

# Deserter Appeals At Amnesty Probe

Washington

An Army deserter came out of hiding yesterday to tell a group of Congressmen that unconditional amnesty will help erase a decade of bitterness over the Indochina war.

Edward Sowder, 25, of Detroit appeared before an unofficial House panel discussing amnesty to men who fled the draft, deserted or resisted the war while in the service.

His statement before the group followed emotional testimony by his mother, Lori, who said her working-class family could not afford college for him to get him a deferment.

She said he went into the Army against her wishes and that she told him the "only thing he could accomplish was to get killed."

## VOLUNTEER

Sowder then entered the hearing room and told the panel when he volunteered for Vietnam he supported the war.

"I was assigned to an evacuation hospital where we received fresh casualties direct from combat areas. Many of these victims were Vietnamese civilians, mostly women and children hit by U.S. artillery and bombing.

"Many had been severely burned by napalm and white phosphorous, weapons used only by the U.S."

## DESERT

He said those scenes and the attitude of some of his fellow GIs led him to decide to desert.

"In April 1970, I made my decision . . . I went on strike against the war. For the past three years, except for a period in Canada, I've lived underground in America, cut off from my family and friends.

"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.

"Only by winning a universal, unconditional amnesty for all categories of war resisters can we begin the long process of changing our country and learning from the decade of blood and bitterness in Indochina," Sowder said.

## CUSTODY

Later, he turned himself over to Capitol police, who took him into custody but told him to turn himself in to military authorities.

The hearing was called by Representative Bella Abzug (Dem-N.Y.) who is the author of a bill which would grant unconditional amnesty.

Also on the panel were Democratic Representatives Ronald Dellums of California, Parren Mitchell of Maryland, John Conyers of Michigan and former Senator Ernest Gruening of Alaska.

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