



Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report

**Intelligence gathering and planning
for the anti-Klan campaign**

Chapter 6



Intelligence gathering and planning for the anti-Klan campaign

The WVO anti-Klan campaign

In the spring of 1979, Paul and Sally Bermanzohn made a trip around the South, collecting historical information around Klan activity (though the trip was not for this specific purpose). They returned with the message that the Klan had been used by the ruling class at various times when there was a crisis, to attack people they thought were dangerous. The Bermanzohns pointed to World War I and the use of racist attacks against immigrants, Jews and Catholics; it had been used during Reconstruction against blacks and people allied with blacks.¹

Don Pelles, former CWP member, recalls these discussions.

At first I thought it was a little bit of a diversion. We were engaged in fighting capitalism, organizing workers, and that kind of thing. It seemed to me at the time that protesting the Klan was a little bit off from what we ought to be doing. Within the WVO, that might have been a viewpoint at the time, but that changed...

(After Paul and Sally's trip), we really felt, the Workers Viewpoint felt, and I agreed, that there was a real crisis in the US and capitalism, an economic crisis beginning and that things were going to get much worse. And there was a real danger of fascism. This resonated with me, between 1979 here and 1933 in Germany, when I knew that there had been armed gangs, Nazis beating up working class and left-wing organizations, attacking people in the streets, some of the battles were with the left-wing Communists in the streets. I really drew a close parallel to those two times and felt that quite possibly, that the renewed activity of the Klan could be a first step in the fascist takeover of the United States.²

Roz Pelles, who was present at the violent march in Decatur, Alabama, (see KKK chapter V), recalled,

My recollection is not that we intended to assault the Klan. It was a dangerous situation, and that people had not thought of the Klan that way, that was naïve. The backdrop all over the South was to stand up to the Klan. I had been at Decatur (with members of WVO) to participate in a huge community struggle to demonstrate on the part of a retarded black man – that became an important cause of the South. The leadership of that had been returning Vets from Vietnam, they literally had the black community of that town guarded and locked down because the Klan had threatened to come in. We arrived at 3 a.m., people were sitting on porches protecting the community with guns. China Grove is in the context of other places having the Klan come and standing up.

This trip of Sally and Paul and others, they were doing trips to visit people all throughout the South. They saw emerging this trend of rise of Klan all over the South – other places all at the same time. While in Decatur, at a huge march led by SCLC, the Klan backed down and ended up leaving, because there were so many people. What impressed me was that community people stood up.³

In the context of growing Klan activity and the threat they believed it posed to racial cooperation in

union organizing and uniting workers politically, the WVO decided to launch an anti-Klan campaign. They believed confronting the Klan was not only confronting oppression, but in addition, if they did so boldly they would win more people to their effort. In late June and early July 1979, representatives from the WVO visited China Grove and met with black residents.

In reviewing WVO fliers and internal documents, and talking with WVO leaders, we find that they advocated for a protest that “modeled” the concept of “armed self-defense” against the Klan and decried what WVO leadership viewed as an ineffective strategy of non-violence.⁴ The WVO leaders say they wanted to show people they need not be intimidated by racist terror and thereby embolden them to unite behind the larger cause of fighting imperialist oppression more broadly. Paul Bermanzohn recalled,

A number of us went to China Grove to talk to people in the black community about what was going on. There was already a movement that had begun to develop members of the black community had talked to the City Council protesting that [Klan members] were going to use the community center... for a recruitment meeting and the impression that they had which I have no doubt is accurate, was that these white city council types kind of winked at each other and you know basically tell us to get lost.⁵

The evidence we have seen suggests that China Grove residents were upset about the Klan’s plans to show the film in their town but were divided on their feelings about the WVO’s presence. However they also had mixed feelings about an open confrontation. We spoke with some older residents in China Grove (who wished to remain anonymous), who said they objected to the WVO’s aggressive tactics and their recruiting in their neighborhood, including what residents said were attempts to recruit children.⁶ Redacted FBI interviews with some residents also reveal some fear and dissatisfaction with the WVO’s activities.⁷ Paul Luckey,⁸ a black resident of China Grove and Vietnam veteran whose neighbors said characterized him as a “righteous man, but with a lot of anger,” was one of those who lobbied for a violent rejection of the Klan’s showing the film in the local community center. Luckey was later called as a defense witness in federal and civil court and claimed that the WVO first came to their community wanting to help, but “by the march it was ‘let’s kill them (the Klan).’”⁹

However, others remembered it differently and expressed gratitude for the WVO’s efforts and said the protest gave them a sense of empowerment:

The people of the community had already known about the Klan organizing a rally at the community center before the CWP even got involved. However, back then, we had no rights to that building because we were located outside the city limits. We had our own community center on our side of town. China Grove was very separated then. They would stay on their side of town and we stayed on ours. The protest march at China Grove came about mainly due to the efforts of Dan Alexander and the CWP. Two people from the CWP came down and talked with Dan about staging a counter demonstration. Dan then brought it forth to the community and that was the beginning. There were a lot of people that thought and still do think that this was just because of the efforts of the CWP but that’s not the case. Many of us in the community felt that this was wrong and wanted to do something about it. We didn’t feel that it was OK for the Klan to come and march in our town while we were still fighting for basic things like our kids getting rides to and from the school.

The workers that came down and met with us were very sincere. I got the sense that they were pretty much like us. They were not in it for money, power or prestige. They were working for something that they truly believed in. They were the kind of people that would sit down and have dinner with you and there wasn’t too much of that going on in China Grove at the time. They told us that the march would be non-violent. There wouldn’t be any guns or weapons. This

was going to be a peaceful march with no confrontations. However, everyone in the community wasn't as accepting of outside help as we were. The older people in the neighborhood didn't want us to participate out of fear of retaliation. The elder 'saints', as we called them, didn't want to stir up trouble. There had been a fear instilled in them from long ago and that fear is still with some of us today. This was the way that they were brought up and they were going to try to instill some of that in the youth. Back then, you were limited as a black person no matter how educated you were. Many of the elders had grown up in a system of racism that would come to be understood by all in China Grove. They thought that these white people who were against the Klan were going to get everyone killed. The white folks in China Grove didn't like the fact that these white people were telling the black people that they had rights. I personally don't think that they paid too much attention to the fact that they were Communists. They just didn't understand why these white people weren't on the same side as they were. They just did not understand why they were trying to help the blacks.¹⁰

Although Luckey's initial protest proposal was violent, police testimony claimed that as plans for the march progressed, he reportedly visited China Grove Police Chief Richard Overcash and asked him to grant the protestors a parade permit as a means of providing protection for the demonstrators.¹¹ China Grove only had four full time officers and four auxiliary officers, so while he denied Luckey's request, the Chief did call the Highway Patrol, the Rowan County Sheriff's office and the NC State Bureau of Investigation to be on hand for backup. Luckey recalled that the protestors got verbal permission from the Chief for their march.¹² On the day when the Klan was to show the film, there was to be one officer at the community center and two in place to follow the march by 11 a.m., an hour before the film was to begin and a half-hour before the protestors began marching toward the community center. The others were on call from the police station, just three blocks away.¹³

A Klan insider recounted that the night before the screening, Grand Dragon Joe Grady called a meeting to disclose information from a police "friend" that Communists were coming to protest their gathering.¹⁴ Grady reportedly laid out a plan for confronting the protestors: women and children would remain in restrooms indoors, while the men would arm themselves and stand guard on the porch. Grady said he believed the permit to use the community center granted them exclusive use, so he argued that if the protestors stepped onto the porch the Klan could rightfully use force to repel them.¹⁵ According to James Allen Mason, Grady claimed the police had agreed to "look the other way" if this happened.¹⁶

The day before the China Grove incident, WVO members Jim and Signe Waller talked seriously about the importance of the anti-Klan campaign, but also about the risks involved in what might lie ahead:

But I also had trepidations. China Grove would be different from previous demonstrations ... Jim agreed this was a different situation ... (The China Grove demonstration) felt different: a calculation of the danger lay just below the surface of consciousness. We had talked about having a baby together. Now we were conscious of new risks in our lives. "It's altogether possible," I told Jim, "that one or both of us will be in jail. Or in the hospital, hurt. Or worse." We could not control the outcome of this thing. As he saw it, by going boldly ahead by making the most militant stand we possibly could against the Klan, we would minimize danger, not only to ourselves, but to others as well ... Others might be spared those horrors (of the Klan) if we took a strong stand, whatever our personal fate turned out to be.¹⁷

On July 8, at about 11:30 a.m., some 100 WVO members and local residents formed a parade from the community center in the black neighborhood of Westside. WVO supplied signs, chant sheets and sound equipment. The protestors marched right up to the porch of the China Grove Community Center, where the Klan and Nazis were already armed and assembled. The two groups faced each other, chanting and

screaming insults.

