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# Watson Says He Rejected State's 'Guilty Plea' Offer

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Black militant Lance (Sweet Willie Wine) Watson said today the state offered him a 30-day sentence to plead guilty to charges of carrying a pistol and disorderly conduct — "but I refused to accept it because I am innocent."

Watson made the statement during a morning recess prior to taking the stand at his trial in Criminal Court. If convicted, he could receive a sentence of up to 11 months and 29 days on the pistol charge, 30 days on disorderly conduct and fines totaling \$300.

Assistant Atty. Gen. Terry Lafferty rested the state's case after six witnesses identified the tall goateed leader of the Memphis Invaders as one of a group of young Negroes who made threats and caused a disturbance in the Jump & Grab Drive-In Grocery, 591 E. H. Crump, on the night of last Nov. 27. Witnesses testified Watson and another man identified as Horace Hall came into the store about 11:45 and bought some soft drinks.

They said the trouble started when Robert L. Marable, night manager, yelled to a 14-year-old Negro helper, David Cole, "Come on, boy, hurry up so we can go home."

Nora Tartaglia, 19, who



LANCE WATSON

was in the store at the time, said Watson and his companion objected to Marable's use of the word "boy."

"I saw a pistol under his (Watson's) belt," said the young witness, "I was scared." Marable, the Cole youth, Mike and Linda Talarico, children of the store owner, Mike Talarico Sr., and Herbert Malone, another store employe, also took the stand and pointed out Watson in the courtroom.

Marable said he meant nothing offensive by the remark. He said the man with Watson pulled the pistol from Watson's belt, and he, Marable, took a .22 pistol

from beneath the cash register and laid it on the counter.

Marable said that one of the intruders, not Watson, warned him: "If you fool with us, we'll blow your head off and burn you to the ground."

Several other Negroes poured into the store from two cars parked outside, including one man carrying a breached shotgun, the store manager testified.

Marable testified the crowd left after an elderly Negro man in the store told them, "No use causing trouble. Let's go."

He said they got back into their cars and drove off.

Watson was arrested about three weeks later when Marable and other witnesses went to Police Headquarters and picked out his picture from a stack of photographs. The picture showed the defendant wearing a large brass ear ring in one ear, but Watson has not worn the ornament during the trial, which began yesterday.

The case was expected to reach the jury of five Negro men, five white men and one white woman later today. At the time of his arrest, Watson denied being in the store at all that night. He claimed that he was mistaken for another man who looks like him.

Youthful...