitchell, and two Wycliffe Bible translators, Mr. and Mrs. John Miller and their six year-old daughter, LuAnne.

Information is still being sought on three other missionaries taken captive in May, 1962 when a party of Viet Cong raided the Alliance medical center at Banmethuot-- Rev. Archie Mitchell, the hospital administrator and Mrs. Mitchell's husband; Dr. Ardel Vietti, a medical missionary; and Mr. Dan Gerber, a Mennonite Paxman. Officials of the Alliance ~~will~~ continue to seek information concerning these missionaries.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance has been active in humanitarian and missionary work throughout Viet Nam since 1911. A worldwide missionary society and evangelical church denomination, it was founded in 1887 and today has a church constituency of over one million in the United States, ^{USA} Canada and 41 other countries. In 1975 the Alliance has more than 900 missionaries assigned in these 43 countries.

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