

# Calley Jury Is Told G.I.'s Were Bitter

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The American force that invaded Mylai was frightened by earlier losses to Vietcong mines and bobby traps and embittered by reports of atrocities, a maimed veteran said today at the courtmartial of First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr.

The witness, Robert Van Leer, 21 years old, of Hialeah, Fla., was called to bolster the defense argument that the killing of large numbers of civilians during the March 16, 1968, attack on the South Vietnamese hamlet of Mylai 4 was in inevitable and justifiable act of war. Lieutenant Calley is charged with the premeditated murder of at least 102 civilians.

Mr. Van Leer, who served in the same infantry company with Lieutenant Calley, stepped on a mine three weeks before the Mylai incident. His left leg was amputated.

### Stories Accepted as True

He recalled a story of mistreatment of an American prisoner. This report concerned a truck driver captured by the Vietcong who was "rat-trapped."

"A bird cage was put over his head, then rats were placed in the bird cage," said Mr. Van Leer.

The story was typical, the witness said, of reports that were widely circulated and considered true by men of Charlie Company, Task Force Barker, and were especially rampant during the enemy's Tet offensive of early 1968.

Mines caused 95 per cent of the casualties inflicted on the

task force by a phantom enemy that always eluded battle, according to another witness, Capt. Kenneth Wayne Boatman of Omaha.

Captain Boatman said that his own company commander at Mylai, Capt. Earl Michaels "did not condone indiscriminate shooting" and took prisoners.

The defense has been trying to show that Lieutenant Calley and other officers had orders to "kill every living thing" at Mylai.

Captain Boatman, a lieutenant at the time of the action, was in charge of the weapons platoon of Bravo Company, Task Force Barker. Bravo Company, under Captain Michaels, landed east of Mylai and was assigned to block the flight of civilians flushed from the hamlet by Charlie Company, commanded by Capt. Ernest L. Medina, in which Lieutenant Calley led the first platoon.

Although Captain Michaels had orders to permit no one, including civilians, to pass through his lines, he did not interpret this to mean that he should shoot down everyone who came running toward him, Captain Boatman said. "We were just supposed to detain them," he explained.

### Eight Men Apprehended

One of the Bravo Company platoons apprehended eight Vietnamese males of military age, and these men were sent to the rear for interrogation, Captain Boatman said.

A defense suggestion that some of the civilians supposedly slaughtered at point-blank range by Lieutenant Calley were killed by artillery was only partly supported by another defense witness, Staff

Sgt. Dennis R. Vasquez. Sergeant Vasquez, an artillery observer, said that although about 20 rounds landed inside Mylai, they fell on the western side of the village, none of them reaching the central trail along which Lieutenant Calley and Paul Meadlo allegedly killed 30 to 40 civilians.

When trial resumes Monday the defense plans to call three psychiatrists. The military judge, Col. Reid W. Kennedy, ruled that the psychiatrists must testify first in the absence of the jury. If the testimony suggests any mental or behavioral defect in Lieutenant Calley, the Government will have the right to subject him to examination by an Army sanity board before the jury can hear the defense psychiatrists, Colonel Kennedy said.

The possible convening of a sanity board at Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, and the examinations and evaluation of Lieutenant Calley could interrupt the trial for at least three weeks.