



Associated Press

Edward R. Sowders, Vietnam war veteran who deserted in 1970, after his surrender yesterday in Washington.

Amnesty Panel Hears Deserter Who Then Surrenders to Police

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WASHINGTON, May 24 — Edward R. Sanders, a veteran of the Vietnam war who deserted from the Army in 1970, appeared before an informal House hearing on amnesty today to announce that he would surrender to military authorities.

The 25-year-old Detroit man told the unofficial hearing, whose chairman was Representative Bella S. Abzug, Democrat of Manhattan: "I make no apology for my act of resistance. I could do nothing else at the time. But underground life has become intolerable to me. So, I'm here today to draw attention to the true facts concerning my case and the cases of tens of thousands just like me. We are not criminals to be hunted and imprisoned."

After giving his testimony, Mr. Sowders went to the Navy Yard here where he was arrested by armed forces police on a charge of being absent without leave. He was then taken to Fort Meade near Baltimore where he will be held until a hearing is arranged.

Mr. Sowders's appearance at the hearing was a surprise by Mrs. Abzug, although newsmen had been informed the day before that someone would surrender, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation was notified this morning.

The hearings were called to allow the families of war resisters to tell how the war and lack of amnesty were affecting them and their sons, husbands and brothers living in exile or in prisons.

One recurring argument echoed by many of those giving their stories was initially stated by Mrs. Abzug, who said that "the nation is pondering the irony of Dr. Kissinger's request for 'compassion' for those connected with Watergate who subverted the democratic proc-

ess, while the Administration denies compassion to those who refused to kill."

One of the scheduled witnesses was Mr. Sowder's mother, Mrs. Lora Sowders. Appearing with another of her eight children, Ronnie, 18, she told the representatives that she had supported her son's act of resistance. "My son and thousands like him deserve amnesty for refusing to take part in an immoral war," she said.

Then, in a breaking voice, she announced that her son Edward was present and would address the committee.

Mr. Sowders then took a seat next to his mother and told his story, as Mrs. Sowders wiped tears from her eyes. Later he left the hearing room to be arrested, only to find that agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation had not shown up. Instead, he turned himself over to the Capitol police, who advised him to go to the Navy Yard where the arrest was made.

Typical of those who testified on this day when President Nixon was playing host to 600 former P. O. W.'s at the White House, were Kay and Ben Israel of Atlantic City, N. J., whose son Sam has been living in Vancouver, Canada, since 1969 to avoid the draft.

Mrs. Israel said their son had to drop out of college because he refused to take a required Reserve Officers Training Corps course. He went to Canada after being denied exemption from military service both as a conscientious objector and for medical reasons.

She also said, as many others did at the hearing, that the F.B.I. had placed their house under surveillance and that their son would return to the United States only if unconditional amnesty were granted.