One China Grove resident who took part in the protest recalled it this way:

On the morning of the march, we all got together and prayed. Immediately after the prayer we took to the streets. Contrary to popular belief, there were way more Westside people marching than CWP people. We could have 'camouflaged' them in the mix. As I recall, there were only 10-15 of them there. We marched from Westside through downtown China Grove to the community center. We marched in the street but it was a side street. I think that the CWP did have a permit because you can't really do anything here without one. As we approached downtown, we could see the police was all over the place as if they were expecting a major confrontation to occur. However, when we reached the community center, I did not see any police present. I thought that they may have been on standby or something. It really didn't matter that much because we thought that the cops were part of the Klan as well. As we approached the community center with our signs, we could see the Klan out in front of the center. They were out there in their robes, hoods, rebel shirts and with their guns. One thing that stuck out to me was the fact that there was this 12-year-old boy with the Klan who had a gun. I couldn't believe that. I don't think that any of the marchers were armed. The two sides stood there face to face and traded insults. This went on for a while. Although things got heated up, we all knew there was a stopping point. Once you see guns and you don't have any, you're not going to try anything. You have to think about the other people around you when things get heated like that. I personally think that there wasn't any violence that day in China Grove because it was a smaller town. We knew most of the townspeople there and knew what they were capable of.¹⁸

Don Pelles, on the other hand, had wrapped his hand and forearm in a towel and was ready for a fight:

(F)rankly, I was ready to beat some Klan heads. That these were Nazis as far as I was ... well some of them actually were Nazis. I never pictured them as big, hefty guys with shotguns. Somehow I pictured them as little wimpy guys in Klan robes cowering on the steps somewhere. It was a militant march, there was chanting and shouting. But when we arrived to community center, we saw a parking lot with people – three - four large white men with beards and shotguns standing on porch. It seemed dangerous. But we were fired up, people were beating on columns of the rec center, yelling at them. It was a very dangerous, volatile situation, but we were so fired up we either didn't notice or didn't care ... It wasn't our intention to fight them, but it was my intention.¹⁹

The Klan and Nazi members were visibly heavily armed with shotguns, rifles and handguns, which several of the witnesses reported were pointed at the demonstrators.²⁰ Although no guns were visible among the protesters,²¹ there is strong evidence that some protestors were (illegally) carrying concealed weapons and several visibly carried clubs, wrapped their forearms and wore hardhats in anticipation of potential violence. As the protestors approached the community center, television news cameras show a police car pull in front of them and one uniformed officer attempt to speak to Paul Luckey. But Luckey and the crowd pushed past and stood directly in front of the porch chanting and waving clubs in the air.

Photos of the China Grove confrontation show clearly that the Klansmen and Nazis on the porch of the community center visibly carried three shotguns, one AR-15 semi-automatic, and three handguns. Although the WVO also were armed, they did not use the firearms to threaten the Klan and we have seen no evidence that the WVO and local protestors intended to use these weapons for anything other than self-defense. Nevertheless, the fact that the WVO had guns meant that they also had the potential

to commit violence.

The WVO recalls that they armed themselves for self-defense, with a keen awareness of the violent history of the Klan and the risk that the demonstrators faced by confronting them. Signe Waller recalls being nervous as they prepared:

We left with the consciousness of going off to battle... People suited up in what can only be described as substandard attire for combat readiness. Riding hats, football helmets, construction hard hats ... We armed ourselves. A few people were designated to carry concealed handguns to defend the marchers if needed. The rest had whatever was on hand: rocks, broken bottles, pipes, sticks. I saw Sally and she was also nervous. She gave me a broken bottle to defend myself. The local protestors also had pipes, sticks, broken glass. Probably some also had concealed guns. ²²

Says Paul Bermanzohn:

"We were very, very aggressive. Not physically but just right up under the Klan's noses. In a way that we surprised ourselves and we surprised them. There were police there—there were four or five police there. The demonstrators were chanting all this stuff about the Klan. The Klan was heavily armed. We were—I was very taken aback by how heavily armed they were. I never had any direct contact with the Klan as an organized group so they were standing on the porch there- the community center-with a lot of big weapons. A few of them had pistols tucked into their belts and white power t-shirts and stuff. They are standing there and people are right up under their noses chanting, "decease, decease, decease the rotten beast." That is the thing that I remember from that. The police were standing there talking with Gorrell Pierce, who was the head Klan guy there, who was wearing a blue serge suit. I swear he looked like he was a car salesman who had just fallen into this thing. He is just standing there. The police are talking to him, not to us but to him, and the police were buzzing in his ear. He is standing right on the porch, right in front of the entrance of the community center, and the police say something to him. I was very close to them so I saw this exchange. And Pierce goes, he nods in agreement to something the police had said, and he signals to his guys and they all go back into the community center so it seemed like this thing was kind of resolved. They seemed to back down so people at that point seized their Confederate flag and burned it and that became a big thing.

At that moment, we wanted to affirm that there had been some kind of victory, that the Klan could be beaten. A few things that happened that were really very striking. One was that there was this black woman from Durham who had come for the demonstration and afterwards, we were all standing there she said "Ah, man, I wish my Grandmother could have been here. They had the guns." She was just thrilled. She thought it was the greatest thing she had ever seen.

So at this demonstration, when they went inside, it was very clear that they had taken a step backwards. There was a discussion right then, right there, we didn't know exactly what to do. What do you do to affirm a victory? There was one suggestion to march around the community center a couple times to declare that you had won. Then someone had the idea of taking the Confederate Flag and burning it which was immediately done. That was about as emphatic a statement that you could make. And there were a couple circuits around the community center. Just one. There is no manual on how to do this right. So people were surprised by the fact that they had backed

down like that because they did have the guns. And we were scared. I think all of us had our hearts in our mouths because it really could have been a disaster but the police were there. I think the police presence is probably a big reason why there was no violence there in contrast to what happened on November 3. And the fact that it was broadcast all over the state repeatedly the Confederate flag being burned was really a very powerful statement that the Klan's flag had been taken and destroyed, I think it was a powerful anti-Klan statement. I think it was a very positive thing. No one was hurt but the Klan's image of invincibility had been damaged. It was a really positive thing.²³

Roland Wood, who had traveled to China Grove as part of the Nazi contingent, recalls being armed and disinclined to back down:

If you look at the pictures of China Grove you will see me on the front porch and I am doing this (waving the protestors forward) to him. But in (my other) hand I have got a .357 and right behind me was a man with a Thompson 45.

Do you know how close we came to a bloodbath that day? ... I wasn't going to go in. Joe Grady came out and got me by the belt and then asked the policeman to help get me inside the building. I didn't want to leave our flags. When they started to burn them ... I went on the front porch and Joe was hollering – No! It's just a flag!²⁴

Gorrell Pierce, who later became Grand Dragon of the Federated Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, recalled:

We could hear them coming...You can just about imagine how it is when you feel like you're in the Alamo and you look out and see all of Santa Ana's army ... We had some uniformed Klan members there like security guards. And in all of China Grove they had two police officers and they looked like they'd just graduated from high school. They come down there and said, "What are we going to do?" I said, "I don't know, but there's a big crowd coming." Our guys arm themselves and then the demonstrators got here ... We were lined up like the Confederate army and the Union army, just within arms length. And people armed. It was like slow motion, and I knew all it would take would be one firecracker because we was already exchanging insults, "Death to the Klan," "Nazis, Klan, scum of the land." And then we would come back, the guys on my side, "Hitler was right, Hitler was right." And it was to the point of fingers in each other's noses. You could feel each other's breath, it was that close, you know.²⁵

Pierce now takes credit for sending the armed Klan and Nazis inside. Paul recalls seeing the lone policeman on the porch whisper into the ear of the man he identified as Grady, after which everyone filed indoors. He describes Grady as wearing a suit, however the news footage reveals it is Pierce who is wearing the suit. Wood maintains it was Grady who sent them inside, and faults him for it since Wood recalls that Grady ran to the back of the crowd and left the rest of them to defend the porch. The video footage also shows three uniformed policemen on the porch at that point.

