

Pueblo Inquiry Is Told the Crew Yearned for Retaliation by U.S.

Radioman Testifies That He Hoped for an Atomic Attack on North Korean Captors

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CORONADO, Calif., Feb. 20 — Slowly and emotionally, two senior enlisted men from the Pueblo said today that the intelligence ship's crewmen had yearned for a United States retaliatory move against North Korea.

Radioman 2d Cl. Lee Roy Hayes, spoke in gasps and brushed tears from his eyes at the Navy court of inquiry into the capture of the ship on Jan. 23, 1968.

The red-haired, 27-year-old sailor from Columbus, Ohio, told the court of five admirals that the North Koreans had forced him to write a letter to the Governor of Ohio, James A. Rhodes.

"I wrote the letter to the Governor and said I prayed each night and every morning to see the glorious bright light from home," he said, gripping the table before him. "I meant they should drop the atomic bomb on us."

Expected Move by U.S.

Comdr. William E. Clemons, assistant counsel to the court, asked, "Did you expect some retaliation?"

"At first, yes, sir," Radioman Hayes replied.

"What would happen to the crew," asked Commander Clemons.

"I figure they'd pay dearly," the radioman said in a choked voice. "But I'd rather be killed by my own people than the Communists."

Quartermaster 1st Cl. Charles B. Law Jr., whose eyes were permanently damaged while he was a captive in North Korea, said that he knew crewmen were "disappointed that the United States didn't come in."

"We sat around and waited for the United States to come in and annihilate this bunch of barbarians over there," he said. "This didn't happen."

Once again the court heard testimony of beatings, threats and malnutrition in the North Korean prison camp.

Led the Enlisted Men

"I don't think there's any way I could really express how the actual detention was," said Quartermaster Law, who was described by Pueblo officers as the leader of the ship's enlisted men. "The psychological aspect—I don't think anyone will ever know unless they went through it."

The husky, baldish quartermaster, who is 27 but looks years older, suffered at North Korean hands, some of the worst beatings among the 83 surviving members of the Pueblo crew. The most prolonged beatings took place in what the crew called "hell week," a few days before their release last December.

"I was taken to an interrogation room at 20 o'clock in the morning on Dec. 12 and I was there until approximately 1 o'clock on the morning of Saturday the 14th," he said quietly. "I was beaten intermittently for eight hours. I was in a kneeling position and I was kicked and hit in the body and head."

Sticks Broke in Beating

"I was hit with a circular piece of wood about the size of a 2-by-2. When those sticks broke in half, they used both halves until they broke in half. Then they hit me with a 4-by-4. I was hit in the head with a fist—250 or 300 assorted blows. They wanted me to say I was a C.I.A. agent, that I was instigating these men to make vicious crimes."

At this point, Commander Clemons asked, "Why did you resist them?"

Quartermaster Law shrugged. "It seemed like the thing to do," he said. "Hell, I wasn't a C.I.A. agent."

Before his captivity, Quartermaster Law testified, he had 20-20 vision.

"In the first part of August my eyes started going bad," he told the admirals. "By the first of September I was almost completely blind. I went to the doctor, who called an eye specialist, who said I had a very serious disease."

"I proceeded getting injections in the eye. I got 50 injections of what they told me was penicillin. I think it helped some."

Doctor Showed Feeling

"My eyesight now — my vision is 20-200," he went on. "I have central blind spots uncorrectable by glasses. The doctors at Balboa [the naval hospital in San Diego] said it was an inflammation of the optic nerve caused by malnutrition and vitamin deficiency."

Commander Clemons asked, "Did the Korean doctor show compassion?"

"Yes, sir," Quartermaster Law replied. "I believe the doctor did. He took some interest."

Quartermaster Law briefly described the Pueblo crew's prison diet, saying:

"In the morning we had two slices of bread and a bowl of turnip soup or potato soup, which we called cream of petroleum soup, really greasy. In

the afternoon we had bread, rice, some fried turnips, half-boiled grass and occasionally a piece of fish. In the evening we had bread and rice.

"We had eight and a half eggs in the 11 months we were there. We never had any milk."

In the session today at the Naval Amphibious Base, here the Pueblo's enlisted men came

under repeated questioning about the crew's statements, letters and confessions that the Pueblo had been engaged in espionage in the claimed territorial waters of North Korea.

"They kicked you and beat you and threatened to kill you," Quartermaster Law testified. "We realized we were just going to have to sit there until some kind of agreement got us out. We did it for survival."

Commander Clemons asked if the code of conduct for American servicemen who become prisoners of war was "completely inapplicable" to the Pueblo crewmen. The code advises American servicemen to tell their captor only their name, rank, service number and date of birth.

"It's not completely inapplicable," the witness replied. "But I was made to understand that the code of conduct was for foot soldiers. If he's captured he has nothing except what he's carrying on his body, like dog tags."

"But here they captured the crew, the ship, the service records. The code of conduct didn't really apply to the same extent with us."

Beaten for Derision

The Crewmen emphasized that, throughout the imprisonment, they made consistent attempts to mock the North Koreans with phrases and gestures in public statements, photographs and news conferences.

Radioman Hayes used one gesture of derision in a widely distributed photograph. He was severely beaten when the Koreans learned about the gesture.

"They beat on me and kicked me and broke my jaw," he said quietly today.

He said he had also sought to fool his captors in letters of "confession" to his parents in Ohio. "When I wrote the word 'right' I capitalized it because my family is very conservative and right-wing, and so am I, and I wanted them to know that I haven't changed, either."

Radioman Hayes said that he and Communications Technician 2d Cl. Angelo Strano had attempted in vain to build a radio receiver, as they had learned in the Boy Scouts, using stolen parts, razor blades, a nail and an earphone from a Korean movie projector.

"It might have taken a year to do," he said. "We were hoping to hear English broadcasts from Seoul."

Medical Histories Sought

A third witness this morning, Hospital Corpsmen 1st Cl. Paul H. Baldridge, said that the North Koreans appeared to be intrigued when they learned he was married to a Japanese.

"There wasn't a lecture period that went by that a North Korean officer didn't mention that I was married to an Oriental," he said. "They were very interested and wanted to know why."

The 38-year-old corpsman said that he had not been allowed to treat sick crewmen in prison, and had no medicine to distribute, but that a North Korean doctor sometimes "asked for the medical histories of people."

"I believe the North Korean doctor made an attempt to help, but I think his techniques were crude and procedures antiquated," he said. "I think the most demoralizing part of the entire captivity was that I had 18 years in the medical Corps and the knowledge to help the crew and I wasn't allowed to treat them. It made me feel extremely bad."



Associated Press
Quartermaster 1st Class Charles B. Law Jr. arrives to testify at Pueblo inquiry in Coronado, Calif.