

31May68

Ed Leonard began flying combat missions in southeast Asia as an A-1H pilot with the 602nd Fighter Squadron at Udorn Royal Thai Air force base, Thailand , In May 1967, and he flew 257 combat missions in the recovery of 18 aircrew members in north Vietnam and Laos before being shot down over Laos, for the second time. On May 31 1968. He evaded the enemy for several days before being captured and taken as a prisoner of war by the north Vietnamese on June 2, 1968. After spending 1,760 days in captivity, including three and a half years in solitary confinement , Major Leonard was released during operation Homecoming on March 28,1973.

The LULUs (Lost Union of Laotian Unfortunates) were told the evening of March 28th , 1973 we were to be released the following day. We left the following day (March 29th 1973),for Gia Lam. We stopped by the front of the terminal we could see a C-141 on the other side. After about an hour , a guard came out of the building and spoke with our driver. The bus then left the airport and parked somewhere off the airfield. The American delegation went out to the C-141, buttoned up and started engines . Naturally a gomer showed up waving the obligatory piece of paper that the American verbiage was acceptable. After about an hour the bus returned to the airport, and we were off loaded and proceeded to be exchanged. We learned later there had been a problem when Charlie wanted the US representative to sign a receipt for "All the prisoners in Laos" Held in Laos . The US Rep. said No, he would sign a receipt for 10 prisoners from Laos. The difference of coarse , was the attempt to get the US to commit to no further prisoners in Laos.

Gentleman it was a long few hours

Ed Leonard
LULU, 68-73