

Subic reveals escape attempts to youngsters

By BILL CASPER

Details of Joseph Subic Jr.'s life as a hostage, which included two attempted escapes, came out for the first time last Thursday before an audience of mostly elementary school children at St. Valentine School in Redford Township.

Subic, who was greeted with cheers, flowers, yellow ribbons and banners saying, "Welcome home," and "We love you," in his hometown parish, revealed these details:

- He twice attempted to escape and was beaten for his efforts.
- He "lived in constant fear" and sometimes cried at night.
- He slept on a foam mattress which at times was taken away, lived on a monotonous diet of soup, partially cooked chicken and sandwiches on Iranian bread, and spent one third of his 444-day confinement alone in a room with no sunlight. He kept track of the days by counting the daily servings of soup.
- He was "mentally and emotionally tortured, but not physically," Subic

said he did not want to give details to his audience.

- The Iranians treated the prisoners with contempt and even beat one of his colleagues on the way to the airport the day they were released.
- He and fellow prisoners had to beg the Iranians for "everything," including such things as walks to a bathroom — blindfolded — and reading material.

SUBIC IS one of three men with primarily Michigan backgrounds to be taken hostage by the Iranians. Subic, a staff sergeant in the U.S. Army, was raised in Livonia and Garden City and enlisted in the Army when his family lived in Ohio. His parents moved to Redford three years ago while he was the service and he has become a "hometown hero" to Redford Township.

A reporter and photographer from the Redford Observer were the only media representatives allowed to attend the St. Valentine assembly at the request of Subic, who said he still does not want to answer in detail press ques-

tions about his captivity. Subic has been the subject of speculative reports that his conduct as prisoner is being investigated. Such reports have been denied by the U.S. Department of Defense.

In speaking to an audience of some 300 elementary school pupils, teachers and administrators and some parents, Subic revealed much about the way he was treated during his confinement.

"IT'S GREAT to be back in a parochial school since I was educated through the eighth grade in Catholic schools," Subic said. "I want to talk informally with you, but there are some things I can't talk about," he said.

The majority of his comments were elicited by questions from the students.

"My first reaction to the takeover was that it was going to be another sit-in and last a couple of hours. But after a while, we knew we were going to be there a long time.

"Our diet basically consisted of flat Iranian bread with butter and jelly in the morning. For lunch, we usually had chicken and rice, which were not cooked too good. We always had soup for dinner. They had plenty of Campbell's soup. I got tired of the soup, but that's how we kept track of the approximate date.

"With no sunlight, there was no other way to note each passing day except to count each bowl of soup as one day.

"I was kept alone the first couple of months after the takeover. I was the only American I knew who was still alive. They tried to keep us separated

so we had no communication with our fellow Americans.

"I SPENT one-third of my time in captivity alone in a room with no sunlight. I never had more than one roommate except for the day before we were released when there were five other hostages in my room.

"We knew something was going on the day before our release because there were several Algerian doctors examining us. We hadn't seen many doctors before that. I was sick often during captivity, but their medical treatment was not up to our standards.

"We were told we were candidates for release and we stayed up all night praying we'd leave. But the next day passed into the night and we thought it was just another trick.

"The militants told us to 'pack up, you're leaving' about one hour before we boarded the plane. One of my colleagues was beaten on the way to the airport, the last beating of our captivity.

"The treatment we received from the militants varied with each hostage. I was beat up, mentally and emotionally tortured, but not physically tortured. They weren't very humane, but I can't go into detail now.

"I WAS in constant fear during captivity, my knees shook and I cried a lot at night. I tried escaping a couple of times in January and April. After being caught, I was beat up, handcuffed to a chair and blindfolded with an electrical cord wrapped around me for eight days.

"It was difficult for me to escape because I couldn't blend into the population and I don't speak the Iranian language very fluently. Now that I look back, it was kind of dumb to try escaping, but I felt I had to try at the time.

"We had to beg the militants for everything, for reading materials, for them to lead us blindfolded to the bathroom. We were lucky to be located near the Tehran-American High School because we used the library to get reading material. I spent a lot of time reading to exercise my mind and I would walk around in my room for physical exercise.

"I kept a diary the first couple of months of captivity, but the militants

took the pens and papers from those of us they suspected as being spies because they thought we were trying to send out secret messages. But my experiences are in my memory and I've had offers to write a book on my time in captivity. I haven't made a decision, but I will consider all offers.

"MY FREEDOM really didn't hit me immediately and I really never felt free until we landed on American soil. I still find it hard to believe I'm free and I don't have to beg for a glass of water.

"One of the first things I wanted when I got back was a good old American hamburger."



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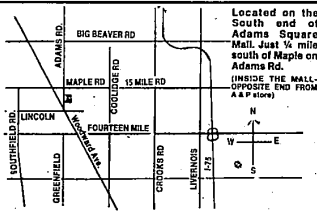


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