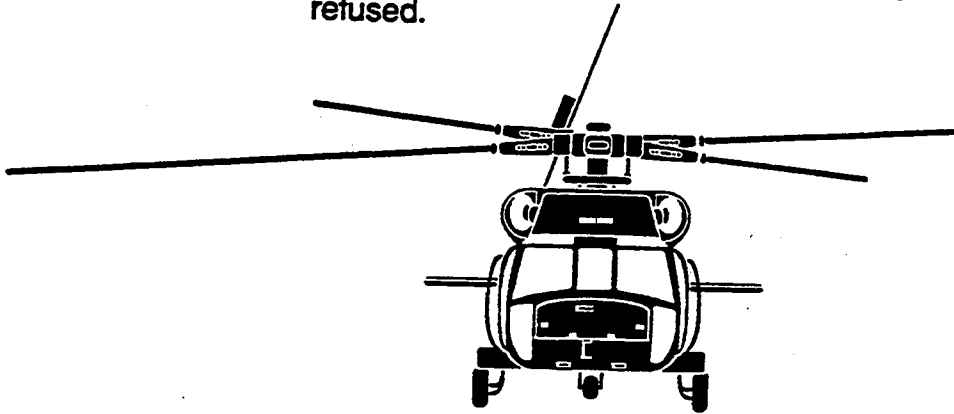

GOVERNMENT WITNESS: Hugh Thompson

You are one of the few authentic heroes of that tragic March 16 morning. You flew over the area in your helicopter and landed many times to help wounded civilians, especially children. On one of the landings you encountered Lt. William Calley near the irrigation ditch. Lt. Calley ordered you to help gather 50 to 100 people together and take them to the ditch. He then ordered you to begin firing, but you refused.



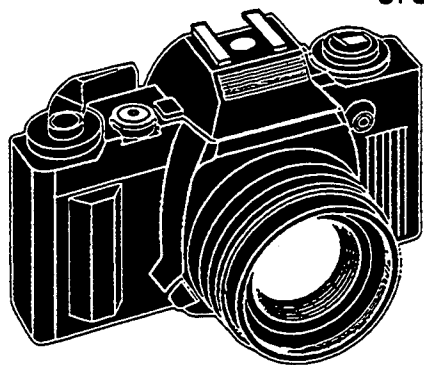
Your refusal is important because by testifying about how you refused to obey an order, you will break one of defense's key arguments—that all done at My Lai that morning was done by following orders.

You relate that you saw Lt. Calley and Paul Meadlo pointing their weapons into the hole and firing, killing nearly 100 people. You were close enough to see them reloading after shooting for about 10 seconds.

You landed your chopper three times. Your first two landings were to help civilian refugees fleeing the village. On your third landing, you confronted Calley and disobeyed his order. You left the scene and met two friends and discussed the tragedy before returning to your helicopter. For your actions you received the Distinguished Flying Cross for landing in the middle of a battle zone and, in disregard for your own life, for rescuing civilians.

The defense will try to discredit you by questioning the validity of the medal you received. The defense attorney will refer to the House of Representatives subcommittee ruling that medals should not be given under such questionable circumstances. Still you kept the medal. The defense will also likely ask if you are a conscientious objector. You will reply that you were not at that time but that you are now.

GOVERNMENT WITNESS: Ron Haeberle



You took the pictures published in *Life* magazine that stunned the nation. Your testimony is supportive of government charges that a large group of 50 to 75 Vietnamese of various ages were killed near an irrigation ditch. There was no hostile fire, and you were ordered to head south to look for possible Vietcong soldiers. You returned to the ditch and saw the dead people. You questioned fellow GIs as to what happened. They told you that Lt. William Calley and Paul Meadlo had shot the people and pushed them into the ditch.

Upon cross-examination by the defense you will admit that the people could have been killed by helicopter or artillery fire.

