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1                    Testimony of Mr. Frederick Joseph  
2                    Widmer,                    , Lower  
3                    Burrell, Pennsylvania, taken at  
4                    Holiday Inn, New Kensington, Penn-  
5                    sylvania, at 1800 to 1930 hours on  
6                    15 July 1969, by Colonel William  
7                    V. Wilson, IG.  
8

9                    Q.    Mr. Widmer, this investigation concerns the  
10                    alleged destruction of a village in South Vietnam nick-  
11                    named Pinkville which was approximately five or six miles  
12                    north of Quang Ngai City. The incident allegedly occurred  
13                    in March 1968 at the time Co C, 1/20th Infantry, Task  
14                    Force Barker, conducted search and destroy operations in  
15                    the vicinity of the Batangan Peninsula. The investigation  
16                    is official. It is being made at the direction of the  
17                    Chief of Staff of the Army. The investigation is privileged  
18                    in the sense that the report will be made to the Chief of  
19                    Staff. The substance thereof should not be discussed with  
20                    others. It will carry a CONFIDENTIAL classification. The  
21                    purpose of the investigation is to determine the facts  
22                    concerning this particular operation. When I say it is  
23                    concerned with Pinkville, it is actually concerned with a  
24                    village in what is called the Pinkville complex. I'd like  
25                    to place you under oath, please. Will you stand and raise  
26                    your right hand?  
27

28                    (The witness was sworn.)  
29

30                    Please state your full name.

31                    A.    My name is Frederick Joseph Widmer.  
32

33                    Q.    What was your serial number?

34                    A.    RA 11 880 429.  
35

36                    Q.    Your present occupation?

37                    A.    Present occupation is part owner of S&W Seamless  
38                    Flooring.  
39

40                    Q.    Your home address?

41                    A.    Home address is                    , Lower Burrell,  
42                    Pennsylvania.  
43

44                    Q.    Have you been discharged from the service?

45                    A.    Yes, I have been discharged. I was discharged on

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1 4 July 1969.  
2

3 Q. What was your duty assignment in March 1968?

4 A. March 1968 I was the CO's RTO.  
5

6 Q. Who was the CO?

7 A. The CO was CPT Ernest Medina.  
8

9 Q. How long did you remain in that job?

10 A. I remained in that job until wounded in July--  
11 no, May.  
12

13 Q. How long before May had you been in the job?

14 A. I was in that position since we had been in Vietnam.  
15

16 Q. Did you go over from Hawaii with that unit?

17 A. Yes, I did.  
18

19 Q. Were you his RTO in Hawaii?

20 A. For awhile. I was acting supply clerk at a time  
21 in Hawaii.  
22

23 Q. How many RTO's did he have?

24 A. Usually he had two, one on battalion radio and one  
25 on company radio.  
26

27 Q. Who was the battalion RTO?

28 A. It varied. Either I'd carry the battalion or  
29 either Paul or Murray.  
30

31 Q. Well, if Paul and Murray were the other RTO's then  
32 he had more than two.

33 A. Only two of us would carry the radios.  
34

35 Q. But another individual was assigned as RTO?

36 A. Yes, sir, I guess you could say that.  
37

38 Q. How about your artillery forward observer? Did  
39 he have an RTO?

40 A. Yes, he did.  
41

42 Q. Was it always the same man?

43 A. Most of the time it was. They started rotating.  
44 This came later on.  
45

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1 Q. Do you remember which radio you were carrying  
2 in mid-March during this operation?

3 A. (Pause) Oh, my. I believe in that operation  
4 I wasn't carrying a radio because I had just come back  
5 from the hospital. Murray and Paul were carrying the  
6 radios at the time. It was one of the very few operations  
7 that I didn't carry a radio.

8  
9 Q. Now the operation and the objective which we are  
10 primarily concerned with took place on the 16th of March.  
11 As I remember it, that was a Saturday.

12 A. I couldn't remember the exact date. I couldn't  
13 tell you right offhand.

14  
15 Q. Do you remember this operation?

16 A. Yes, I do.

17  
18 Q. Would you describe to me in as much detail as you  
19 can what occurred on that date?

20 A. As far as I know, we were on an operation down in  
21 the Pinkville area. We were on a search and destroy mission,  
22 search and clear, and we had been having trouble with one  
23 NVA regiment down there, or battalion, and I believe this  
24 was the third time we had been down to the area. It seemed  
25 like every other time we went down there we got pinned down  
26 and shot up pretty good. We had the one big, combined  
27 operation and were sweeping the area.

28  
29 I was CA'd in by helicopter. Everybody else was  
30 on the ground. I was one of the last ones to get in. We  
31 swept from about--I know we swept clear down to the river  
32 and then started working back up and that Bravo, 4/3d was  
33 working with us, and we were all on line and we were told  
34 to get in there and clean out the village because it was  
35 supposed to be VC and VC supporters and they were tied in  
36 directly with them.