After the Klan went inside, the ecstatic WVO burned the Confederate flag, and nearly burned the U.S. flag before Paul Luckey intervened. Meanwhile, Grady and Pierce vowed revenge in front of the TV cameras. "I'll have revenge for this. China Grove does have a nigger town," threatened Grady. The Klansmen then proceeded with showing the film because they feared Klan retaliation.

Meanwhile, fearing retaliation, protestors and WVO returned to the Westside community center, where

they blockaded roads into the neighborhood and patrolled with firearms.

A China Grove resident recalls,

After the protest, we came back to the community and locked the town down. This went on for two-three days after the protest. We knew we had stirred up some trouble downtown and were fully expecting trouble to follow us back. In an effort to protect the people of the neighborhood, we didn't let any white people pass through Westside unless we knew them.²⁶

Facing down the Klan

A black China Grove resident:

When this protest took place, I was only 22-years-old ... Most of the people that were involved and marched were about my age. There were some that marched who were as young as 17-18 and some that were in their 30s. This was basically the relative age of the CWP members that came to march with us. It amazes me that it took someone else coming into our community and telling us that we don't have to take this, that we could take a stand. This event showed us that we didn't just have to accept things as they were because they had always been that way. It made me want to fight for a cause that I believed in. It taught me not to be just a follower of someone else's movement. I learned that you have to take a stand to make things better for those that will follow you. The incident at China Grove made me a better and stronger person but I wouldn't be the only one that would come to feel this way. I think that the protest gave the community a little more self-respect. It showed them that they did have a voice. It let people know that they could get a permit to march and protest something that they were against. If it wasn't for that event, most of the people here would still be in the dark.²⁷

Don Pelles, WVO member:

I thought it was the right thing to do to expose the Klan and do what we could to demonstrate against them, basically to let people know that the Klan was not this powerful monolith, but they were a paper tiger. They were blown up a lot worse than they were, and it needed to be shown they were not as powerful as they made themselves out to be and as the press made it out. I think that was the background for China Grove. I went down there feeling like I wanted to do something against a possible rise of fascism comparable to Nazi takeover of Germany in 1933.²⁸

Roz Pelles, WVO member:

[At China Grove, we] were shocked, didn't expect that. I did not expect that the Klan was going to do anything... I didn't expect them to respond in that way... I didn't think that China Grove was going to be that serious. I just figured people would be inside and they would show their film and we would march outside and we'd go home. It was only later that I really understood the magnitude of it. I didn't understand the magnitude until we were away from there... I didn't really understand it until then, how dangerous it was. It was really like being naive...

[The Klan has] a history of cowardly violence. You've heard about Klan marches during the daytime, but you rarely heard about them doing things to people during the daytime. So I just didn't think China Grove was going to be what it turned out to be... A lot of people raise questions about that later, about how serious it was. And the whole question about the Klan. The role of the Klan and how they would respond... it became a small debate.²⁹

Willena Cannon, WVO member:

...(T)hat wasn't my first time in acting with Klans. That has been off and on a process of my whole life. I am from South Carolina, a small town, and a county where they was really known for was next to my county. They call it Horry County. Growing up, I've known a lot of people or heard of people who would go work in that county and they would never come back. Or sometimes they would come back after three days, hungry, tired, whatever, they just worked and were not given any money and then dropped off and they were considered the lucky ones. And later people found them in the swamp. It was a thing that my parents and people I know didn't talk about because if you started questioning too much, then you might disappear too...

... To be honest with you, knowing what they would do was always in the dark and always just one or two people and fifty Klansmen. So for them to come out even when there were a lot of people. To be honest, when I was nine years old, Klansmen burnt a black man up in a barn because he was going with a white woman and this was the first time that the woman would not cry rape or anything like that so it was consensual. I don't even remember all what happened to her. But I remember they were throwing rocks and stuff at her and she was bleeding. And I never heard from that day to this day what happened to the woman. The man was put into an old raggedy barn—you may see barns around now where we aren't using any more but just haven't torn them down--- and locked up, put a stick in it, and then they burnt the barn and you could hear him hollering and screaming and then you could hear him no more. I don't know how deeply that affected me. The Sheriff came when they was getting ready to deal with that— that's why I said my thing is seeing them together - the Sheriff came and said that was none of his business and left and these people carried that out. I was there with cousins. We were standing back but you could see and you didn't interfere. And I would wake up, sometimes even when I was a student at A&T. Well, let me start, at first- that went- I'd wake up screaming through the night a lot. And as old as I got, it wasn't as regular but it was still there and it even happened two or three times while I was at A&T and my roommate didn't know what was going on. So my mind, or my mental, would go back to that. So when we were there, and this may be stupid because I know they are dangerous and they have guns and stuff but, again, I am dealing with how to deal with one or two people and a bunch of them. So to me, what covered my right to be feared or whatever you want to say or should be fearful was mainly- it was getting back at them. I think it was coming from that thing at least I could say back that you are not going to do this and actually say Death to the Klan. It was a race and death to any of that stuff you are doing. Once you say that, it is a slogan that gives you energy. Literally you don't mean that because if you did, you would have guns and gun shells and whatever and all of that. It was like this stuff was over with a whole time ago and here it is so death to that. Death to the whole Klan mentality.³⁰

Liz Wilderman, friend of WVO members who later joined herself:

Now this (the protest in China Grove) was something that I did not want to do. I didn't want to go. I was too scared to go. I was not even in the party at this time. I was just around the party. On the eve of the China Grove protest rally, Tom (Clark) and several other friends came

over to the house to convince me to go. They eventually did. I was told that even though you were afraid to take stands in life, you have to do it if you want to fight for the right things in life. When we got to China Grove, I will never forget how terrified I was when I saw them in their hoods. I remember thinking, we've only got sticks. No one had any guns. So we were there face-to-face with the Klan. The next thing that I remember is Charles Finch grabbing the Confederate flag and setting it on fire. I couldn't believe it but the Klan didn't do anything in retaliation. We were convinced that it just totally proved that our boldness and our strength could outfox the Klan. I felt as if we were stronger and better than the Klan. We came back from China Grove exhilarated.³¹

Marty Nathan, WVO member who was not present at China Grove although her husband Mike was and he came back concerned:

After Mike came back from the China Grove demonstration, and after Paul and Sally left, Mike said: "I was scared to death. We almost got ourselves killed." And I thought to myself: "What's wrong with you, Mike? Why don't you have more spirit?" That became a rift between us.³²

Sally Bermanzohn, WVO member:

The Klan was just like the opposite of what we all had been working for for fifteen, twenty years by then. Because they were—the Klan violence was really a major impediment to black civil rights, equality, equal rights and black, white friendships, relationships and labor, working together side by side and building a union was part of that, was one of those things that the Klan had successfully prevented from happening. I know for me, it was just like, I had heard about the Klan and except for hanging out with CP Ellis who was sort of ex-Klan when we were friendly with him, I had never seen or experienced the Klan. It was just a distant, something that I had read about. It was a scary movie sort of thing. But it was just outrageous, what they were saying, what they were doing, the kind of fear, the kind of reaction they got from people... I came from a white middle class background that I didn't have the kind of experience that Nelson or Willena or that other African Americans had had who grew up in the South and had experienced that type of violence or knew that type of violence or that Paul had had whose family had had it. I was by that time, really familiar with the laws and rules of labor organizing and of debate and strikes and picket lines but I just had not a clue once guns were being pulled. It was like a whole new arena that just was like scary as hell. It was really scary. It was a whole different thing that I did not understand at all. It scared me. For me personally, I really felt the outrage and the anger but I also, for the first time, really felt fear and it was suddenly bigger than I had any clue of what was going on, what were the forces..³³

(After China Grove) I felt the way Mike did, but I didn't know he felt that way. We didn't talk about it. That night, I still felt like we had done the right thing. But the next morning, my elation was gone. No longer was the Klan a remote phenomenon. With my own eyes, I saw the hatred in those men's eyes. I saw their guns...

