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NEVER LOST HOPE, FECTEAU ASSERTS

Says He Was Alone So Long
He Isn't Used to Talking

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(UPI)—Richard G. Fecteau said today that during his 19 years of imprisonment in China "I was in solitary for so much time I'm not used to conversation."

Mr. Fecteau made the statement at the first news conference held since he and Mary Ann Harbert were released by China on Sunday. Both were taken to the Valley Forge Army Hospital here yesterday.

Speaking in a barely audible voice and wringing his hands, Mr. Fecteau, who is 6 feet tall and weighs about 175 pounds, said that during his entire period of captivity "I never gave up hope." He said, "you get used to" solitary confinement, then added, "that's my problem."

Miss Harbert, captured in Chinese waters while on a pleasure cruise between Hong Kong and Japan in April, 1968, posed for 10 minutes for photographers a short time after Mr. Fecteau's news conference but would answer no questions. A hospital spokesman said she would hold a news conference at 1 P.M. tomorrow.

Responds to Questions

Mr. Fecteau, wearing a blue hospital robe over his pajamas, stood before a brightly lit Christmas tree during the news conference, which he opened by saying:

"I came in here to give a short statement but I do not wish to answer questions at this time. I'm in good health."

But then he began to respond to questions relating to some of his experiences during his captivity.

He said he was in a prison camp either in or near Peking and that the only other prisoners in his cellblock were other Americans. He said that during the middle years of his imprisonment, he had a Chinese cellmate but that other times he was alone.

He said his normal prison day consisted of "reading and writing and walking outside my cell."

Mr. Fecteau, who is 43 years old and whose home is in Lynn, Mass., identified three of the American prisoners as John T. Downey, 41, of New Britain, Conn.; Capt. Philip Smith, 37, of the Air Force, and Lieut. Comdr. Robert J. Flynn of the Navy.

Mr. Downey, who is still in prison, was captured with Mr. Fecteau when their military aircraft was forced down in Chinese territory in 1952, during the Korean war.

No Comment on Spy Charge

The United States has said only that the two were civilian employes of the United States Army at the time of their capture. Unofficial sources identified them as employes of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Asked at the news conference if he was a spy, Mr. Fecteau replied, "No comment."

Miss Harbert, 26, of Palo Alto, Calif., sat on a couch with a nurse in her second-floor hospital room clad in a light green dress when she met photographers. She smiled broadly when a newsman shouted, "Welcome home," but said nothing.

Mr. Fecteau said he was able to read newspapers and magazines during his imprisonment. He said he knew the United States had put a man on the moon, that President Nixon planned to visit China and that Henry Kissinger the presidential adviser had been to China.

A medical bulletin released by the hospital said Mr. Fecteau and Miss Harbert were fatigued but otherwise normal. Both complained of eye disorders, which Chinese doctors diagnosed as trachoma.

The hospital said both had been eating and sleeping well.

STATINTL

U.S. Won't Concede Or Deny Fecteau Was on Spy Mission

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Associated Press

U.S. officials yesterday declined to concede that one of the two Americans released by China was on an espionage mission when captured in 1952. But it was learned they no longer deny the charges.

Expressing reluctance yesterday to talk about "so darned sensitive a matter," government sources nevertheless said "we are not arguing" any more with the Chinese who insist that Richard Fecteau and John Thomas Downey were engaged in espionage when arrested.

Fecteau was released Monday after serving 19 years of a

20-year sentence. He was returned to the United States along with Mary Ann Harbert, an American from Menlo Park, Calif., who was arrested in 1968.

Downey remains in China, but his sentence was reduced from life to a term scheduled to end in about five years.

Speculation that Fecteau and Downey might have been dropping Nationalist Chinese agents on the mainland as charged was raised to a possibility Monday when Fecteau's former wife was reported by several newsmen as saying that "the Chinese haven't been lying."

She was said to have explained, "It's very involved and I'm not supposed to get into it. He was a civilian working for the U.S. government. I know what he was doing, but I can't say. Let me put it this way—the Chinese haven't been lying."

Mrs. Fecteau denied later that she said this, but she would not elaborate. Two reporters who interviewed Mrs. Fecteau quoted the same language in their Monday stories.

When asked about Mrs. Fecteau's reported assertion, State Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey said yesterday, "I don't see any useful basis on which I could, at this time, discuss his previous employment."

But other officials said privately that the administration no longer is following the original U.S. characterization that the charges against Fecteau and Downey were trumped up.

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