37  
38 Q. You said you came in last?

39 A. I was in one of the last lifts to come in, right.

40  
41 Q. Were you with the company commander?

42 A. Yes, I was.

43  
44 Q. And he came in last?

45 A. No, I take that back. I wasn't with the company

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1 commander because I came in with the demo men.

2  
3 Q. Were these demo men assigned to your unit?

4 A. He was supported by the 26th Engineers, C Co,  
5 26th Engineers, and they were from this unit, C Co, 26th.

6  
7 Q. What was your duty assignment on this operation?

8 A. On that operation I was supposed to be security  
9 for the RTO's, security for them.

10  
11 Q. Did you leave the engineer unit when you landed  
12 and join the company command group?

13 A. We all joined up with the company, the engineers  
14 and myself.

15  
16 Q. At the time that you landed had the assault  
17 platoons begun sweeping the village?

18 A. Yes, they had.

19  
20 Q. They were in the village at that time?

21 A. Yes, they were.

22  
23 Q. Were you receiving any fire when you got off the  
24 helicopter?

25 A. When I got off they were not receiving any and  
26 they had three "dinks" running up toward the river, I believe,  
27 just to my right, and they sent a squad down there to try to  
28 capture them. I believe we did capture one of the weapons.

29  
30 Q. Who was with the command group? Do you remember?

31 A. The one engineer--I know his nickname was "Hot Rod,"  
32 and gee, there was myself, CPT Medina, Paul, Murray, I  
33 believe LT Alaux was with us--he was the artillery FO--and  
34 Kern and Martin, the FO. I am trying to think of the other  
35 engineer's name. I know him because we used to run around.  
36 I don't remember what they called him. I can't think of his  
37 name right offhand.

38  
39 Q. Would that be William Kern, K-E-R-N?

40 A. Is he from California?

41  
42 Q. I don't know. Was he a corporal?

43 A. Right, CPL Kern.

44  
45 Q. Who was the other man you mentioned?

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1 A. Martin.

2  
3 Q. Louis B. Martin?

4 A. Right.

5  
6 Q. Spec 4?

7 A. Right, also from California.

8  
9 Q. Were there any National Police, that you remember,  
10 on this operation?

11 A. Yes, there was.

12  
13 Q. When did you first see them?

14 A. After we went through one village they were with  
15 the prisoners. I believe they came in with another company.  
16 There was another company before it moved out the next day--  
17 was it Bravo?

18  
19 Q. These National Police weren't lifted in with C Co's  
20 helicopter lifts?

21 A. Not that I remember, no. I don't know for sure if  
22 they were. I couldn't tell you exactly.

23  
24 Q. Do you remember the direction of your flight when  
25 the aircraft landed, where the nose of the aircraft was  
26 pointing?

27 A. The nose of the aircraft was pointed north and we  
28 were moving southeast, I believe it was.

29  
30 Q. Then you flew from south to north?

31 A. We came down and made a swing around. I remember  
32 I had just jumped off the chopper and was heading for C Co.

33  
34 Q. How far were you from the village when you got off  
35 the chopper?

36 A. From the village complex itself I would say about  
37 500 meters, possibly more than that. I couldn't exactly  
38 tell you where the village complex began, or where you con-  
39 sider the village. If you mean the edge of it, it is pos-  
40 sibly only a couple of hundred meters.

41  
42 Q. I mean the edge of the village, the first huts.

43 A. A couple of hundred meters from where I landed.

44  
45 Q. Do you know the flight formation the helicopters

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1 used?

2 A. I guess a regular flight pattern.

3 Q. This would have been the V's?

4 A. Three choppers in a V.

5  
6  
7 Q. Do you remember the location of your chopper in  
8 the V?

9 A. I believe it was on the right because I was the  
10 closest one, one of the closest ones.

11  
12 Q. What was your seated position in the helicopter?  
13 Were you on the inside or the outside?

14 A. I believe I was in the middle because one demo-  
15 lition man was beside me and I picked up a roll of his det  
16 cord when we jumped off the chopper.

17  
18 Q. Did you notice whether or not the door gunner was  
19 firing prior to landing?

20 A. I don't believe he was on my lift.

21  
22 Q. Do you remember a man named Carter?

23 A. Excuse me?

24  
25 Q. Carter.

26 A. Yes, I do.

27  
28 Q. What was his job?

29 A. He was rifleman, I believe, assistant machine  
30 gunner or machine gunner, because he shot himself accident-  
31 ally that day, with a .45.

32  
33 Q. He did shoot himself with a .45?

34 A. Yes.

35  
36 Q. How did this happen?

37 A. It jammed on him.

38  
39 Q. What was he doing with it when this occurred?

40 A. When I was with him he went to eject a round--  
41 he was sitting down and went to eject a round and it slid  
42 forward and discharged on him. He reloaded a magazine and  
43 put it in and the shell just discharged on him and shot him  
44 right through the foot.