But I couldn't hide; I was the regional secretary, responsible to the WVO center. I decided I needed to talk to Jerry Tung and others in leadership to tell folks that this was dangerous and to discuss seriously how to proceed.³⁴ ...On the drive up to New York City, Nelson and I agreed that we should not repeat this type of demonstration.

In China Grove, we had the element of surprise, but it was too dangerous to repeat the same type of march in another town.

But when we got to the WVO headquarters in New York City, it was a different story. I said my piece, and Jerry Tung immediately launched into heavy criticism of me. There was no discussion of tactics, of dangers – just of my inadequacies. Jerry said that I was timid, that I had lost my bearings and failed to assume leadership. Rather than address the issue of danger, Jerry said that the China Grove confrontation was a “shining example” of struggles that WVO should be taking up.

No one else in the room said anything. I looked around and realized that, of a dozen people, I was the only woman there. I backed off, feeling like my gender and my white middle-class background must explain why I was such a chicken.

There were lots of other things going on at the WVO headquarters. People were making plans for a founding congress, when Workers Viewpoint would become the Communist Workers Party. Jerry was stressing that party building should be the focus of all our work, that we should be taking up militant struggles like the anti-Klan campaign. The whole thing made me shut up and toe the line.³⁵

Paul Bermanzohn, WVO member:

Fighting with the Klan you have to fight the aura of invincibility that creates such a fear in people; that has to be punctured. That was also the reason I said the nasty things that I did about them later. So here we are in front of the Klan and they have just gone inside. We had won a victory. How do you demonstrate that? ... We were freelancing; we were experimenting, trying to figure out how to do this. No one I knew had a really effective strategy at that point. We were improvising. So we burned the Confederate Flag, and later of course the thing that we got a lot of publicity was, not that people united black and white to oppose the Klan – but that the Klan vowed vengeance. That is what got all the media shortly after.³⁶

Nelson Johnson, WVO member:

In general, in the political culture of the time, there was, you would say, there were some expectation that this might happen. There were tendencies within the group where some people advocated stronger than others by a group like the Klan you know whose MO is violence you know so you really expect them to do that. There were others who said that there was a way to make a political statement, you know, without them. But there was no plan for that....

I can't say that (there was no one with firearms at China Grove). I can say that I did not have one and the people that I know did not have one. In a community like that there are kind of tendencies and King experienced this over in Memphis and we only had a few days of relationships. Our posture was the right of self-defense and the right of armed self-defense which we interpreted as a Constitutional right. There may be some challenge to that so we never felt that we were operating outside of the law. I would make some defense of that now but in a different way than I would have in '79 and it would look more like this: that whatever one's ultimate interpretation of the Constitution is—the right to bear arms, the right to defend one's self and so forth. What I think is terrible is the dual standard for the application of the law and what I see in looking at this is an unequal application of the law where law enforcement

people deliberately with willful forethought says “you can’t have any weapons” and then look at another group bring their weapons, months before in discussions about weapons, know they are going to bring them, see them there, and the fact that they can’t stop them, can’t do anything about it. It is this kind of double-standard that those of us who grew up in the South know that most of this talk is just talk. And that we have been into trials where black people were treated one way and white people were treated another way.

This is the deeper reality that has to be struggled against. So if one group has the right of armed self-defense so should the other group. I think that is the equal application of the law. I would argue at this point that it is my deepest desire that no one will have to resort to violence in order to achieve what I think are the standards of human decency. It was not my view in 1979. I upheld and I defended the right of self-defense, and any force was always understood in that context by me.

I think that has been terribly turned around and we have been turned into the aggressors and makers of violence. But I don’t think the record will support that when it is scrutinized and put in context anymore than a person in this city who might have a gun in their house and could be accused of wanting someone to break into their house so that they can shoot them, you know, or expecting someone to all of the time. But it is a posture of precaution and we felt in relationship to the Klan, it was one that was historically justified. I would just argue that our discussion and attitude towards violence can mainly be understood in that context. That somebody in our group acted outside of or thought outside of that—I cannot say that did not happen but it was not the overall attitude of the group. It was not at odds for people to come in preparation to defend themselves because they thought they were coming to a place where someone might just jump up and attack them.³⁷

Floris Weston, WVO member:

I know now that many others shared the concerns about the fear we experienced at China Grove and we talked about it briefly and quietly, but not real openly and there was no real large discussion about the negative or long-term impacts of it. Personally, my bottom line was that I felt that we were in America and that we would all be protected.³⁸

Riding high after their heady victory in China Grove, the WVO were eager to capitalize on their progress with “the masses” and to win support of the “advanced elements,” as the WVO called them. “Advanced elements” were those who already had an understanding of how the capitalist elite controlled the workers.³⁹

Jean Chapman explained,

The anti-Klan conference had been planned to help educate the community about how the Klan had been used historically and was presently being used to divide workers. Our goal was to attract the most advanced elements of the working class and black community to the march and conference. This is why we used the rhetoric that we did. “Death to the Klan” was more a metaphorical thing than anything else. No one had this notion of going out and shooting the Klan there, then, or any other time. We were looking for slogans that would attract people who weren’t violent but really advanced in their thinking. We were after the ones who could picture

a movement that could really change things. Although looking back, I don't really think that there's anyone who doesn't think that that rhetoric wasn't a mistake.⁴⁰

The WVO leadership envisioned a broader anti-Klan campaign as part of their two-pronged strategy to make their communist ideology real to the lived experience of working people they hoped to reach, and to emphasize why only their organization could “correctly” lead this campaign over the other competing “misleaders” (as the WVO labeled them) like the SCLC or the NAACP, whose reformist approach the WVO saw as “appealing to the state and disarming the people.”⁴¹ The union organizing and anti-Klan campaigns fit together within their broader political agenda of bringing down the economic and political power that they viewed as oppressing poor working people of all races and recruiting members to their organization.

Jerry Tung, national chairman of the WVO, said that China Grove was a “shining example” of the work they should be doing to fight the Klan.⁴² He believed they needed to show everyone that the Klan was not as powerful as people believed.⁴³

But the WVO appears to have met with stumbling blocks. A flier advertising a WVO mass meeting in China Grove on July 21 urges residents to “continue our fight to smash the Klan,”⁴⁴ but the meeting reportedly had only a handful of attendees.⁴⁵ One internal flier from August 1979 indicates that red-baiting might have played a role: “In China Grove, misleaders ... helped the bourgeoisie and its other agents to whip up anti-communism.”⁴⁶ Our own interviews with China Grove suggest some of the black residents did not recall communism being an issue with the objection to WVO involvement, but rather an aspect that surfaced (or was raised) in the debate much later after Nov. 3, 1979 when people looked back on the July protest in China Grove. Older black residents recalled that their objection was the risks they believed the WVO’s style of protest posed.⁴⁷

However, there are numerous references in internal WVO documents to the problems encountered in the China Grove campaign due to what the WVO derided as “incorrect (ideological) lines” about how to implement the new vision and the way forward.⁴⁸ This reflects the internal struggle over the correct strategic approach and theoretical thinking needed to reach their goals.

