

Bay Wives Press For POW News

By Ken Wong

While rejoicing with the families of the three returned POWs, two Bay Area wives of prisoners of war in North Vietnam today pressed for information concerning the condition of the more than 1600 still held captive.

Mrs. William Butler and Mrs. Richard Stratton, whose husbands are POWs in North Vietnam, held a news conference at the American Airlines offices today.

Their husbands have been prisoners for five years, Air Force Captain William Butler was shot down in November of 1967. Navy Commander Richard Stratton, who was promoted while a POW was downed in January, the same year.

The wives, members of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, noted that "No consideration has been given our sick, wounded and long term prisoners."

Hanoi has released 12 men since 1968. "But nine of these had been held less than a year, most of them only a few months. No one captured prior to 1967 has ever been released," they noted.

The women felt that the release of the latest three POWs is a "token release" for propaganda purposes.

"The men were paraded in Hanoi, Peking and Moscow after their release on Sept. 17 and didn't return until yesterday," they noted.

The two disagreed with

the Committee of Liaison, which escorted the men home, over the Pentagon rushing the released POWs to military hospitals.

"We must find out about the conditions of the prison camps. The men might forget vital information later on," Mrs. Butler said.

The committee, a group of anti-war activists, "is not responsible for the release of these men," Mrs. Stratton said, "They are only a tool of the North Vietnamese. Hanoi uses them to bypass official channels."

Mrs. Butler who lives in San Rafael with her two children, a boy, 5, and a girl, 4, said she last heard from her husband in August. The note, a 6-line card mailed in June, didn't say much. It was censored.

Mrs. Stratton, who has a young son, lives in Palo Alto.