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Ovation From Neighbors

Powers Goes Home to Virginia Hills

By The Associated Press
BIG STONE GAP, Va. — U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers, vindicated by Congress and the Central Intelligence Agency, received a standing ovation yesterday from his southwest Virginia neighbors.

"I'm very thankful to all of you who had a part in this," he told 800 Wise County residents attending the welcome home ceremonies at the National Guard armory. Tribute was paid the 32-year-old flyer by government officials ranging from town mayors to Rep. W. Pat Jennings, D., Va.

"I don't have words to express my feelings," Mr. Powers said. His mother and father sat to the right of the platform while Mr. Powers made his brief talk. His father, Oliver Powers, blinked back tears during the program, which lasted less than

an hour. Mrs. Ida Powers frequently clasped her son's hand. Later, talking with newsmen, Mr. Powers said he felt a lot of people were saying a lot of words about something about which they knew nothing.

He said pictures released immediately after his capture by the Russians were said not to show the wreckage of his plane. "But the plane I saw in Moscow was the U-2," he said.

Mr. Powers said both the wing and tail sections were intact.

He said yesterday's welcome made up for his ordeal, and added, "I hope people realize I'm a normal man who has done a job."

Mr. Powers' high flying reconnaissance plane was shot down deep inside Soviet territory May 1, 1960—eight days before a scheduled summit conference between Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev, former President Eisenhower and other world leaders.

Mr. Powers was brought to Big Stone Gap in a motorcade of about a dozen cars from his parents' home at Pound, a small mountain town thirty miles

Norton Mayor B. E. Ball decried those who "just attempt to cast doubts. . . The people join in a genuine and joyous welcome home."

Applause frequently interrupted the brief talks by Rep. Jennings, Milligan (Tenn.) College president Dr. D. E. Walker and Mayors from Wise County communities.

Mrs. Barbara Powers, the pilot's wife, was in Milledgeville, Ga., where she has been with her family.

"She wanted to go home, and I needed some time with my parents," Mr. Powers said.



Herald Tribune—UPI telephoto

U-2 PILOT HOME—Francis Gary Powers on horseback at his father's farm near Pound, Va., yesterday shortly before welcome-home ceremonies in town.