

Mother Says Dead G.I. Thought Vietnam Was Terrible

By JERRY M. FLINT

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BLOOMINGTON, Ind., Nov. 25—“He thought it was terrible, how they did over there; how little children were killed, how they lived over there,” the tired, almost haggard woman, said.

Her son, Bobby Wilson, died in Vietnam 21 months ago and he is buried a couple of miles down the road from here, at the Clover Hill cemetery.

But now the tale of the alleged Songmy massacre has brought Bobby Wilson's name back from the grave and put it on the front pages of newspapers around the country. His death has been mentioned by at least one of the men who admitted taking part in the shootings.

In an interview in the Columbia Broadcasting System's radio network last Monday, Paul Meadlo of Terre Haute said that he had killed 35 to 40 men, women and children during the attack on the village.

“Why did I do it?” he asked. “Because I felt like I was ordered to do it, and it seemed like that—at the time I felt like I was doing the right thing, because, like I said, I lost buddies.”

On His Conscience

“I lost a damn good buddy, Bobby Wilson, and it was on my conscience. It was on. So after I done it, I felt good, but later on that day, it was gettin' to me.”

Bobby Wilson's mother, Mrs. Ruth Wilson DeWitt, sitting at the kitchen table in her white frame house in Smithville, just outside of Bloomington, said:

“When it comes to little children, Bobby wouldn't have approved of that.”

She had seen her son's name on the front page of the daily Herald-Telephone an hour earlier, when Brad, her 14-year-old son, brought the paper home.

The older son was a member of Company C, First Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, but he was killed by a land mine Feb. 25, 1968, a few weeks before the attack on the village.

He, too, had been worried by the military casualties.

“We are pretty well tore up,” he wrote in his last letter home. “Two of our buddies got killed, and three more got wounded by a land mine.”

His mother said, “He was just 19. He would have been 20 in April.”

Bobby Wilson dropped out of high school and went into the Army on Jan. 10, 1967. The Army was good for him, his mother said. “He just grew up over night.”

Doesn't Read War News

She doesn't read the war news. “I have a bad feeling when anyone gets killed now,” she said. “I just don't read any of it.”

“Brad will just never forget him,” she said, nodding toward the 14-year-old. “He and Bobby used to play like little kids.”

Wayne Monahan, 21, a friend and a Navy veteran said:

“Bobby would fight at the drop of a hat, but they were just scraps, not important. He was a nice kid, a pretty good kid, always decent and clean.”

Mrs. DeWitt, who is divorced from Bobby Wilson's father and remarried two years ago, looked at the newspaper story

of the killings in Vietnam and the mention of her son.

“It's just something you relive every day,” she said of her son's death. “Freddy Wayne died when he was just 6. I had four, now there's two left.”

The fourth son, Bill, is back from the Marines after 25 months in Vietnam, she said.

The war hasn't changed the billboards on Route 37 leading

into town; they're still promoting the local Burger King, Groves Restaurant, Tovey Shoes and Wickes Lumber Yard.

But the war touches down here. A half-dozen Bloomington boys have been killed, a newspaper editor said, and every death is a front page story. And now the shadow of Songmy has fallen on the town.