45  

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1 Q. Did he have a problem with this weapon or what?  
2 Why was he messing with the weapon?

3 A. He said it jammed on him.  
4

5 Q. Had he been doing anything in particular to cause  
6 him to be concerned about the .45 jamming?

7 A. Not that I know of.  
8

9 Q. Were you with him at the time?

10 A. I was with him when he shot himself. I had just  
11 walked past him.  
12

13 Q. You heard the round go off?

14 A. Yes, I turned around because I thought we were  
15 receiving fire and he had just shot himself.  
16

17 Q. What had he been doing before?

18 A. Just sitting there.  
19

20 Q. Was he a tunnel rat?

21 A. Yes.  
22

23 Q. Had he been in the tunnels?

24 A. I believe he was. He had gone through several.  
25

26 Q. On this day?

27 A. I couldn't tell you for sure because I wasn't  
28 with him.  
29

30 Q. But you were with him when the round went off?

31 A. I had walked past him when it discharged.  
32

33 Q. Do you have any reason to believe that he delib-  
34 erately shot himself in the foot?

35 A. I have no reason to believe he deliberately did  
36 it. He is not that kind of guy. It was accidental. You  
37 could say he is a pretty close friend. He came from Hawaii  
38 with me and it just isn't Carter to go and shoot himself.  
39

40 Q. I will show you a photograph with the individuals  
41 numbered 1 through 6. I'd like you, if you can for me, to  
42 identify, starting with No. 1, the individuals in this  
43 photograph. (Colonel Wilson handed the photograph to the  
44 witness.)

45 A. No. 1 is Carter, No. 2 is CPT Medina, 3 is Murray,

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1 4 is Louis, 5 is Lagunoy, and 6, I believe, was Doc Capezza,  
2 the medic.

3  
4 Q. And who was Louis?

5 A. Excuse me?

6  
7 Q. What was Louis' job?

8 A. He was the RTO for the artillery, Louis Martin.

9  
10 Q. Martin is his last name?

11 A. Right.

12  
13 Q. Where were you?

14 A. I don't know where I was when that picture was  
15 taken. I couldn't tell you.

16  
17 Q. Did you stay with the command group the entire  
18 day of the 16th?

19 A. No, I didn't.

20  
21 Q. What other elements of the company were you with?

22 A. I was with one squad for awhile, walked through  
23 with them. I couldn't tell you which squad it was.

24  
25 Q. Do you know which platoon it was?

26 A. The one that was in the village.

27  
28 Q. That probably would have been the 1st or 2d Platoon.

29 A. All I know is the one guy that was with us, Smitty.

30  
31 Q. Smitty?

32 A. He was a colored kid, never had any problem.

33  
34 Q. He was with you most of the day?

35 A. No, I was with them for a little while walking  
36 through the village.

37  
38 Q. What was his job, do you know?

39 A. Rifleman.

40  
41 Q. In one of the squads?

42 A. Right, sir.

43  
44 Q. Do you remember his grade?

45 A. Excuse me?

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Q. Do you remember his grade?  
A. Oh, I believe he was a PFC at the time, either that or a private. He got busted once.

Q. Do you remember his first name?  
A. Gerald.

Q. Did you know Bernhardt?  
A. Michael?

Q. Did you see him that day?  
A. Bernhardt. I don't believe so. I couldn't tell you right offhand for sure.

Q. Did you know Terry?  
A. Terry?

Q. Michael B. Terry.  
A. Oh, Mike Terry, yes.

Q. Did you see him that day?  
A. I couldn't tell you whether I saw him either.

Q. Do you know Doherty?  
A. I know him--Bernhardt, Terry and Doherty, all three.

Q. Did you see him that day?  
A. I couldn't tell you.

Q. The only man you remember seeing that day is Gerald Smith?  
A. And Carter.

Q. And Carter. Did you know Torres?  
A. I knew Torres. I used to be in his platoon.

Q. Did you see Torres that day?  
A. I couldn't give you a definite yes or no on that, sir.

Q. Do you remember the name of this village that you conducted the combat assault against?  
A. I believe it was My Lai (4).

Q. Was there much vegetation inside this village?

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1 A. Yes, there was.

2  
3 Q. Was it difficult to see the huts?

4 A. Most of them had, I believe, hedgerows all around  
5 and the trails had big, high, thick hedgerows along them,  
6 and everything was pretty well separated.

7  
8 Q. What do you think was the population of this  
9 village?

10 A. I couldn't give you a definite--

11  
12 Q. (Interposing) When you landed and got off the  
13 helicopter was the village burning?

14 A. No, sir.

15  
16 Q. Were any of the huts burning?

17 A. Not to my knowledge.

18  
19 Q. Did you see any of the gun ships firing?

20 A. The gun ships were around there. I remember them  
21 because they circled us when we landed.

22  
23 Q. Did you see them fire?

