

Calley 'Just Plain Dumb,' Says His Ex-Sergeant

By WILLIAM J. NAZZARO
Of The Bulletin Staff

A former staff sergeant who served under Lt. William L. Calley, Jr. in Vietnam a year after the My Lai massacre describes Calley as "just plain dumb" — too dumb, he implies, to lie about his orders.

"He had plenty of textbook knowledge," said Jeffrey Saltzman, a University of Delaware dropout who was with Calley for two months, "but he was very slow in picking things up.

"He applied what he knew from the Army manual by rote, but he had no judgment."

Saltzman gave his opinion of Calley, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for his role in the massacre at My Lai, in an interview last week in the three-bedroom house near the University of Delaware, in Newark, which he shares with two friends.

Enlisted in Army

Saltzman, 23, from Metuchen, N.J., attended the University of Delaware for a year and a half after his discharge from the Army in the fall of 1969. He said he dropped out because of financial problems and is now job-hunting so he can return to school in September.

He enlisted in the Army in 1966 and was sent to Vietnam in 1968, arriving on March 17, the day after the My Lai affair.

During his stay in Vietnam Saltzman earned three Purple Hearts ("mainly for being hit by shrapnel"), three Bronze Stars, one for valor, and three service ribbons. He was a forward artillery observer in tactical operations.

"My first impression of Calley was that he was all Army," Saltzman said.

Starved Fatigues

"Calley's boots were always shined. He even wore starched fatigues. He went by the book.

"I had been in Vietnam about a year, and in that time you learn a few shortcuts to get the job done. Other officers had approved, but not Calley.

"He had to let you know he was an officer and you were

everything up. He was like a machine that had been perfectly programmed. He knew his job, he knew how to do it and he knew the regulations.

"The trouble is that the Army manual can't cover every situation, especially in a guerilla war, even though it has regulations for that.

Went by the Book

"An officer has to use common sense. He has to know

when the regulations have to go by the board.

"Calley cut down on our prearranged efficiency by his insistence on going by the book. I think it was because he was so dedicated to the Army. If an enlisted man makes a mistake, it's no big deal, but if an officer makes a mistake, it follows him his whole career, wherever he goes, and Calley was deter-

mined not to make any mistakes."

Saltzman said he usually became friendly with officers in the field, but not with Calley.

"He was very aloof, I never saw him off duty," he said. "I never even called him 'sir' or 'lieutenant' — just 'hey you' — because I had no respect for him. I thought he was going to get me killed."

only an enlisted man, and he could cite the exact regulation in the Army manual that would back him up."

Saltzman said: "It's such a frustrating war. You're hit by mortar fire, you're men get killed, the Viet Cong get away and take their dead, and you don't know whether you've hit them back.

'No Reason to Lie'

"Calley, I understand, lost four men the night before My Lai, and he couldn't return fire. He said he was ordered to wipe the village out. I believe him. He's not the sort of man who would disobey an order. Calley has no reason to lie.

"I think Calley thought he had done an honorable thing.

"I know I might have done the same thing in the same circumstances, though I don't go for killing babies. But the VC use old women and six-year-old children, and their killing could be justified, depending on circumstances."

Shouldn't Have Been Tried

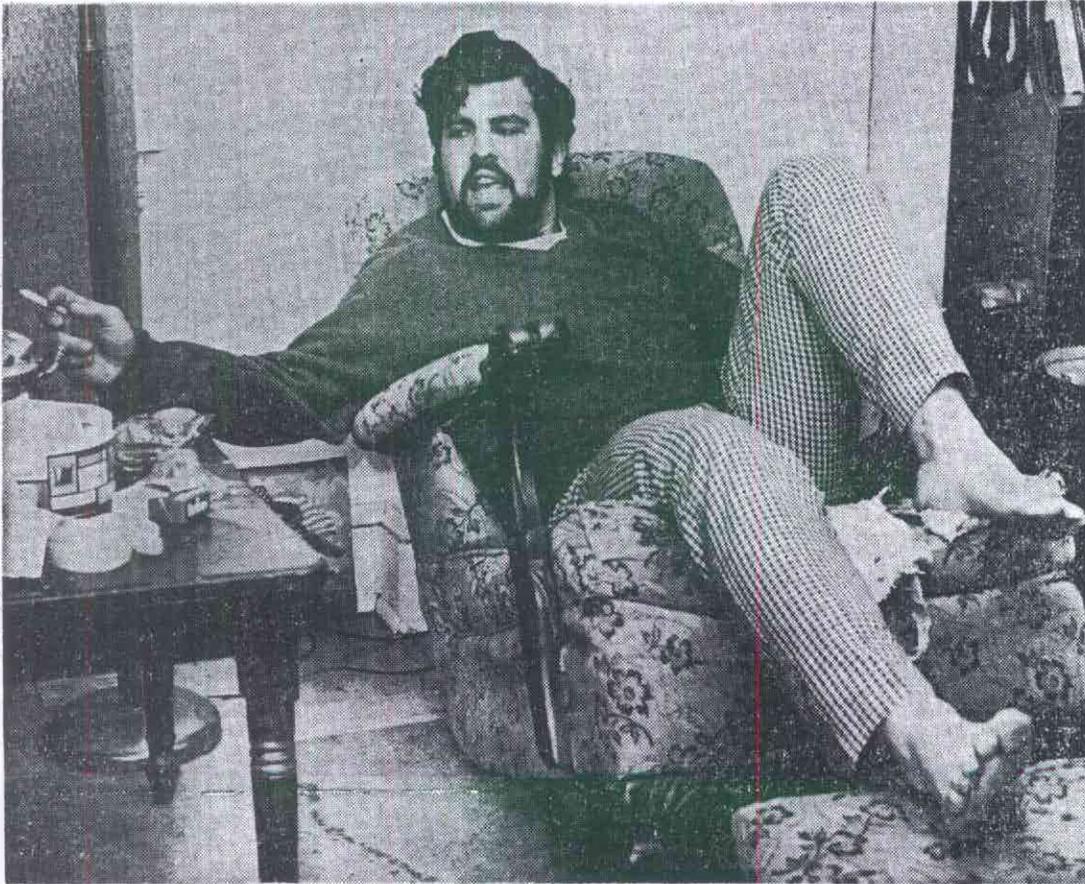
Calley, Saltzman thought, shouldn't have been tried.

"If Harry Truman could order the A-bomb dropped on Hiroshima and kill 100,000 people and not be tried, then Calley shouldn't be tried," Saltzman said.

"I was assigned to work under Calley in March of '69, a year after My Lai," Saltzman said. "We were in Ly Tin province, the next province south from Quang Ngai province, where My Lai is.

"I won't say I actively disliked him. He just screwed

I found this rather interesting



Jeffrey Saltzman: "... he even wore starched fatigues."