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Codefendants Submit Requests

Mandel Asks to Serve Term in Florida

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Former Maryland governor Marvin Mandel and two of his codefendants have asked to serve their prison terms on political corruption charges at the federal prison camp at Eglin, Fla.—one of a handful of minimum-security institutions often called “country clubs” by their critics.

Mandel also formally requested yesterday that his four-year term be suspended or reduced, citing “two-and-a-half years of unprecedented suffering” during his lengthy and complex appeals.

U.S. District Court judge Robert L. Taylor, who presided at the Mandel trial, has agreed to hold a hearing on May 1 to consider requests for sentence reductions by Mandel and his codefendants. He also has ordered all the defendants to surrender to begin serving their terms on May 13.

Eglin is a “Level 1” prison facility, which means it has no fence or walls. It is located on the grounds of the sprawling Eglin Air Force Base in Florida’s panhandle, 10 miles from Fort Walton Beach and 60 miles from Pensacola.

“We consider recreation just as important as work” said J. C. Henry, Eglin’s administrative officer, as he ticked off the pluses of doing time at the camp—racquet ball court, miniature golf, weight lifting room and cable television that features Home Box Office attractions.

Mandel wouldn’t be the first celebrity inmate at Eglin. We’ve had our share,” said Henry. “Let’s see, we had five Watergate figures—E. Howard Hunt, (Eugenio R.) Martinez, (Virgilo) Gonzalez, (Frank) Sturgis and Bernard Barker.”

Two of Mandel’s codefendants, Irvin Kovens, his lifelong friend and millionaire political sponsor, and Harry W. Rodgers III, have also asked to go to Eglin.

The three other codefendants have requested to serve their terms at other institutions scattered throughout the East.

Wealthy developer W. Dale Hess has asked to serve his four years at the prison camp at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Ala., where former U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell served time for his role in the Watergate scandal.

Insurance executive William Rodgers asked to serve his 20 months at

the federal correctional institution at Lexington, Ky., which houses about 1,000 men and women.

Ernest Cory Jr. has asked to serve his 18 months at the prison camp at Allenwood, the detention center in the lush hills of Pennsylvania that is so popular among white-collar criminals that it is difficult to get into.

The U.S. attorney’s office in Baltimore made no objections to the defendants’ requests and passed them on to Judge Taylor, who agreed to make the recommendations to the U.S. Bureau of Prisons. Such a recommendation is given “great weight” in the final decision, a Bureau of Prisons spokesman said.

The impetus behind some of the defendants’ requests was “to get as far away from Maryland as possible,” according to one source.

One other concern for some of them, according to another source, was to get away from each other.

“Serving a sentence is a very personal thing,” this source said. “Rather than being constantly reminded by the presence of say, Mo, ‘about how we screwed up, they wanted to not be tagged along with each other.’”

Several sources said that the former



MARVIN MANDEL
... asks sentence cut

governor and his longtime political sponsor Kovens are still “very close.” But this is not the case with the other defendants.

“Harry [Rodgers] thought he was getting away from everybody else

See MANDEL, C2, Col. 2

Serve in Florida

Sundays and holidays. Prisoners also may attend religious services on the base with members of their families.

Henry said much of the recreation at Eglin is outdoors because of the balmy climate. "It only gets down to freezing two or three mornings in the winter, and then its' up to 50 by noon," he said, adding "it was very warm here today."

The recreation program, which also includes softball, basketball, volleyball, bocci and pool, is aimed at "keeping the men busy throughout their waking hours," which end with lights out at 10:30 p.m., the prison official explained.

Eglin and Allenwood are favorite choices among federal prisoners, but there is considerable debate in correctional circles about which is the plushiest facility in the federal system, with some votes going to a new "Level 2" prison in San Diego, while others insist that the camp at Lompoc, Calif. is the best.

Hess, choice, Maxwell, is described by one Justice Department official as "the so-called prison which is separated from the so-called air university by a golf course."