24 A. I heard them firing. I believe they were firing  
25 to our south or southeast.

26  
27 Q. Did you handle the radio at all on the 16th?

28 A. I believe I may have answered one call from the  
29 platoons, sitting in the group there waiting for dust-off.  
30 I think I remember somebody calling the dust-off.

31  
32 Q. The dust-off was called in for what?

33 A. For Carter.

34  
35 Q. It was probably near this location where this  
36 photograph was taken.

37 A. Right near the rice paddy.

38  
39 Q. Was this on the edge of the village or the inside  
40 of the village?

41 A. It was along the edge of the village, yet there  
42 was a couple of rice paddies and some more village or a  
43 group of houses.

44  
45 Q. Do you remember whether it was on the south side

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1 of the village or the north side or central?

2 A. I believe I would be safe to say the south side  
3 or the southeast corner.

4  
5 Q. This happened a reasonably short period after the  
6 company had closed on the landing zone?

7 A. That Carter had shot himself?

8  
9 Q. Yes.

10 A. I believe it would be safe to say it was a short  
11 period after, since they were already on the ground before  
12 me.

13  
14 Q. Do you know if anyone had borrowed Carter's .45  
15 and used it?

16 A. Yes.

17  
18 Q. And then given it back to him?

19 A. Yes.

20  
21 Q. Do you know what the purpose of borrowing that  
22 weapon was?

23 A. Yes.

24  
25 Q. What was it?

26 A. To finish off a couple of people that were not  
27 yet dead.

28  
29 Q. Were they wounded?

30 A. They were in pretty bad shape. They would have  
31 died eventually.

32  
33 Q. How could that be determined?

34 A. Because I was standing beside them.

35  
36 Q. Who was it?

37 A. A couple of villagers, "dinks."

38  
39 Q. Who borrowed the gun?

40 A. From Carter?

41  
42 Q. Yes.

43 A. I did.

44  
45 Q. Well, I am going to have to tell you something

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1 here. You are not subject, to the best of my knowledge,  
2 to military law because you are a civilian--

3 A. (Interposing) Yes, sir.

4  
5 Q. --and this is the main reason I didn't give you  
6 any military legal warnings, or warnings about your self-  
7 implication on anything of a criminal nature.

8 A. Yes, sir.

9  
10 Q. Now the best information I have from The Judge  
11 Advocate General is based on a case that occurred in Italy  
12 some years ago during World War II where there was an attempt  
13 to try a major for war crimes and he was a civilian and the  
14 Federal law does not cover this. This is the reason that  
15 I didn't give you any warning, because to the best of my  
16 knowledge you are not subject to any legal prosecution and  
17 if you were without the proper warnings no testimony you  
18 would give could be held against you in evidence, but your  
19 statement there places you in a position of having been  
20 associated with a war crime. You say that it was an act of  
21 mercy?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23  
24 Q. This could really only be decided by medical  
25 authorities at the time.

26 A. True. As far as I know, it could have been the  
27 after effects of them already having been dead, the bodies  
28 quivering.

29  
30 Q. Quivering. Do you know the age of these people?

31 A. I couldn't tell you offhand.

32  
33 Q. Was there a young boy there?

34 A. Yes, sir.

35  
36 Q. Was he one of them that you fired on?

37 A. Yes, sir.

38  
39 Q. But you used a .45 for this?

40 A. Negative, sir.

41  
42 Q. What did you borrow Carter's weapon for?

43 A. To finish off one "dink" that was dead, was laying  
44 there along the trail.

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Q. Did the weapon jam on you?

A. Yes, it did, sir.

Q. How many rounds did it fire before it jammed?

A. I believe it was two or three and it jammed. I gave it back to him and that is when Carter was playing with it and shot himself.

Q. Did Carter see you do this?

A. I couldn't tell you.

Q. Was anybody with you when you did this?

A. No, sir.

Q. Did anybody else do this?

A. I'd like to ask a question, sir. As far as my statements go, they cannot be held against me, right?

Q. Your statements without the proper warning, which I have not given you, cannot be used in evidence because there is no civil law that will prosecute you for war crimes, as far as I am advised, and no testimony will hold up unless you are advised of your rights. I haven't done so because I have been told by the legal authorities that it isn't necessary. Now, that is against you, you understand?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. But what I am really trying to find out is the facts concerning the operation. As I say, my report goes to the Chief of Staff and we are just trying to pin down the facts of the operation. You can rest assured as far as what you have told me, what you have voluntarily stated, it can't be held as evidence against you. I will tell you this. For awhile during these interrogations we were warning people that they didn't have to say anything, that they could have legal advice if they were still in the military, and if a statement was made under those conditions then it could be held as evidence if there are laws you can be tried under. Now a military man can be tried, but not unless he has been given the proper warnings, and you haven't been given these warnings and this is all in the testimony. Let's take about a four-minute break.

A. Yes, sir.

(At this point there was a brief recess.)

