

'Bullets Hit Next to

Attica, N.Y.

"I laid there on the floor and knew I was going to bleed to death right there."

As he said this, the only sign that Ron Kozlowski had been one of the hostages whose throats had been slit in the first fierce instants of the assault on the rebellious prisoners here were a small two-inch bandage at the base of his neck and a shakiness in his knees.

"They told us, 'as soon as the first shot is fired, you white blanket-blanks have had it.' I was scared silly up there, I really was. I didn't want them to shoot."

Kozlowski, a 23-year-old accounts clerk at the prison, was one of eight hostages who were led yesterday morning, bound and blindfolded, out of the jerry-built pen in the center of the prison yard where all the hostages had been held for four days.

The 30 others left in the pen were also bound and blindfolded soon after the ultimatum from State Correctional Commissioner Russell G. Oswald had been delivered.

First, Kozlowski said, the eight were taken to a pit partly filled with gasoline and told they would be burned alive there when the

assault began, then, apparently because their captors felt the pit would not be sufficiently visible to the helicopters circling the prison, they were dragged and shoved to a trench, which was also full of gasoline.

Finally, moments before the two U.S. Army helicopters made their first law passes over the yard to drop their freight of stifling CS gas, the eight hostages were led to a parapet atop a catwalk that crosses the yard.

There they were held, each with a stick in his back and a knife at his throat, bent backwards in plain view of the choppers so there could be no doubt about their fate.

Kozlowski thought he heard machinegun fire as he collapsed on the parapet. "You could hear the bullets right next to your head on the cement," he said.

Newsmen who were later led through the prison were told that the sight of the hostages on the parapet convinced the authorities to order the assault. The deputy director of corrections, Walter Dunbar, later said there were four hostages on the parapet. Kozlowski, who was blindfolded, had thought there were eight.

The official said that the life of one of these men had been saved by the fast reflex-



UPI Telephoto
 Hostage Elmer Huehen was embraced by his wife after he was freed

Our Heads'

es of a state police sharpshooter on the wall who killed the prisoner just as he started to cut the hostage's throat.

And amid the rampage one of the hostages, Elmer Huehen, found his life spared by a convict assigned to kill him, who whispered instead:

"I don't have the heart to do it. I'm only going to prick you."

Huehen said the prisoner nicked him enough to draw blood, then lay down on top of him so other convicts would not notice he was still alive.

Dr. Warren Hanson, who treated the hostages brought to the hospital, said that at least one other of the eight held on the parapet had survived. That hostage told the doctor that instead of cutting his throat, the inmate holding him had cut his bonds and pulled him down to the ground.

"I didn't feel they were bluffing, not one bit," said Sergeant Gerald Riger, 51, who is in his 21st year as a prison guard. "I knew what they were capable of and what I heard of their talk over four days convinced me they were very determined."

The hostages had been told from the first that they would be killed as soon as

the shooting started. But until the ultimatum, these hostages and others said, they were treated carefully, at times even solicitously.

"The inmates right around us were there to protect our lives till just about the end," said Larry Lyons, a 32-year-old guard who was treated at the Genesee Memorial Hospital in Batavia. "They did what they could. I really believe that. We got to eat what they got to eat."

The hostages came to depend increasingly for their safety on their guards, fearing the diffuse hostility of the more than 1000 angry prisoners milling about in the yard.

"Some guys started to crack," one of the hostages said. "quite a few said they were never going back into that prison except to get paid off — if they got out."

When they thought about how it all would end, the hostages were torn between their fear and their incredulity over the liberal concessions the prisoners seemed to be extracting from the authorities.

"Let's face it, you're always fighting for survival," Riger said. "But I didn't want to see them get all their demands. It would start the same thing going in prisons all over the United States."

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