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P.O.W.'s Mother Kept Secret After Warning 2½ Years Ago

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WOONSOCKET, R. I., Feb. 13 (AP)—Rose Tellier says that two and one-half years ago the Government asked her to live with the secret that her son—previously believed to have drowned in Vietnam—was alive and well in a Communist prison camp.

Yesterday, after watching the first of the American prisoners of war being returned to friendly soil, Mrs. Tellier said that a military officer had told her in 1970 that her son, Marine Sgt. Dennis A. Tellier, had been seen in a P.O.W. camp by a double agent working for Americans in Vietnam. For a year before that, he had been believed dead.

"My casualty officer came and he said he had a phone call from Washington but it was supposed to be very quiet," Mrs. Tellier recalled. "But you know how we are, so happy, we can't keep it inside."

Mrs. Tellier said she had spread the news among her family despite the officer's warning that it could jeopardize the safety of her son and the double agent. But she kept the news of her son's reported safety from even her closest friends.

"It was very, very difficult," Mrs. Tellier said when asked what she said to inquiring

friends. "I always said he was a M.I.A. [missing in action]."

Mrs. Tellier said that she and her husband had kept the secret until after it was announced that her son, who is 23 years old, was on the list of American P.O.W.'s to be repatriated.

She said the military officer had told her that her son, who disappeared in 1969 just south of the demilitarized zone, was a prisoner in North Vietnam. Now, she says, the Government has informed her that he is held by the Vietcong in South Vietnam. He still is being held.

Mrs. Tellier said that, when the news first came that her son had disappeared, "I thought it was the end. It made me sick. I couldn't take this. I thought there was nothing left to live for. Whenever I saw a young boy pass, I started to cry."

She said the authorities had told her that they had believed her son had drowned in a river near where he was last seen.

When she was told in September, 1970, that her son was alive, "That's all I wanted to live for. That helped me. It kept my courage."

She said she was disappointed that her son was not among the first prisoners released but she is "used to waiting."