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Q. Did you attend a briefing given by the company commander the day before the operation?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. Do you remember what that briefing consisted of?

A. Yes. The CO gathered us all together and gave an itinerary of what was going on the following day. We were going into the village on combat assault, supposed to be on a search and destroy mission, and word was put out if it isn't VC it is VC supporting, NVA supporting, kill everything, anything that is alive, even animals because they'd turn around and just use them for food.

Q. Did CPT Medina say kill the people in the village? I mean those words.

A. I don't know. No, I wouldn't say those exact words.

Q. Well, did he leave that impression?

A. Yes, he did.

Q. Was there a memorial ceremony held in conjunction with this briefing?

A. I don't believe there was, sir. I don't think so. I don't remember right offhand.

Q. Do you remember the operation which C Co participated in prior to the 16th of March in this area?

A. The first operation we went on down there, I missed that one, and the day I came back to the fire base, and it was right after they pulled in from the field, they tore up men down there. One of the men was killed and a couple were wounded. And the second one down there, and they got pinned down, again I wasn't on--I stayed back in the base camp; and I believe I was with the one operation that went down along the--what is it--I think we called it the dam--it was a dike that ran down there--where we ran into more trouble. I believe we had been on three operations prior to that operation.

Q. Did you lose a close friend on any of those operations?

A. Yes, I lost a very close one on the first one. It was the first individual we lost in the company since our arrival in Vietnam.

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Q. Who was that?

A. Webb. Correction, Weber.

Q. How was he killed?

A. Gunshot wounds.

Q. Did you see LT Calley on this operation?

A. The one that Weber was killed on?

Q. No, I mean the operation on the 16th of March.

A. I know he was a platoon leader at that time. I believe he had to be along.

Q. But you didn't see him?

A. Not that I can remember.

Q. Do you remember Meadlo?

A. Meadlo.

Q. Meadlo.

A. Yes.

Q. Did you see him on this operation?

A. I couldn't tell you exactly. I know he was on one operation. I believe that was the day he was blown up. He lost his foot. He was with Calley in the 2d Platoon or 1st Platoon. They had gone up one hill on that operation.

Q. Do you know if any groups of civilians were rounded up and executed?

A. I would say they may have been. There were bodies in groups.

Q. There were bodies in groups on the ground, you mean?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you see this?

A. I had seen what was left of them.

Q. You saw the results of what could have been an execution?

A. It could have been or they could have just run away and been shot. I don't know.

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1 Q. Do you remember on the east side of the town a  
2 large ditch?

3 A. On the east side?

4  
5 Q. Over toward the sea.

6 A. No, not offhand.

7  
8 Q. Do you remember a ditch anywhere in the vicinity  
9 of the town, anywhere that had a large number of bodies in  
10 it?

11 A. I remember hearing about one later on. I didn't  
12 see it.

13  
14 Q. You didn't see it?

15 A. No.

16  
17 Q. Did you see anyone execute either VC or civilians  
18 in that village?

19 A. I wouldn't say I saw anyone, no.

20  
21 Q. No executions?

22 A. I take that back. I saw one.

23  
24 Q. One?

25 A. Right.

26  
27 Q. In the village or outside of the village?

28 A. On the edge of the village.

29  
30 Q. Was this during the first period you were in there  
31 or later on?

32 A. I believe it was toward the end.

33  
34 Q. How many people were killed?

35 A. One man.

36  
37 Q. And how was he executed?

38 A. Shot.

39  
40 Q. Was he wounded?

41 A. No.

42  
43 Q. Why was he shot?

44 A. He wouldn't get out of his house so we could  
45 search. He just laid in there and wouldn't move.. He



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stayed in there.

Q. Who shot him?

A. The Chief.

Q. Who is the Chief?

A. It was a kid's nickname. I can't think of his name.

Q. He wasn't in the headquarters group?

A. No, he wasn't, sir.

Q. Here is a roster. (Colonel Wilson handed the roster to the witness.) That roster is a month later.

A. (Pause) Arcoren.

Q. How do you spell it?

A. A-R-C-O-R-E-N.

Q. What is the rest of his name?

A. Dale M.

Q. And he shot a man who would not come out of the hut?

A. Right, sir.

Q. And the man was not wounded?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Was there anyone else in the hut beside that one man?

A. As far as I know it was just the one man.

Q. Did you ever hear an order on any radio communications system which said stop killing people?

A. I would say no because I wasn't with the radios, right with them.

Q. Did you hear an order passed down to that effect from company to platoon to squad?

A. I remember we got an order not to shoot anyone, to quit shooting people.

Q. Do you remember what time of day that was?

A. I couldn't tell you exactly.

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1 Q. Did these actions that you refer to occur before  
2 or after that order?

3 A. Before.

4  
5 Q. How many bodies do you think you saw in this town?

6 A. About 30 myself.

7  
8 Q. Were they scattered around or were they in stacks,  
9 groups?

10 A. Scattered around.

11  
12 Q. Were many of these women and children?

