

VOICE: Other American Soldiers at My Lai

The following testimony from Lt. Calley's trial is from soldiers under Lt. Calley's command who were there the day of the events in question.

DENNIS CONTI: "Lieutenant Calley came out and said take care of these people. So we said, okay, so we stood there and watched them. He went away, then he came back and said, "I thought I told you to take care of these people. We said, "We are. He said, "I mean, kill them. I was a little stunned and I didn't know what to do. He said, "Come around this side. We'll get on line and we'll fire into them. I said, "No, I've got a grenade launcher. I'll watch the tree line. I stood behind them and they stood side by side. So they -- Calley and Meadlo -- got on line and fired directly into the people. There were bursts and single shots for two minutes. It was automatic. The people screamed and yelled and fell. I guess they tried to get up, too. They couldn't. That was it. They people were pretty well messed up. Lots of heads was shot off, pieces of heads and pieces of flesh flew off the sides and arms. They were all messed up. Meadlo fired a little bit and broke down. He was crying. He said he couldn't do any more. He couldn't kill anymore people. He couldn't fire into the people any more. He gave me his weapon into my hands. I said I wouldn't. "If they're going to be killed, I'm not going to do it. Let Lieutenant Calley do it, I told him. So I gave Meadlo back his weapon. At that time there was only a few kids still alive Lieutenant Calley killed them one-by-one. The I saw a group of five women and six kids -- eleven in all -- going to a tree line. "Get 'em! Get 'em! Kill 'em! Calley told me. I waited until they got to the line and fired off four or five grenades. I don't know what happened...."

Q: Then you gathered up people. Why?

PAUL MEADLO: That was my orders. It ain't my reason to say why.

Q: When Lieutenant Calley came up and said, "Take care of these people," why did you continue to guard them?

PAUL MEADLO: I figured he just wanted me to guard them.

Q: Why didn't you shoot them?

PAUL MEADLO: I figured maybe he wanted to hold them for interrogation.

Q: What did you do?

PAUL MEADLO: I held my M-16 on them.

Q: Why?

PAUL MEADLO: Because they might attack.

Q: They were children and babies?

PAUL MEADLO: Yes.

Q: And they might attack

PAUL MEADLO: They might have a had a fully loaded grenade on them. The mothers might have thrown them at us.

Q: Babies?

PAUL MEADLO: Yes.

Q: Then why didn't you shoot them?

PAUL MEADLO: I didn't have no orders to kill them right then.

Q: Why didn't you fire first when Lieutenant Calley said, "I want them dead?"

PAUL MEADLO: Because Lieutenant Calley started firing first. I don't know why I didn't fire first.

Q: What were the people doing when Lieutenant Calley arrived?

PAUL MEADLO: They were sitting down.

Q: The women, the children and babies were sitting down?

PAUL MEADLO: Yes. Q: Did they attack you?

PAUL MEADLO: I assumed at every minute that they would counterbalance. I thought they had some sort of chain or a little string they had to give a little pull and they blow us up, things like that.

Q: What did you do?

PAUL MEADLO: I just watched them. I was scared all the time.

Q: How many people did you take to the ditch?

PAUL MEADLO: Seven or eight people.

Q: Why didn't you shoot these people rather than take them with you?

PAUL MEADLO: I assumed we was going to hold them for interrogation.

Q: Why didn't you kill them?

SOURCE: Linder, Douglas. "The My Lai Courts Martial 1970." Famous American Trials. 2009. University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) School of Law. 17 Mar 2009. <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mylai/mylai.htm>