You will admit that you did not see Calley firing directly into the ditch. The defense will ask why you didn't report the incident to a higher officer. You should reply that your group decided to keep it quiet. The defense also will try to discredit you by revealing that you earned \$35,000 from the sale of your pictures and that therefore you have a financial interest in the case. The defense will also ask if you were with Captain Ernest Medina that day. Reply that you were and that while searching through the village you saw a woman with a grenade whom Medina shot to death. You should also testify that you and Medina saw a soldier shoot down an eight-year-old boy. Medina said nothing.

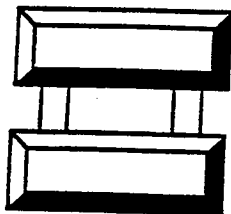
IMPORTANT



Read carefully.

Special note: *Locate a copy of the December 5, 1969, issue of Life magazine, which contains your famous photographs. (See your school, community, or local college librarian for help. If possible, bring a copy into the classroom so that the government attorneys can pass it to jury members to examine.)*

DEFENSE WITNESS: Captain Ernest Medina



Captain, your position is vulnerable. Therefore, you should practice answering questions you expect you will be asked. Get a friend or family member to go over your material with you and ask questions that both sides will likely ask you.

To be more convincing, don't take any notes with you to the witness stand. And of course, above all, don't take this handout with you.

You are a tough, imaginative officer who was Lt. William Calley's immediate superior. You arrive at the trial angry because the testimony begins to implicate you. The defense asks that you give your military background and you begin, "I was appointed commanding officer of Charlie Company in Hawaii December 1966. My problems were in getting adequate personnel for officers." Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara sent 100,000 men who would not normally have qualified for the Army on the basis of intelligence. Within a year you were sent with these untrained, unqualified personnel to Vietnam. You state, "There was little training given to us regarding prisoners and we received limited training on how to distinguish Vietcong and innocent civilians."

Next, you will be questioned about the orders given to you. Respond: "Colonel Barker briefed me at the beginning of March that My Lai would be our first engagement with the enemy and that we had permission to kill livestock, close wells, and destroy the food crop. It was to be a revenge mission and since Colonel Henderson had just taken over the 11th Brigade, he wanted it to be a smashing success."

When you briefed the troops, you told them to expect to be outnumbered and that artillery and helicopters would support. You further told the troops that all innocent civilians would have gone to market. You made no comments about the handling of prisoners. You said not to kill women and children "unless they engage you."

During the day at My Lai you encountered Lt. Calley once and asked for a body count. You then instructed him to speed up his progress. Later during the evening you learned that innocent civilians had been killed. When questioned you also say that Colonel Henderson was in a helicopter over the My Lai area and saw the gathering at the ditch. Generals Koster and Young were also near the My Lai area.

Upon cross-examination the government attorney will ask pivotal questions in your testimony about the briefing and the orders you gave. The government wants to convict Calley, not you, so they will not spend a lot of time questioning you.

The defense will redirect questions asking if you stated "kill everything that moved." Reply, "No, sir, but I gave orders to burn all buildings." At the time you didn't know that these tactics were barred by the Geneva Conventions.

The last question you will likely be asked is, "What were your reasons for not reporting the killing of innocent civilians?" Answer, "First, I realized that the intelligence information was faulty. Actually, we found nothing but women and children; and after what happened, I thought it would bring disgrace upon the United States and its Army. I realized the repercussions it might have. And lastly, I feared for my family and myself."

GOVERNMENT WITNESS: Paul Meadlo

You are the most important witness in the government's case. You were with Lt. William Calley at the irrigation ditch. Together you two shot the civilians. In an interview with Mike Wallace of CBS News you told him of the gruesome slaughter.

The day after My Lai your foot was blown off by a mine; you soon returned home a bitter man. You originally refused to testify on the grounds of self-incrimination. The judge ordered a grant of immunity for you, but again you refused to testify. Finally, you were issued an ultimatum: Either testify or the U.S. marshals will take you away to prison for contempt. You then agreed to take the stand.

AT ACTING TIP

Don't forget that men can cry.

This was the most traumatic moment of your life. It left a scar that will never heal.