13 A. Yes.

14  
15 Q. Did you see any indications that artillery fire  
16 had fallen on the village?

17 A. There was indication that artillery support was  
18 close.

19  
20 Q. Did you ever go back through the village once it  
21 was swept?

22 A. No, I didn't.

23  
24 Q. Do you know if CPT Medina did?

25 A. I don't believe so.

26  
27 Q. Did you hear that CPT Medina had groups of civilians  
28 executed?

29 A. No, I didn't.

30  
31 Q. Did you ever participate in any operations with  
32 C Co similar to this one later?

33 A. No. You see, we went from there to--we left Task  
34 Force Barker in April and went west of Quang Ngai up in the  
35 mountains and highlands.

36  
37 Q. Did you feel that this village was any different  
38 from any other village in the country?

39 A. I'd say in that particular area most of those  
40 villages in that area were VC because we had found evidence.  
41 We had found Communist Chinese flags and Russian Communist  
42 flags and NVA flags inside the villages.

43  
44 Q. Now if you had been conducting an operation in your  
45 normal area, in Task Force Barker's normal area, which would

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1 have been north of the river, would those villages there  
2 have been the same in your mind as this particular village?

3 A. I guess they would have been up until the point  
4 where I received fire from them, which holds true in just  
5 about every village there. You can consider them all the  
6 same up until the time you start receiving sniper fire and  
7 get pinned down in the village right on its doorstep. This  
8 is about the same that happened when I left Vietnam. We  
9 went up to a village--in fact, part of the company had  
10 walked through the village, and just as we got to the other  
11 side of it VC were dug in in the village and the whole  
12 village was the headquarters.

13  
14 Q. Did you observe any helicopters land during the day?

15 A. The dust-off came in.

16  
17 Q. For Carter?

18 A. Right.

19  
20 Q. Any others?

21 A. We got a resupply that night.

22  
23 Q. But not during the daylight then?

24 A. In the late evening.

25  
26 Q. Were you already in the perimeter when the resupply  
27 came in?

28 A. I believe I was.

29  
30 Q. Did you see the National Police in the perimeter?

31 A. There was National Police because we had linked  
32 up with Bravo.

33  
34 Q. Did you see them interrogating anybody?

35 A. Yes, I did.

36  
37 Q. Did there appear to be any unusual system of  
38 interrogation?

39 A. Yes.

40  
41 Q. Did they execute?

42 A. Yes.

43  
44 Q. How many people?

45 A. Two.

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1 Q. Did you see this?  
2 A. I saw it after it had been completed. I didn't  
3 see the act itself.  
4  
5 Q. Did you hear any explosions in the village?  
6 A. Yes.  
7  
8 Q. What type of explosions were they?  
9 A. Grenades mostly.  
10  
11 Q. Aboveground or below ground?  
12 A. In tunnels. They were checking tunnels.  
13  
14 Q. Was there any CS used in the tunnels?  
15 A. I couldn't tell you offhand. As far as I know,  
16 we didn't use any because we didn't have our protective  
17 masks with us to use it.  
18  
19 Q. Were there many people running in the village?  
20 A. Not to my knowledge.  
21  
22 Q. Did you see any medical attention being given to  
23 civilians?  
24 A. Negative.  
25  
26 Q. What weapon were you armed with?  
27 A. M-79.  
28  
29 Q. Was there munitions for the M-79 during this  
30 operation?  
31 A. We had what we carried.  
32  
33 Q. You did have grenades?  
34 A. I never carried grenades.  
35  
36 Q. Do you feel that C Co went into this operation  
37 with a feeling of get even or vengeance?  
38 A. Yes, I would.  
39  
40 Q. The whole company?  
41 A. Yes.  
42  
43 Q. Was this based on the briefing or on previous  
44 operations?  
45 A. It would be based on previous operations due to

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1 the fact we had had so much trouble in that area and lost  
2 quite a few guys down there. I'd say the hardest part  
3 about it was these were the first casualties in the com-  
4 pany. We had been pretty lucky up to that point and never  
5 had any casualties--I think at the most one or two minor  
6 ones--until we got into that area.  
7

8 Q. Did the platoon send any VC suspects or civilians  
9 back to the company command group at any time?

10 A. Yes, we did. We got one who was supposed to be  
11 a party organizer for that area.  
12  
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Q. Where was Weber killed?

A. Weber was killed up in this area here (indicating).

Q. This would be south of the Song Diem Diem.

A. I believe so, right in this area here (indicating), in the My Lai area. I am pretty sure of that. Meadlo lost his foot, I believe, on this hill here (indicating).

Q. Hill 85. Can you show me My Lai (4) on this photograph? (Colonel Wilson handed a photograph to the witness.)

A. Not offhand unless it is this one right here (indicating).

Q. That's it. Now do you remember the side of the village that you landed on from the photograph?

A. I believe it was right in this area right here up by this corner (indicating).

Q. That is the northern corner.

A. The northwestern corner of the village.

Q. Was this stream inundated at the time? Was there water in it?

A. I couldn't tell you. I don't exactly remember whether there was water in it or not. I remember landing in the rice paddy and going straight to the wood line, a group of pine trees.

