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ERNEST MEDINA
... 'following me'

Medina Goal Is Earning \$1 Million

By WILLIAM J. MITCHELL
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MENOMINEE, Mich. —

The squat, slope-shouldered man is noticed around Menominee: delivering an advertisement to the Herald-Leader newspaper; angling, politely, for a three-day loaner at Gustman Chevrolet, where the fender on his ranch wagon is getting straightened.

The leathery face appears, sweating, in a sauna at the local Y. Occasionally, in the evening, the bright-white prominent teeth glisten in the soft lounge light at the Holiday Inn.

STEADILY, IF incompletely, in the criss-cross pattern of small-town interaction, Menominee in Michigan's Upper Peninsula is absorbing this man's presence, if not his ambitions, as he fades from public view.

Capt. Ernest L. Medina, acquitted a year ago of premeditated murder of a Vietnamese woman, of involuntary manslaughter of "no less than 100" Vietnamese civilians at My Lai, and of two counts of assault against a prisoner,

has been here since the trial.

Medina is hustling now to make his first million as he struggles at becoming Ernie or Mr. Medina again.

What does he think, a year after his honorable discharge from the Army and four and a half years after the massacre, about what happened at My Lai?

"I THINK," he says slowly, pursing his lips as he pauses to reflect, "the fact has been established that there were innocent people that were killed there. It's not on my conscience because I didn't order it. I wasn't aware of it.

"It's one of those unfortunate things that have happened, and that's part of living the thing down. But I was tried and I was acquitted, and there's no need for me to try and rationalize or think what

happened or worry about it any longer.

"I think it will probably follow me around the rest of my life... but I think most of the people have accepted me in the community.

"SUPRISINGLY, I found the change much easier than I ever thought it would be. Basically, I always considered making the Army a career... I'm doing the type of work (in Menominee) I find very enjoyable, I have a lot of responsibilities, I keep busy, I find more challenge here than I did in the service."

The challenge, as he sees it, is to transform the Enstrom Helicopter Corp., owned by his attorney, F. Lee Bailey, into a business that will do "for the Upper Peninsula, the state of Michigan, the same thing that Henry Ford did with the automobile in Detroit."

"I haven't spoken to the Army since I've gotten out," he says, his stomach bulging a bit between belt and tie clasp as he leans back, hands clasped behind his head, "and I have no intention to."

IT SEEMS an almost father-son mixture of respect and resentment that Medina exhibits toward the Army.

"I learned everything from the Army — everything from personnel management to expediting, to doing with what resources you have. There is really no place to start and no place you can really end — just everything.

"I think the important thing is that you learn how to compete. You learn you can't do business sitting on your ass. It's just, you know—I would recommend the service to anyone."

But would he do it all over again, in spite of everything?

"HINDSIGHT IS a wonderful thing... but if you ask me if I would spend 16 years (he ticks off his total service time, including reserves, down to the day: 19 years, five months, 29 days) in the military again—I don't think so. I think I would just serve my military obligation.