The Bulletin of the Southern Regional Committee of the WVO (made up of Paul and Sally Bermanzohn, Nelson Johnson, Sandi Smith, Jim Waller and Bill Sampson), dated July 1979, gives some insight into the strategy and dogma behind the anti-Klan campaign. This internal document emphasizes that the “WVO has become the vanguard force in the actual struggles of the working class.”⁴⁹ The strategy laid out to “start from their actual lives, their views, using Marxism to answer their questions ... to make the Party concrete and as their own.”⁵⁰

An internal document entitled “Directive: from the SE: Immediately Take Up the Klan Campaign and Use to Build the Party as we Build for a RED HOT Demonstration and Conference on November 3rd,” discusses strategy and demonstrates that the leadership viewed the rally as a key turning point in their struggle. “The anti-Klan campaign has been lagging. This is mainly because the campaign has not been sharply focused and the tasks have not been adequately defined ... Area leadership put forth that we should build for a statewide anti-Klan conference as the main content of the anti-Klan campaign at this point. We are summing up that the conference alone, as the main content of the anti-Klan campaign for the next month or so is incorrect – instead the main content should be militant direct action – A confrontation with the Klan would be best if we could get it.”⁵¹

With a vision of how confronting the Klan crosscut their civil rights, trade unions, and Marxist underpinnings, and eager to recapture the passion they experienced at China Grove, WVO leaders envisioned the way forward was to build a statewide anti-Klan movement. This would begin

with a conference to educate people on the Klan and “their secret supporters” in industry and law enforcement. The march was envisioned as a way to motivate people from the largely black working class neighborhoods to come to the conference. Nelson Johnson, one of the central figures organizing the march, explained it this way:

The march was distinctly my idea, I do remember that. Because, you know, poor and working people don't just get up and come to conferences in droves. You know, it's the same argument we had around here with the task force about the 25th anniversary and why don't we have a workshop? Because nobody's coming, that I want to come. People want to express this in other ways ...⁵²

...Much of the discussion about why we chose to begin the march in the Morningside community is quite simple to explain. It was a community march with anticipated police escorts and security. We had long-standing experience of work in that community, and we worked alongside many of the residents in the textile mills. Flyers were circulated in the Morningside community and along the entire route; numerous residents were spoken to and invited to participate in the march and conference. That is an unequivocal fact. The questions raised by some about the starting point of the march being in a populated part of the community really arose out of a false post-facto distortion promoted by establishment apologists that this was not a march and conference at all but rather a staged and expected “shootout” with the Klan, from which the police were asked to stay away.⁵³

Don Pelles recalled,

When the idea of another march started floating around, my initial reaction was, kind of annoyance. We did this thing with the Klan, let's be done with it, and move on to something else. I don't know ... I wasn't comfortable with it. I don't think it was fear or anything, it just felt like ... I didn't welcome it, I'm not sure why. ... But plans went along for the march. We put out a poster with map of North Carolina, people from China Grove marching. “Death to the Klan” was the slogan, which at first I thought was a little much.⁵⁴

Fliers were created that outline the bloody history of the Klan and declare, “Turn the other cheek? No Way! ... We are against non-violence and pacifism and for armed self- defense. We should beat the hell out of the Klan wherever we find them. These dogs have no right to exist!”⁵⁵ Another urged, “(The Klan) should be physically beaten and chased out of town – This is the only language they understand!”⁵⁶

In early October, the WVO started distributing a flier with photos of the China Grove confrontation on it and the phrase “Death to the Klan!” The flier announced the anti-Klan march and conference, the assembly point for which was advertised as Windsor Center at 11 a.m.

On October 11, Paul Bermanzohn held a press conference in Kannapolis, where the WVO had been organizing in Cannon Mills. He delivered an intentionally aggressive challenge to the Klan, calling them “cowards” and “two-bit punks” and daring them to “come out from under your rocks and face the wrath of the people.” The story was picked up by the Associated Press and ran the following day in the Charlotte Observer under the headline “Group Seeks Confrontation with the Klan.”⁵⁷

Violent language

Members of the Klan, Nazis and WVO/CWP used language that demonized and challenged each other, language that was violent and provocative, yet protected by the First Amendment. Some examples:

Roland Wood, while on the stand in the civil trial (after using the ‘Heil Hitler’ salute when he was sworn in) sang to the tune of “Jingle Bells,”

*Shooting all the Jews down
Rat a tat tat, Rat a tat tat
Oh what fun it is to have
Nazis back in town!*⁵⁸

Gorrell Pierce, former Grand Dragon of the Federated Knights of the KKK, speaking at a Klan and Nazi rally in Benson, N.C.:

... Now the white man is the son of Abraham, seed of Adam. That nigger, remove him and put him back in Africa and once again he'll dream no dreams, build no cities, saw no lumber and plow no furrows. He'll become, he'll start eatin' himself again. He has never gone anywhere and prospered. The capitalist system, the free enterprise is the best system that's ever been. And democracy works for civilized people. It works for the white race.

*... Everyday I wake up and say 'Thank God I'm white.' I thank God that my grandfather never messed around with any of them sub-humans...*⁵⁹

WVO/CWP members in fliers advertising the July 1979 anti-Klan demonstration in China Grove:

*Turn the other cheek? No Way! ... We are against non-violence and pacifism and for armed self defense. We should beat the hell out of the Klan wherever we find them. These dogs have no right to exist!*⁶⁰

*(The Klan) should be physically beaten and chased out of town – This is the only language they understand!*⁶¹

WVO chants at China Grove:

*“Decease, Decease, Decease the Rotten Beast.”*⁶²
*“Nazis, Klan, scum of the land.”*⁶³

Klan/Nazi chants at China Grove:

*“Hitler was right. Hitler was right.”*⁶⁴

Harold Covington, leader of the National Socialist Party of America (Nazis), in a letter written to the Revolutionary Communist Party (which he had confused with the WVO):

“Almost all of my men have killed Communists in Vietnam and I was in Rhodesia as

well, but so far we've never actually had a chance to kill the home-grown product, although we've put a few in the hospital and we nearly killed some of your people in China Grove last July – we had it all worked out with the cops that if you were dumb enough to try to attack the community center we'd waste a couple of you and none of them would see anything.”⁶⁵

Virgil Griffin, Imperial Wizard of the Cleveland Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, speaking at a Klan rally in October 1979:

“If you cared about your children you would go out and kill 100 niggers and leave their bodies in the street.”⁶⁶

WVO/CWP slogan for Nov. 3, 1979, rally and conference:

Death to the Klan⁶⁷

Paul Bermanzohn, speaking at a news conference Oct. 11, 1979, in Kannapolis, N.C.:

They can and will be crushed. They are cowards, nightriders who try to terrorize innocent people. They must be physically beaten back, eradicated, exterminated, wiped off the face of the earth. We invite you and your two-bit punks to come out and face the wrath of the people.⁶⁸

WVO/CWP letter/flyer dated Oct. 22, 1979, calling addressees “treacherous scum” and “two-bit cowards” and daring them to come to the Nov. 3, 1979, rally and conference:

(To) Klansmen Joe Grady and Gorrell Pierce and all KKK Members and Sympathizers ... We take you seriously and we will show you no mercy.⁶⁹

Klansman Mark Sherer, shouting after firing the first shot (into the air) on Nov. 3, 1979:

Show me a nigger with guts and I'll show you a Klansman with a gun!⁷⁰

Violent language in retrospect

In retrospect, former WVO/CWP, Klan and Nazi members shared reflections with the GTRC on their violent words of decades past. Some examples:

Floris Weston:

Who had ever done that? Who had ever openly opposed the Klan? Hardly anyone. Some people may fight them in the courts from time to time but no one really takes a stand against them in the street and their history is one of a terrorist organization and terrorism is important and real to all of us right now, but the Klan has been killing and terrorizing for years, hundreds of years. So, I didn't think anything against saying “Death to the Klan.” That's an organization that I didn't want.⁷¹

Nelson Johnson:

I deeply regret the use of the slogan "Death to the Klan." In retrospect I am clear that it was an unfortunate, ill-advised slogan. The slogan was meant to convey the weight of our conviction about the damage done by racism, a challenge this nation, especially whites, still needs to face. It would have been more accurate to say "death to racism." As the slogan was formulated, it lent itself to distortion and misuse suggesting that we meant death to a person or to a group of people. That was no more the case than the A&T football slogan "The Blue Death Defense" meant that A&T's football team intended to physically kill the other team ... Even in saying all of that, we are in large part responsible for whatever misunderstanding arose from that phrase, because it was our decision to use that phrase "Death to the Klan" as a slogan.