Q. Was the rice paddy inundated?

A. Yes, it was.

Q. How far did you sink into the mud?

A. Not very far. It was still a little damp.

Q. I am going to read you an allegation. This is an allegation.

A. You lost me.

Q. Well, it is a hearsay statement.

A. O. K.

Q. Now the reason I am going to read you this is because I want to tie this in with what you told me before and if there is anything that isn't--if this information

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sounds incorrect, I'd like to know where it is incorrect.  
"One morning in the latter part of March, Task Force Barker moved out from its firebase headed for 'Pinkville.' Its mission: destroy the trouble spot and all of its inhabitants."

A. Negative on the all.

Q. "He recalled seeing a small boy, about three or four years old, standing by the trail with a gunshot wound in one arm. Then the captain's RTO put a burst of M-16 fire into him." Is that the same boy?

A. Yes, it is.

Q. Was he wounded in the arm?

A. Yes, he was.

Q. Was he standing?

A. Yes, he was.

Q. But you said you were armed with an M-79.

A. I borrowed an M-16.

Q. Who did you borrow it from?

A. I don't remember exactly. I borrowed it from a guy sitting along the dikes.

Q. Was this--this didn't have anything to do with that .45, did it?

A. No.

Q. "Gruver said it was so bad that one of the men shot himself in the foot in order to be medivac-ed out."

A. That is not true.

Q. Did CPT Medina appear to be hesitant in issuing instructions for this operation in any way?

A. He did, I believe. He didn't seem to be his usual self, you could say.

Q. Why did he impress you this way?

A. There seemed to be something worrying him or bothering him, both at the same time. He was more nervous than he usually was.

Q. Do you remember SGT LaCroix? He could have been,

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a Spec 4 at that time.

A. Yes, I remember him.

Q. Did you see him on the operation?

A. I couldn't tell you exactly offhand who I saw and who I didn't see excepting the one man in the group I was with.

Q. "Kally's men were dragging people out of bunkers and hootches and putting them together in a group. As soon as he felt that the group was big enough, he ordered an M-60 set up and the people killed." Did you see anything like this?

A. I didn't see that.

Q. "Kally ordered Pfc Torres to man the machine-gun and open fire on the villagers that had been grouped together." Did you see that?

A. No, I didn't.

Q. Did this operation appear or impress you as being any different from any other operation in country?

A. Yes, it did.

Q. Of the combat assault type, I mean.

A. When we started it off it was regular combat assault, I guess, just another CA.

Q. Well, were the procedures for the operation the same as had taken place in the past?

A. This one seemed more stepped up. There had been a lot more preparation and the artillery prep-fired all night and they had continuous air strikes flown.

Q. Do you remember a large, heavy-set, colored NCO?

A. Heavy-set?

Q. Kind of fat.

A. Who would that be? (Pause) It seems that we had Mitchell and Hodges and Arcoren was with us, but he wasn't an NCO.

Q. He doesn't have to be an NCO.

A. But he wasn't heavy-set. I don't think we had any fat people in the platoon or the company, what you would

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1 consider fat or heavy-set.  
2

3 Q. Did you know SGT Bacon?  
4

5 A. SGT Bacon, yes, sir. I guess you could say he  
6 was heavy-set. He was a big guy. He wasn't fat though.

7 Q. Did you see SGT Bacon on this operation?  
8

9 A. I couldn't give you a definite yes or no on that.

10 Q. Did you know about this rumor of Calley ordering  
11 these groups of people shot?  
12

13 A. I heard about it later on.

14 Q. Did you ever tell anybody about it?  
15

16 A. No. After the operation we were told to keep  
17 our mouth shut since they weren't too happy with it after  
18 we came back, and our CO instructed us to keep our mouth  
19 shut and not to talk to anybody about the operation, and  
20 as far as the men of the company were concerned he gave them  
21 an order and he was going to take full blame for anything  
22 that happened.

23 Q. Did he tell you this directly?  
24

25 A. He gathered us together after it was over and told  
26 us this. This was the company.

27 Q. Do you know if he told Bernhardt not to write his  
28 Congressman?  
29

30 A. I couldn't tell you. I doubt it.

31 Q. But he gathered the company around and told them?  
32

33 A. He gathered us all up just like he had gathered  
34 us when he briefed us.

35 Q. Was this a normal procedure before a CA--to have  
36 a company briefing?  
37

38 A. I'd say no. Usually it consists of your platoon  
39 leader and platoon sergeant and squad leaders.

40 Q. So this was something a little different from  
41 that standpoint anyhow?  
42

43 A. True.

44 Q. I am going to ask you to do one more thing and  
45 then I think we can finish up. I am going to take the

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1 photograph and map and draw a sketch here. I am trying to  
2 find out from these things what occurred. (Colonel Willson  
3 sketched on a sheet of paper.) Now would you come here a  
4 minute and look at this?  
5

6 (At this point there was a discussion off the record.)  
7

8 Q. Mr. Widmer has observed a sketch which I made,  
9 which includes the general vicinity of My Lai (4). It is  
10 not signed. At the time that you shot this boy did you feel  
11 that he was an enemy or was this a mercy killing?