Therefore, you may come close to—or actually break into—tears.

While testifying be very emotional at times. When asked by the government about your duties in the village, say that "we just gathered up about 50 to 75 people and led them to a designated area." With some anger say that "we suspected them of being Vietcong" and "as far as I'm concerned they're still Vietcong." After gathering the people, Calley came up to you and said, "You know what to do with them." You assumed he meant to guard them. Lt. Calley returned in 15 minutes and said, "How come they're not dead?" You said you didn't know you were supposed to kill them. When Calley started shooting, you joined in.

The attorney then will ask how you felt at the time. State the following: "I was upset, scared, and crying. Calley and I pushed them in the ditch and continued shooting the Vietcong. Someone yelled that a child was escaping and Lt. Calley then killed him."

The defense will begin its cross-examination by asking if you were ordered to kill. You should reply, "Yes." When asked why you carried out the order, say that you were ordered to and were emotionally upset. "We were supposed to get satisfaction from this village for all the men we'd lost." The defense will then ask about Ernest Medina. Say that you saw him and that he didn't say anything so you figured you were doing the right thing. When questioned about Calley, reply that you thought he was doing his duty. He was not violent or raving around.

When the government is allowed to redirect questions, you will be asked when you saw the first Vietnamese. You will answer, "Right after we landed in an open field." Explain that you were not ordered to fire. You gathered the people together because that was your orders and "it ain't my business to say why." When asked about the children, answer, "There were many children and they carried fully loaded grenades. Their mothers would throw the babies at you, and I assumed every minute they had a string and could blow us up at any time." When asked what the children were doing and if they attacked you, reply, "I expected a counter-balance at any time." A last question you may be asked is, "Did Lt. Calley or Captain Medina order you to kill?" You answer, "I took my orders from Lt. Calley, but Captain Medina was there before the ditch and I thought everything was okay, because he didn't put a stop to it."

DEFENSE WITNESS: Charles West



Answer all questions directly, for you are a man who approaches life that way—head on.

You are a gung ho squad leader who describes the search-and-destroy mission in military vocabulary: "We were to overrun the village leaving nothing walking, crawling, or growing We was to kill all livestock There was to be no living thing when we left."

Your involvement in My Lai was to lead two platoons through the northern part of the hamlet. At one point you saw Lt. William Calley and told him that his platoon was too much in your area, so he moved his men. Next, as you moved on, you encountered and apprehended 10 Vietnamese. One of your men asked what to do with them and you stated, "We are to kill every living thing. We killed about ten persons."

The defense attorney will ask if you had ever received orders to kill unarmed civilians before the My Lai incident. Reply that when you were with another platoon, a Lt. Lowe ordered you to kill all men, women, and children. Lt. Lowe then ordered you to kill a young man. Later you saw that someone had fixed the young man's body to look like a grenade had killed him.

When asked what Captain Ernest Medina was doing during the My Lai incident, respond, "He knew exactly what was happening in My Lai. I saw him at the ditch where we both saw the bodies."

The next few questions will pertain to what you heard Medina say at the pre-My Lai briefing. Point out how you remember that Medina said he didn't want to see anything living except GIs. Medina gave the final orders at My Lai that day. He said, "The party's over. That's enough shooting for the day." Captain Medina reported the final body count at 310.

The government's cross-examination will try to discredit you by bringing up an incident where a Vietnamese girl was molested. You must say yes to all the questions about this incident. This attorney will also ask who shot first at the group of 10 Vietnamese. You should answer, "I don't know, but when I saw they were injured I joined in."

If asked if you ever saw Calley at the ditch during the My Lai invasion, say no.

DEFENSE WITNESS: Lt. William Calley - 1



Lieutenant, you are on trial for your life—And of course, it's not just you on trial. The American military's performance in Vietnam is on trial. You have a responsibility to yourself and the American military.

Therefore, you should practice answering questions you expect you will be asked. Get a friend or family member to go over your material with you and ask questions that both sides will likely ask you.

