

# 'The Prodigal Child Is Home,' Ex-POW Tells Gravely Ill Mom

SAN DIEGO, Calif. (AP) — "I told her the prodigal child is home. There's no reason now she shouldn't get better," says one of the first two released American prisoners of war to reach home soil.

Within minutes after the end of a long flight from Clark Air Base in the Philippines, Navy Cmdr. Brian D. Woods was at the bedside of his critically ill mother at a

hospital in suburban Coronado.

Woods said she told him, "God has rewarded my prayers."

**ASKED HOW** he felt, Woods replied, "I'm feeling on top of the world."

The return of Woods and Air Force Maj. Glendon W. Perkins of Orlando, Fla., whose mother is also gravely

ill, was capped with anxiety last night when their plane developed mechanical problems on the approach to Miramar Naval Air Station.

The pilot of the C141 military transport radioed that he could not get his flaps down for a landing, and the aircraft circled for nearly an hour until the problem was solved.

When it finally touched down, Woods and Perkins appeared healthy and in obviously good spirits as they strode from the plane.

**IN A BRIEF** statement, Woods said:

"We are proud to be Americans; we are proud to have served our country and our commander-in-chief."

Then he walked into the waiting arms of his wife, Paula, and embraced his father, retired Navy Rear Adm. R.W.D. Woods. His three children — Cathleen, 10; Christopher, 8; and Michael, 7 — stood nearby.

The family was whisked quickly to the hospital, and Woods said later, "I'm happy to be back and there's one hell of a great bunch of guys coming right behind me."

**AND BEHIND** him they were. Twenty more of the American POWs released early this week departed from Clark today on the final leg of their journey home from the prison camps of Vietnam. They are scheduled to arrive at Travis Air Force Base, near San Francisco, late today.

From Miramar, Perkins flew on to Maxwell Air Force Base, near Montgomery, Ala., arriving early today in a driving rainstorm.

Walking past the car in which sat his wife, Kay, Perkins stepped to a microphone to say he was "most grateful to the American people whose faith, determination and prayers made this homecoming possible."

Then he returned to the car and took Mrs. Perkins in his arms. Later they will fly to Minnesota to a reunion with his mother, hospitalized at Cross Lake.

Woods, 40 and a POW for almost 4½ years, and the 38-year-old Perkins, a prisoner for almost seven, were smiling when they stepped from the plane at Miramar. They saluted to waiting officials and a four-member color guard.

The reception, as carefully planned by military authorities, was low key. There was no band or music. The red carpet rolled out at the last minute failed to reach the plane ramp. There were only about 100 spectators — most of them newsmen — to greet the first returnees.