12 A. At the time I would say (pause) I couldn't tell  
13 you exactly how I felt, except to prove to myself I could  
14 kill someone because that was the first time I had ever  
15 killed anyone.  
16

17 Q. Mr. Widmer, do you have any further information  
18 concerning the matters we have discussed? (Pause) Any  
19 further testimony?

20 A. No further testimony except we feel if we had to  
21 do it all over again we wouldn't do it the same way.  
22

23 Q. Do you have any further statements to make re-  
24 garding the subject under investigation?

25 A. (Pause) I don't know except I guess at the time  
26 of the incident everyone felt that we were justified in our  
27 actions.  
28

29 Q. Was there any indication after the operation was  
30 over and in discussions among the individuals in the units  
31 that they felt they were not justified in the actions?

32 A. Yes, I would--  
33

34 Q. (Interposing) Would you say this was the majority  
35 or minority opinion?

36 A. I would say it was the majority.  
37

38 Q. In other words, this operation was conducted, it  
39 was executed, and after it was over it was felt that it  
40 wasn't done right?

41 A. Yes.  
42

43 Q. Do you remember this operation very clearly?

44 A. I remember parts of it clearly.  
45

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(WIDMER)

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1 Q. Do you remember it more so than any other opera-  
2 tion over there?

3 A. Yes, I do.

4 Q. Why?

5 A. Well, I think it was the first time I ever killed  
6 anyone. What it amounted to was mass murder.

7 Q. In your case or in the case of the unit?

8 A. I would say in the case of the unit.

9 Q. Did you see a lot of reconnaissance by fire taking  
10 place? Do you know what I mean?

11 A. With what type of weapon--I05?

12 Q. No.

13 A. Small arms recon?

14 Q. Small arms recon.

15 A. I'd have to say negative on that.

16 Q. I mean spray fire without having a target.

17 A. Yes, sir, there was some of that.

18 Q. In the village?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Was the unit ever briefed on the Rules of Engagement?

21 A. Not that I know of.

22 Q. Were you ever told what to do if a Vietnamese ran  
23 from you?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. What were you supposed to do?

26 A. Holler dung lai and that is supposed to be Viet-  
27 nameese for stop or halt and usually if they kept running to  
28 fire one or two warning shots and if they kept on running  
29 after that drop them. It all depends mostly on the type of  
30 area we were working in. In a village that is the procedure,  
31 but up in the mountains if someone comes down the trail you  
32 shoot first and ask questions later.

33 Q. Do you have any further statements?

34 A. No, I don't.

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Q. I want to remind you that this is an official investigation. It is privileged in the sense that my report will be made to the Chief of Staff of the Army for such use as he deems appropriate. You are requested not to discuss this investigation or the questions and answers covered during this period except as you otherwise may have a right to do so in accordance with law.

A. O. K.

(The witness was excused.)

(The foregoing testimony of Mr. Frederick Joseph Widmer was taken stenographically and transcribed by Albert F. Smith, Supervisory Shorthand Reporter, Office of The Inspector General, Headquarters, Department of the Army.)

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Further testimony of Mr. Frederick Joseph Widmer, 221 Crescent Drive, Lower Burrell, Pennsylvania, taken at Holiday Inn, New Kensington, Pennsylvania, at 2050 to 2058 hours on 15 July 1969, by Colonel William V. Wilson, IG.

Q. I want to remind you you are still under oath.  
A. Right, sir.

Q. And I have the following warning to give you. You are advised that you are suspected of having committed a war crime, to wit: Wrongful destruction of a village and murder of Vietnamese civilians. Your constitutional rights are that you have a right to remain silent. Any statement you make may be used as evidence against you in a criminal trial. Do you desire to make a statement?

A. (Pause) Off the record I have a question.

Q. We can't go off the record.

A. O. K. On the previous statement that I have given you, is that still to be used?

Q. That statement is not legal evidence.

A. No comment. No statement.

Q. You do not desire to make a statement?

A. No, I do not.

Q. You do not desire to give testimony?

A. I do not.

Q. O. K., that's all. Thank you for coming back in.

A. You are welcome, sir.

(The witness was excused.)

(The foregoing further testimony of Mr. Frederick Joseph Widmer was taken stenographically and transcribed by Albert F. Smith, Supervisory Shorthand Reporter, Office of The Inspector General, Headquarters, Department of the Army.)

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(WIDMER) (RECALL) (END)

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