



Mr. and Mrs. Claude Stacks of Memphis and their daughters, Martha and Claudette, were this happy during the past 48 hours when they were told their

son, Capt. Raymond Stacks, long missing, was on a POW list. But their joy turned to resignation when later informed that he is not listed as a prisoner.

—AP Photo

Army Goofs; Family Suffers

MEMPHIS — (AP) — Because of a human error, a Memphis couple were given three conflicting reports about the fate of their missing serviceman son — all within a week.

First they were told that their son was not among Vietnam war prisoners, then that he was and finally that he was still missing.

"We've been through enough," said the sad and disillusioned father. "This is uncalled for."

"They were given incorrect information. To be honest, the Army goofed. It was a human error," a spokesman for 3rd Army Headquarters at Ft. McPherson, Ga., said after the mixup had been resolved.

It was the second such incident involving a Memphis

family. Earlier in the week, the wife of a serviceman was told her husband was not on the list and then informed 12 hours later that he was.

Claude Stacks, a lumber company owner, said he and his wife had been told in a phone call last Sunday morning that the name of their son, Army Capt. Raymond Stacks, 24, was not on the POW list released by North Vietnam last weekend. Stacks, a helicopter pilot, has been missing in action in Indochina since Nov. 30, 1968.

Nor was Stacks' name on a later list of POWs being held in Laos.

The elder Stacks said, however, that Friday he called

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Capt. Arthur Hermsdorfer Jr., a Pentagon survival assistance officer, in an attempt to find out how long it would be before the family could expect further word on whether Raymond was alive.

Hermsdorfer said he checked through channels, then called the Stacks family back.

Stacks said Hermsdorfer told him, "Are you ready for some good news? Your son's name has appeared on the list."

The name did not appear on any public roster, however, and Hermsdorfer said he relayed the correct version to the family yesterday after talking with the Pentagon.

The Pentagon said Stacks' wife had been correctly informed that he is still unaccounted for.

Hermsdorfer described the episode as "a tragic mistake."

"Their whole world fell apart . . . I'm kind of sick to my stomach about the whole thing," he said.

Stacks was critical of the Army's handling of the entire situation.

"Truthfully," he said, "I think the government really has the families confused. I think they're being completely inconsiderate of the families."

But Mrs. Stacks said she couldn't blame the Army although her husband "took it pretty hard."

"It was a human error," she said. "I felt all day yesterday that it wasn't an accurate report — call it intuition."

"Of course, we would have been awfully happy had it been true."