

The Last POW to Leave Hanoi

Clark Air Base, Philippines

"Let's hit it!" shouted Navy Lieutenant Commander Alfred Howard Agnew as he made a dash for the C-141 on the Tarmac at Gia Lam airport in Hanoi. Agnew was the last of the U.S. prisoners freed by the North Vietnamese yesterday.

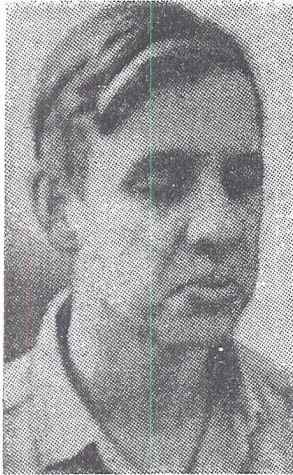
Two and a half hours later, a jubilant Agnew told the cheering welcome home crowd here:

"As the last prisoner of war on the list released by Hanoi, I'd like to speak for all the prisoners of war and simply say we're mighty happy to be home."

Agnew's release in Hanoi was a moment of high drama. The north Vietnamese apparently were aware of it, and for a minute they paused, conferring over the list of 67 POWs they released — the last of 594 prisoners they and the Viet Cong held since the Vietnam war began.

According to witnesses Agnew stood transfixed on the runway while the Vietnamese officials checked their list.

He was standing alone. The other 26 men on his plane already had been handed over to the Americans. Finally the North Vietnamese announced Agnew's name.



UPI Telephoto

ALFRED AGNEW
He was all alone

"Let's hit it!" he said, and the last U.S. POW held in North Vietnam was free.

"He was a little bit excited by the fact we had a delay of a minute or so," said Brigadier General Russel A. Ogan, the Pentagon's top officer dealing with POW's, who went into Hanoi. "He was a little bit shook at that point. I tried to reassure him."

Ogan said Agnew told him, "I am sure as hell happy to be going home."

Lieutenant Colonel Richard Abel, an information officer who accompanied Agnew back to Clark, said later that when Agnew got on the plane he said the attention toward him was misguided

because there are still many pilots missing in action and he hoped he really would not be the last to come out.

Agnew was shot down in a RA-5 Vigilante on Dec. 28, 1972.

Agnew received special treatment when he arrived here. Admiral Noel Gayler,

commander-in-chief of Pacific forces, escorted Agnew over to the crowd where he was smothered in kisses and hugs.

Agnew shyly repeated "thank you, thank you," as he walked along the crowd of excited people. "I had the feeling it was accepted

San Francisco Chronicle 19
★★ Fri., Mar. 30, 1973

among his compatriots as well as the North Vietnamese that he was the last guy that was caught," Ogan said. "I think there's probably a fixation on the name, although I think that should be dismissed from the news standpoint — although it may be hard to do."

Agnew is no relation to Vice President Spiro T. Agnew. His wife Rena, a son and a daughter live at Albany, Ga. *United Press*