



By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post

Sgts. William O. Wooldridge, Narvaez Hatcher and William E. Higdon at hearing.

4 Sergeants Split \$100,000 In 13 Months, Probers Say

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By Morton Mintz
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Senate investigators charged yesterday that a clique of four soldier-entrepreneurs—led by the Army's top enlisted men—split \$100,000 in 13 months by over charging and stealing from their fellow GIs in Vietnam.

Sen. Abraham A. Ribicoff (D-Conn.), acting chairman of the Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee, said the testimony indicates that Sgt. Maj. William O. Wooldridge and his associates were able to go into business with funds they obtained with "acts of malfeasance"—mainly, "skimming" up to \$350,000 a year from slot machines played by enlisted men of the 24th Infantry Division in their clubs in Germany.

After leaving Germany, Sen. Edward J. Gurney (R-Fla.) said, the non-coms got them-



CARMINE BELLINO
... prober testifies

selves transferred to servicemen's clubs in Vietnam—particularly those of the 1st Infantry Division—"like a plague of locusts."

The senators' charges came after testimony by Carmine S.

Bellino, a subcommittee accountant-investigator. He made an investigation over the last eight months in which he reconstructed financial manipulations including the use of Swiss and German banks, assumed names, and kickbacks.

Meanwhile, the Army disclosed that it has revoked the Distinguished Service Medal awarded last year to Maj. Gen. Carl C. Turner, the retired provost marshal.

Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Chief of Staff, ordered the revocation on Sept. 24, the eve of the subcommittee hearings. The revocation was not announced until yesterday, 24 hours after Turner testified about his dealings in guns confiscated by the Chicago and Kansas City police departments and the Bureau of Customs.

See CLUBS, A12, Col. 3



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Gen. William Westmoreland, Army Chief of Staff (left) is shown in Sept. 17, 1968, photo presenting the Distinguished Serv-

ice Medal to Maj. Carl C. Turner. Westmoreland revoked the medal last month after an investigation of improprieties.

CLUBS, From A1

The DSM was awarded for "exceptionally meritorious and distinguished service" between February, 1962, when Turner became the Army's top policeman in Europe, and Oct. 31, 1968, when he retired after four years as provost marshal of the Army. He is scheduled to testify again on Monday, along with the police chiefs of Chicago and Kansas City.

Bellino said that the four soldiers' business was launched in 1967 to sell supplies to servicemen's clubs controlled by the quartet, Sgts. 1/C Narvaez Hatcher and Seymour Lazar, M/Sgt. William E. Higdon, and Sgt. Maj. Wooldridge.

Another purpose, Sen. Ribicoff said, was to "legitimize" money "skimmed" from the clubs in Germany, mainly at Augsburg. The "A-Burg Brothers" was the original name of the enterprise. Then it became the Maredem Co.—a contraction of the first names of three of the men's wives (Marian Hatcher, Edith Higdon and Emily Lazar).

"They themselves did not know how much they invested," Bellino said. Wooldridge told him on one occasion his stake was \$10,000 but on another said it was \$14,000.

At the first board meeting, on Oct. 22, 1967, in Hong Kong, Lazar was named sales manager at a salary of \$1,500 a month (raised two months later to \$2,000) plus expenses. Later, the company obtained a villa in Saigon.

Bellino said that during 13 months:

- Maredem "cheated" GI's in Vietnam out of \$13,416 by selling a 20-ton-capacity freezer owned by the soldiers of the 1st Infantry to a servicemen's club at Longbinh.

- Phillip Haar, who in alliance with Maredem sold and maintained bar dispensing equipment and supplied syrups for servicemen's clubs, told Bellino that he ended the Maredem connection because "I got the Mafia treatment . . . They all want a rakeoff."

- An aide to Haar, in a series of letters involving kickbacks, said that Sgt. Theodore H. (Sam) Bass, who became the fifth principal in Maredem, of-

ferred equipment and syrup at a 10 per cent kick."

- In 1968 three servicemen's club systems in Vietnam bought 87 per cent of their purchase—totaling \$1,053,619—from Maredem. The club custodians were affiliated with Maredem.

- While on official Army business, Wooldridge attended a Maredem meeting with Higdon and Hatcher, registering under the name "W. O. Patty" at the Grand Hotel in Anaheim, Calif.

- Maredem "directed" Great West Food Packers, Inc., a San Francisco supplier, to "overcharge" clubs in Vietnam by 25 per cent—yielding Maredem \$9,901 on 17 shipments.

- World Beverages, Inc. of San Francisco, agreed to give Maredem 60 per cent of gross profits of \$47,716 on sales to soldiers' clubs controlled by the Maredem clique, resulting in markups over cost of as much as 159 per cent.

Tracing the sources of \$70,308 in Maredem's initial operating funds, Bellino said they included \$15,800 in three checks from the Foreign Commerce Bank in Zurich, Switzerland (including one made out to an apparently fictitious "Georg Schell"; 93 \$50 bills; \$28,000 from Emilie Mendler, identified as a friend of Lazar's in Munich, and \$1,933 from a Munich bank.

In the nine months ended Aug. 31, 1967, when Maredem was changed from a partnership to a corporation based at Stanton, Calif., the four original investors earned profits of \$78,297—exclusive, Bel-

lino said, of "other income each of the other three men that came in as 'loans' or 'investment.'" Last year, Wooldridge got interest and principal payments of \$34,823, and 761.