Secondly, I very much regret that a flyer was developed in the form of a letter that called the Klan members cowards and challenged them to come from under their rocks and face the wrath of the people. That was wrong. The names demeaned and devalued the potential of people who were members of the Klan and or the Nazis. Although in a letter form, it was really a flyer and I need to emphasize here that it was never mailed to anyone by us. Nevertheless, it was wrong and should not have been done, and I do apologize for that letter to my brothers and sisters who were and may still be Klan or Nazi members⁷².

Paul Bermanzohn:

I believe Nelson Johnson has taken credit, or blame, for this letter in the past, but I wrote it and then he and I discussed it, at least that's my recollection of that.

I've been asked, even by friends, if I was sorry that I said this and would I do it again since the result was so awful. This is a little like asking someone when did you stop beating your wife. There are a lot of assumptions in the question. In this case it presupposes what happened was merely an explosion by good old boys of the Klan righteously reacting to the taunts and jeers of that impotent loud Jew from New York...I wouldn't do it the same way but not because what I said wasn't true. When I called the Klan a bunch of cowards, there is nothing wrong with that – that's right. Call them murderers; the truth is on the video tape. The reason I wouldn't do it again is because what I said was used to cover-up the government's role. It became Bermanzohn the loudmouth; you know what I'm saying. It became this thing, because I said nasty things about the Klan, all of which were true by the way, that there is no need to look into the role of the government agents in this whole thing. Which to me is the ominous, most threatening, horrifying part of the whole story; so it was used to cover-up the possibility of a government organized hit squad used to kill a group of young revolutionary leaders and to terrorize a growing movement.

I've pondered my words for 25 years ... I wouldn't say what I said then now but I understand better what I did say. It was the blood of my murdered family that was crying out for vengeance. And it was used by a craven media and legions of political hacks to make it look like we were asking to be murdered.⁷³

Willena Cannon:

People always tell me that the Klans have a right to show "Birth of a Nation." That's their right. Why would you stop that right? Me, as a black person, don't have a right

*to protest showing hanging and lynching of black people? Where is my right? I'm sixty-five years old, and I'm sorry, but if the Klans go to show that crap tomorrow, I'll be there.*⁷⁴

Gorrell Pierce:

*I'm glad I was at China Grove now because that turned out real good, and nobody got hurt and everybody had a little bit of fun shouting at each other. It's all right to shout, it's all right to burn each other's flags. But as my grandpa said, "Son, this here killing people is bad business." And it is.*⁷⁵

Roland Wood:

*I wore a swastika. I was a boot stomping Nazi, full of hate, prejudice and bigotry. I hated anything that wasn't white. I hated my own mother because she was married to a Jew, although I loved her. I was sick and perverted. And that man was probably better to me than any other man had been in my life. He was my mother's husband. I'm putting it straight with you. I was sick with prejudice and hatred.*⁷⁶

On Oct. 20, the WVO leadership announced at the national conference that the name would be changed to the Communist Workers Party. The Southern Regional branch decided to announce the change at the Nov. 3, 1979 rally. Although the group had been avowed Communists prior to the change, the direct association with the party in their name nevertheless produced mixed feelings, which persist today.

Sally Bermanzohn:

I think I was not comfortable. I liked being a union organizer ... I was a product of the 60's. I thought fundamental change, which I saw as revolution, was really important ... I thought we could learn from other countries that had had communist revolutions or communist parties, that we could learn from that ... I didn't like to be called communist – having our name become the Communist Workers Party. That was a big difference that I had with people.

*... We were, we saw ourselves as Communists. And that came out of being ... our experience as anti-war demonstrators in the '60's. I know that I was struck by, struck by the national liberation struggles going around the world: Africa, Asia. And I was impressed that there could be an organization, as the country was falling apart, that could try to organize people to rebuild something. That is how I saw the communist party. This was in the 70's. It was a pretty distant and romantic idea. I didn't have any concrete idea about that in terms of practical matter. None of us did, or speaking for myself, I didn't.*⁷⁷

...My feelings about this had a lot to do with my kind of hesitations and stuff had a lot to do with ... being that I differed from some people there because they were of poorer or more oppressed background than I was. And that made me...I mean my family is not wealthy, you know, but it's also not as oppressed or as beaten, down-trodden as Paul's or Willena's. And because I respected people it made it hard for me to kind of like own my own view and argue it. Express it. And I guess I just felt that I was always much more into the short term benefits or justice issues than kind of a long term glorious revolutionary future. That was just my orientation, always. So

I was just always kind of the reluctant person in terms of the long term thing. And I still feel that way. I'm really into right now and I don't know what's going to happen. I mean I think it's good to think about the long term stuff but I think you can get carried away with grand theories. I am much more interested in right now.

. . . I think I was always more hesitant. In the whole thing. I loved the fact that a group of white and Latino people from Durham merged with a group of black activists in Greensboro. I just thought that was great and I had heard about Nelson and – I knew Joyce, we went to Duke together and loved the fact that we merged with them. I loved the organization and I loved becoming a family with – you know Sandi, Willena. . . You know, the whole crowd. I just felt very very strongly about them. I didn't really like the larger rhetorical debates, and this and that. It wasn't what I was interested in – and I think that is why I kind of got a little bit demoralized. Even though it really had nothing do with—I was just confused about the long term and the short term. And having . . . what we were about. BUT I was totally amazed and surprised – horrified – by Nov 3. I had not any premonition of that. Nothing at all.⁷⁸

Paul Bermanzohn:

The name is a significant thing. I mean in this country if there is anything like an official religion in the United States from WWII onwards (it) was anti-communism. So to call yourself that in a certain way was to make yourself a lightning rod. There is no question about that. There is a real downside of that there's been such a sustained brainwashing effort by the forces in power in this country to justify their expansionism principally because the Soviet Union was never anything like the threat they claimed. The advocacy or the assuming of that label was a dangerous thing, to be sure. . . . when we changed our name the planning on the assault on us was already well under way—and was pretty well locked in from all the reports that I've read. So it really didn't have any serious effect on the attack but it was something that did make it easier for the media to marginalize us, isolate us and attack us in the press and in the courts.

It became part of the political offensive. You know, the second wave of attacks on us if you will. And it was quite effective I think—cause we were . . . Think of it, 25 years later we are still trying to let folks know that it is not right that people should be shot down in the street in broad daylight simply for what they believe. But they were able to get away with that—broad daylight, 4 TV stations, people get shot down and they get away with it. Full acquittals, two trials and they're still walking the streets – in part because they were able to marginalize the victims because of this name, because of this word that has been so toxified by the long process of attacks from the U.S. government on this word and this concept and what it really means. So it was a very significant thing whatever view you might have of it. It was really an important part of the whole story. But by no means the whole story for the reason it happened. The reason that this happened was because we had gotten good at pulling together the workers' movement. That's the reason that this happened. That's my view. And I think that's consistent with past incidents in North Carolina history and the history of the United States.⁷⁹

Nelson Johnson:

While I cherish much of what I have learned from my study of Marxism, the word communism, however, no longer describes my core beliefs. In addition, because of

the fear and confusion associated with the word, it became almost impossible to use that term to convey broadly anything of positive value. I would note in passing that there is a passage in a very broadly read book which says, "Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need." This saying comes for the second chapter of Acts, verses 45 and 46, in a book called the Holy Bible. I think our culture would do well to ponder its implications as it relates to our economic structure and way of life.⁸⁰

Much of the public debate around the Nov. 3, 1979, shooting has centered around a WVO flier that took the form of a letter, dated Oct. 22, 1979, and addressed to "Klansmen Joe Grady and Gorrell Pierce and all KKK Members and Sympathizers." The letter again called the KKK "treacherous scum" and "two-bit cowards," and renewed their challenge for the Klan to come to the rally and warned that, "We take you seriously and we will show you no mercy." Nelson Johnson says that letter has been used to claim the CWP asked to be murdered.

