

Ex-G.I. Says He Saw Calley Kill a Vietnamese Civilian

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NIAGARA Falls, N. Y., Nov. 26 — A Niagara Falls Army veteran who was under the command of First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. says that that officer shot and killed a Vietnamese civilian in an incident entirely separate from the alleged massacre at Songmy in South Vietnam.

Lieutenant Calley was officially charged Monday by the Army with the premeditated killing of at least 109 South Vietnamese men, women and children on March 16, 1968, in the village of Songmy, known to soldiers in the jargon of their mission as Pinkville.

James R. Bergthold, 22 years old, of Niagara Falls, in the copyrighted article, in The Niagara Falls Gazette today, was quoted as saying that he saw Lieutenant Calley throw an apparent South Vietnamese civilian of about 60 years of age into a well and shoot him through the head after 15 minutes of questioning.

"I brought the guy in," said Mr. Bergthold, a former private first class in C Company of the First Battalion, 20th Infantry Division, 11th Infantry Brigade. "He was standing in a field all by himself. I brought him in, and the lieutenant asked him questions and then threw him in a well and shot him in the head. He never said why he did it."

Loading Zone Uptight

Mr. Bergthold said that the incident occurred a short time after the Pinkville operation—probably a few days later—in an area between Chulai and Quangngai called landing zone Uptight.

An Army investigation of the alleged massacre was conducted by the 11th Infantry Brigade in April, 1968. The investigators concluded that no disciplinary action was appropriate and that no further action was warranted.

Mr. Bergthold, however, said that "no one was aware of the investigation in our outfit," and that the members of his company had heard of "something going to Westmoreland." He referred to Gen. William C. Westmoreland, then United States commander in Vietnam and now Army Chief of Staff.

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"hootch," or hut, "just to put him out of his misery."

He said that a machine gunner in front of him had shot into a hut without looking, and that the old man was on the floor with big chunks out of each leg, moaning in pain.

Mr. Bergthold said that the Pinkville operation had gone this way:

"We were briefed the night before and were told we were going into an area controlled by the Vietcong for about four years. The captain told us—we weren't given any orders to shoot—that if we saw anyone they might be carrying weapons, so be careful. The briefing was for the whole company. We had lost quite a few guys just before, a lot of them in mine fields."

About two platoons, he said, were flown into the area in seven or eight helicopters after an artillery barrage to clear the landing zone. The first group of men went directly into the village, he said.

"I was with a squad of about seven or eight guys, and we were sent off around the village as flank security," he said. "We were by a little stream about eight feet across, I remember, near a bridge, and there was a little house on the other side. We went there, and then we heard shooting on the other side of the creek, back toward the village."

It was later that day, he said that he heard an accounting of what had taken place.

"Everybody was talking about it," he said. "We hooked up with another company from another battalion and made up part of Task Force Barker, and we spent the night and then went toward Quangngai."

"First we heard there were quite a lot of people killed, and then it was found out they weren't supposed to be killed, but were supposed to have been evacuated by helicopter, instead."

Paul David Meadlo, a former private in the company who said in a television interview Monday that he had killed probably 10 or 15 civilians, was an acquaintance of Mr. Bergthold's.

Mr. Meadlo said in the interview that he felt God had punished him because he had his foot blown off the day after the alleged massacre when he stepped on a mine.

"I was maybe 100 meters away when he had his foot blown off," Mr. Bergthold said.

Mr. Bergthold was drafted in October, 1966. He took basic training and advanced infantry training at Fort Carson, Colo., then went to Hawaii for jungle training. A year and two months after he was drafted, he arrived in Vietnam.

"We heard he dropped everything," Mr. Bergthold said, "because the village chiefs were happy that the place was rid of Vietcong sympathizers."

He said "they told us not to say anything, and then I kept reading about it in the papers."

The veteran said that he had not witnessed the alleged massacre of civilians but heard accounts from his buddies the same day and participated in a sweep himself. He said that he had killed one old man in a