If possible, meet with the defense attorney who will question you. Practice answering the questions he will ask before the military tribunal.

To be more convincing, don't take any notes with you to the witness stand. And of course, above all, don't take this sheet with you.

As the accused you have the most demanding of all witness parts. Your basic training was in Texas and you were sent on to Officer Candidate School. Your assignment before was in Hawaii, where you received limited instruction about the Geneva Conventions in regard to the rules and regulations of warfare. You learned that all orders were to be assumed legal and that the soldier's job was to carry out orders to the best of his ability. You felt Captain Ernest Medina was a fine officer and you respected him. You were proud to serve under him.

At no time did you stop to judge the legality of your orders. When asked to define the term *civilian*, define it as "the Vietcong living in the area and all Vietcong sympathizers." You realized that if you disobeyed a senior officer, you could be court-martialed and could be ultimately sentenced to death. You were never required to determine the legality of an order, then submit your complaint.

Upon arriving in Vietnam, you found things confusing because nobody had the answers as they did back in Hawaii and the States. You heard reports and stories from many people. They all told you to be afraid of Vietnamese civilians. You read that it was essential for troops in Vietnam to put out of their minds the World War II and Korean War concepts of giving candy and things to children. That was taking its toll, because the communists were using women and children effectively by planting grenades on them as they rushed toward GIs. As time went on, you understood this more: 95 percent of the fatalities in your platoon were caused by mines and booby traps.

Describe Captain Medina's briefing as follows: "The men were sitting on ammunition bunkers with Captain Medina in front. There was a short memorial service for those killed. Then he said our platoon was under strength and that we would have to be extremely aggressive. He said we were to neutralize My Lai on our way to Pinkville, and that the 48th Vietcong Battalion was there. He said all civilians had left the area and anyone who remained was to be considered the enemy." Someone asked about women and children and Medina said that means everything. This area was classified "free-fire zone," which means we had political clearance to destroy everything in the village.

Here is your description of the actual My Lai operation: "We entered the hamlet with a burst of fire and neutralized everything by dropping grenades down bunkers and firing into hootches. I saw many dead Vietnamese in the village and shot two myself, one with a bright green uniform. I saw (Paul) Meadlo near a ditch and told him to get rid of his prisoners if he couldn't move them faster."

DEFENSE WITNESS: Lt. William Calley - 2

A good way to first approach this two-page handout is to use a colored highlighter pen to mark key points. Then you will possibly wish to transfer such points to note cards so that when you practice answering questions, you can refer to your notes. However, remember not to take any notes or this handout to the witness stand.

You should deny shooting any children. Say that all the orders you gave came directly from Medina. He gave the orders at the previous night's platoon leaders briefing.

The defense attorney will ask if you ever intended to kill or whether you ever formed premeditated opinion to "waste" anyone. Respond that your intentions were to waste and destroy only the enemy. You considered the people Meadlo was guarding as enemy soldiers and acted as directed by Captain Medina's orders.

You admit that Captain Medina was interested in a body count. You explain that a body count includes Vietcong, buffalo, pigs, and cows. You had been criticized previously for getting too many shot and not coming back with accurate body counts.

The government's cross-examination will begin by asking if there were any women being shot. You respond that you weren't discriminating between individuals: they all were enemy and were to be destroyed. You don't remember enemy fire because you were too busy giving orders and gathering people to be used to go through the mine field. Captain Medina had told you to gather a mine-sweeping group. Then he told you to get rid of them. You gave the same order to Meadlo and moved on. You came back and found Meadlo in the same place with the people and said, "If you can't move the people, waste them." You were not angry with Meadlo, but you found the situation distressing because you were being slowed down.

You walked southeast to talk to Sgt. Mitchell and heard fire near the ditch. You returned and began firing into the ditch at the people. Your main objective was to finish them off as fast as possible because you were running late. Medina told you that you had done a good job, but you hadn't been fast enough. You told him about the people at the ditch, but he didn't ask questions because it wasn't out of the ordinary.