Nobody even knew who to mail it to. And if the Klan got that, it was because the police gave it to them, or because the police informant gave it to them, or the possibility of a Klan member getting it at a place of work. It was circulated there. It wasn't a wise thing to do but it has now become the kind of smoking gun that you wanted these people to come and you expected them to come. As foolish as it looks in retrospect, it really wasn't that. It was a statement to model that you really do not have to be afraid of these people.⁸¹

Attempts to publicize the march met with obstacles. Sometime after the RCP and GPD clash in Hampton Homes, the WVO claimed they began to encounter hostility when they passed out leaflets in the neighborhood, because residents evidently were angry about the trouble there and also confused about the difference between the RCP and WVO. The WVO began distributing a leaflet that discussed their differences with the RCP and the platform of the WVO, and at the bottom advertised that, "Right now we are organizing a statewide campaign to Smash the Klan. On Saturday Nov. 3, 1979, the Anti Klan march will come right through your community."⁸² We have not seen evidence of how many homes to which this particular leaflet was distributed, if any, but it suggests there were discussions with at least some local residents about the planned march to come through their neighborhood. WVO members Dale Sampson, Willena Cannon and Joyce Johnson all say they personally participated in leafleting the neighborhoods where the march was planned.⁸³ Yet some former residents of Morningside maintain that they did not know an anti-Klan march was planned in their backyard.

At the same time, the WVO complained that the police were taking down posters for the march, which they said were illegally plastered on telephone and street light poles.

Willena Cannon:

A lot of the signs they have talked about, that was put up on some of the light posts...I put them up, along with election signs and garage sale signs and many other signs. We put up posters about the march and conference. So, the police was harassing me all during these weeks, about putting up signs. They said nothing about the other ones on those posts⁸⁴.

Nelson Johnson denounced the police interference in a press conference on the front steps of the Department, "At every point the Police Department has tried to disrupt and disorganize our plans. They hide behind the law and try to appear neutral. Instead of attacking us directly, they sneak around to do their dirty work. The police have torn down posters and have harassed people putting up announcement of the conference. But, most significantly, they are spreading lies, confusion and fear."⁸⁵

Morningside residents caught in harm's way

Morningside residents were terrified to be caught in the fray of gunfire on Nov. 3, 1979. There are differing viewpoints about whether the WVO adequately consulted neighborhood residents about their intention and potential risks of their march.

Tammy Tutt, a Morningside resident who was 10 years old recalled:

When we woke up on the morning of Nov. 3, 1979, we were very afraid. Rumors had been circulating even the day before that the Klan was coming and that nobody was safe in the community. I had a vision in my mind, in my ten year old mind, of people running up and down the streets, shooting at all of us and none of us would be left standing. People in my community knew that something bad was going to happen and would not allow any of the children to go outside and play. And nobody that had to shop on that day even went out to the grocery store. Although I will not recall the events of the day because they are all too familiar to us, I would like to say that even as a child I felt so much anger and frustration that something was about to happen, something bigger than what I even knew how to do anything about. People knew about it and they were so disempowered that they could not join together to bring about a change.⁸⁶

Candy Clapp, a resident who was a few days shy of her 16th birthday on Nov. 3, 1979:

We questioned why the Communist Workers chose to march in our community, a community that was already going through its own private hell. How did they decide to march in front of the office? We had no idea that they were even there. If we had known something like this shooting would have taken place we would have left.⁸⁷

Willena Cannon:

Leaflets, and you do it about three times and then talking to people. I did that myself. Some people would help. I can't remember. I believe Sandi did. People had leaflets and they may forget but you remind them again. And then you talk to people and I didn't talk to everybody in there but I talked to a lot of people in there but you talk to some of the people about it. Talk to some of the people who raise the questions why these Klan's showing up like that, going to have the march and then we're going to have this conference, and then they find out the ruler of this Klan thing, how to deal with, and who to hook it up with and not let Corporate America separate itself from it. Actually corporate here in Greensboro because that's who we were dealing with but anywhere they are using it. Sometimes Bill helped in there because he knew people and he got people to help them. If he was working at the water plant and you worked there with him and you lived at Morningside then you would help him. That was going on. That is always the best way when you go into community... We worked with the youth in there... they were much more effective than me.⁸⁸

Nelson Johnson:

Now much of the discussion about why we chose to begin the march in the Morningside community is quite simple to explain. It was a community march with anticipated police escort and security. We had long-standing experience of work in that community, we had worked alongside many of the residents in the textile industry. Janie, I had worked right beside her,

and one of the cooks in the ovens. Flyers were circulated in the Morningside community and along the entire route; in fact, we leafleted every community that we were going through: Morningside, Ray Warren, all along Asheboro Street, Hampton Homes and where we were going to end at Smith Homes. Not only did we leaflet, we put up posters everywhere, which the police have already testified to.

...(L)et me now, how can I say, speak with softness to those in Morningside who have suffered too much, and who don't recall these things: I do know that there are many people from Morningside who do recall, but they have not come to this Commission and perhaps a little later on we can speak to that, but this question arose out of a false post-facto position promoted by establishment apologists that this was not a march and a conference at all. It was a staged, expected "shootout" with the Klan, from which the police were asked not to come. And once you put that view out there, I can understand how people would have a terribly negative reaction to that kind of thing happening in their community.

(After Nov. 3, 1979)I have visited people in Morningside Homes... and a dear friend of mine came down almost in tears and said "really, I just need to ask you to go because I am afraid of what might happen to us if you are here." Do some studying of what happens to people when this level of trauma comes over them. And almost everyone who had any relationship with us and said so who worked at the plant got fired. Just like that. And so the wise thing to do is to say that you don't know nothing about these people ... I don't know how many you've talked to, but I think that you would need to think about who talks to you. And who's willing to talk to you and the many people who are still reserved about coming forward with this. It's very real in this city. It's still here and the impact of the fear is more than most people realize even today.⁸⁹

Evelyn Taylor, president of the Morningside Neighborhood Council in 1979, who recalled that she and the WVO informed residents of a meeting to discuss the march, but attendance was poor:

Housing authority didn't keep you from coming over there. If that was the case then they would have never allowed me to give them a dinner for them, for the communist workers. I gave a luncheon, beautiful luncheon. They supplied the food; I supplied the building and hospitality to go along with it. Nobody, I'm just telling you now, would come up there and greet them people but me. So does it seem like I had anything against them? They had the run of the building for the whole evening for as long as they wanted to stay. Food, food, food! They brought in all this food, catering and stuff. They had a beautiful time. They had a meeting at Bennett College that Friday night. Like I said, everybody was welcome. Everybody over there, I made it known to them that I was going to host a luncheon for them and to come up and join us. You think they came? No! They didn't want to be bothered. Probably going to find a lot of that now. We don't want to be bothered. We rather stay out of it.⁹⁰

White supremacists' anti-Communist campaign

After China Grove, white supremacists were also experiencing in-fighting and looking for a way to attract new recruits. Joe Grady's Klan had broken off from Bill Wilkerson's Imperial Empire to form the NC Knights of the KKK. It was in an effort to win over members to their new organization that the recruiting drive showing "Birth of a Nation" in China Grove was planned.⁹¹ More splintering of the white supremacists followed the face-off with protestors in China Grove. Some believed it was an

embarrassment to publicly back down to their enemies.⁹² Others distrusted the emerging cooperation with the Nazis. Others thought it was foolish to take up the Communists dare to confront them in Greensboro. Joe Grady put it bluntly, “If these Communists think they are going to get me to attack them, they are crazy as hell.”⁹³

However, those Klansmen who broke from Joe Grady following China Grove and either joined the Nazis or Virgil Griffin’s Invisible Empire supported the union of like-minded groups like the Klan, Nazis and The Rights of White People.⁹⁴ In the post-Vietnam Cold War atmosphere of the late 1970s, Communists were an easy scapegoat. Together they launched their own campaign against Communists as part of their attempt to spread their common ideology of white supremacy and gain membership in an increasingly fractured Klan community.

The Nazis and Klan seemed to be as confused as the local police about the difference between the RCP and the WVO, and may have attributed what were considered to be “offenses” against the Klan committed by one to the other. The front page of the August 1979 edition of the Nazi newsletter, The New Order, carried a photo from China Grove of armed Nazis and Klansmen said to be “holding the line against the Reds.” The caption incorrectly identifies the protestors who “attacked” the meeting as the Revolutionary Communist Party.⁹⁵

Further, on Sept. 11, 1979, the RCP received a letter from Harold Covington, claiming, “Almost all of my men have killed Communists in Vietnam and I was in Rhodesia as well, but so far we’ve never actually had a chance to kill the home-grown product, although we’ve put a few in the hospital and we nearly killed some of your people in China Grove last July – we had it all worked out with the cops that if you were dumb enough to try to attack the community center we’d waste a couple of you and none of them would see anything.”⁹⁶

Meanwhile, white supremacists’ plans to confront the “Communists” continued to progress. On Sept. 22, members of Harold Covington’s American Nazi Party, Leroy Gibson’s Rights of White People and Virgil Griffin’s Invisible Empire held a rally in Louisburg, N.C. and agreed to “pool their resources” for common goals.⁹⁷ Covington reportedly described this coalition as the United Racist Front.⁹⁸

At about this time in late September, Klansman Eddie Dawson⁹⁹ claimed he went to see GPD Detective Jerry Cooper for the first time and expressed interest in disrupting RCP meetings. On Sept. 23, 1979, FBI Special Agent Bogaty received a phone call from Eddie Dawson, a former informant, who asked if there was any difference between the RCP and WVO.¹⁰⁰

The WVO augmented the Klan and Nazis’ desire to seek revenge for China Grove with the use of aggressive challenges to the Klan’s manhood. On Oct. 14, just a few days after Paul Bermanzohn’s press conference challenging the Klan, the state board meeting of Griffin’s Invisible Empire of the KKK met in Icard. In attendance were: Virgil Griffin, Chris Benson, Coleman Pridmore, Jerry Paul Smith, Mark Sherer, Carl Nappier,¹⁰¹ and David Matthews, all of whom later were passengers in the Greensboro caravan. The Charlotte Observer article about the press conference was reportedly passed around and they discussed going to confront the anti-Klan marchers in Greensboro. Also a topic of discussion was the “backing down” of the Klan to the Communists and blacks in China Grove. The board members agreed to go back and discuss what to do with their own individual units.¹⁰² Virgil Griffin explained to the GTRC the reasons he wanted to confront the marchers:

Why I came to Greensboro, China Grove had nothing to do with it. I wasn’t there ... The reason I came to Greensboro, they put the poster out: Death to the Klan, said we’s hiding under rocks, we were scum. I’m not scum, I’m as good as any man walks on this earth. I’m as good as anybody. That’s why I

*came to Greensboro. I don't hide under a rock from nobody. I'm not scum, I'm not ashamed to say I'm Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, and I'm not afraid of no man. And I don't hide. That's why I'm here today.*¹⁰³

A week later, on Oct. 20, the Klan held a state rally and march in Lincolnton. Some 150 people attended, and Griffin told the crowd, "If the people there cared anything about their children they would go out on the street and kill 100 niggers and leave them dead on the street."¹⁰⁴ Afterwards, there was a private meeting with some 60-80 Klansmen and their wives, including Benson, Nappier, Renee and Terry Hartsoe, Matthews, Jerry Paul Smith, Pridmore, Sherer, Toney, and Billy Joe Franklin. Griffin reportedly introduced Dawson, who gave a fiery speech about the trouble Greensboro had been having with Communists and their insults to the Klan in recent months, including the newspaper report of the challenge to "the two-bit cowards to come out from under their rocks and face the wrath of the people." He told the crowd about the planned anti-Klan rally and encouraged a counter-rally to show the Communists the Klan was not afraid of them.

It is clear from the testimony of witnesses that the subject of violence was discussed at this meeting, and that hostility toward the Communists was deliberately inflamed by Dawson, the GPD informant. When someone in the audience asked about the use of firearms, Dawson claimed that he replied, "I am not your father. I can't tell you whether to bring guns or not," but that they should have bond money if they bring concealed weapons because they will be arrested.¹⁰⁵ He warned that police and FBI and maybe even the National Guard will be lining the parade route. Dawson cautioned (or rather, dared) those present that there will probably be several hundred Communists at the march, and those who came should expect to be involved in a fight. Dawson said he told the audience, "if you push [the WVO], they're gonna push you back. And you're not fooling around with [the WVO] because they're just not gonna take none of your nonsense."¹⁰⁶ Griffin reportedly urged women not to come because violence was expected and they could be injured.¹⁰⁷ Carl Nappier recalled that Dawson "wanted people who knew how to brawl" because six black colleges would send students and football teams in support of the Communists, and there would be some "big buck niggers ... bigger than anyone in this room." After hearing Dawson's assessment, Nappier recalled, "I was ready for a knock-down, drag-out fight."¹⁰⁸

Convergence

All these threads of hostility begin to weave together in the early fall of 1979. Virgil Griffin's Klan was interested in publicly striking back at the Communists to boost his numbers and used explicitly racist language to encourage people to violently disrupt the rally. The WVO pursued what they termed "militant direct action" in both aggressively confronting the Klan's racism and encouraging people to take an armed self-defense posture against the Klan's violence and armed intimidation tactics. The hierarchical WVO leadership – especially national Party Chairman Jerry Tung – dismissed those who expressed misgivings and pushed ahead with aggressively challenging the Klan, employing provocative language in promotional materials.

Meanwhile, the Greensboro police wanted to gather information on the communists and the Klan, so they engaged Eddie Dawson, a loyal Klansman who also wanted to attend and heckle local communist gatherings, as an informant. Dawson recalls going to the GPD to ask if anyone in intelligence was interested in information on communist groups.¹⁰⁹ Dawson first approached Maj. Phillip Colvard, who had been head of intelligence when Dawson was a Klan informant to Lt. Ford in the late 1960s. Even during that period, Dawson had been interested in confronting communist groups.¹¹⁰ Colvard took Dawson to meet with Lt. Talbott and Det. Cooper, who were assigned to that area.¹¹¹ In their first meeting, Dawson says Cooper urged him to go to the RCP meeting.¹¹² Cooper claims it was Dawson, at his own initiative, who said that he wanted to go to RCP meeting at the Holiday Inn Four Seasons on Oct. 14 and disrupt it. Cooper and Talbott recall that they told Dawson he would be arrested if he broke

the law, but they would be interested in the information if Dawson did go to the RCP meeting.¹¹³

As early as Oct. 10, 1979, police staff began discussing the WVO's anti-Klan parade. In the Oct. 10 staff meeting the parade plans were raised as a result of a Channel 8 newscast about it just a few days before. No permit had yet been requested and a discussion ensued about whether such a permit could be denied.¹¹⁴ When Police Attorney Cawn advised that denying the permit would violate the WVO's freedom of speech, he added that restrictions could be made on the parade in the interest of public safety and specifically to avoid a violent confrontation between police and the WVO. Capt. Wynn was reportedly especially vocal in this meeting, making suggestions about restrictions on carrying firearms and limitations on the size of posts and thickness of cardboard for placards, which could be used as weapons.¹¹⁵ This discussion was held prior to Paul Bermanzohn's fiery press conference in Kannapolis and before the RCP/WVO altercation at the White Oak mill.

Inconsistent with these meeting minutes, Lt. Gibson testified in the federal criminal trial that he was the one to first raise concerns about denying the WVO permit or placing weapons restrictions, due to what he felt was Nelson Johnson's "propensity for violence."¹¹⁶ Gibson says he raised these concerns with his commanding officer, Maj. Wynn, after one of his officers gave him a flier announcing the march that he had been handed at the A&T homecoming on Oct. 13.¹¹⁷ Gibson says this was the first he had heard of the rally, although it was after the news report that his commanding officer reportedly saw, as well as after the staff meeting when parade restrictions had been discussed. It was also after the provocative press conference where Paul Bermanzohn challenged the Klan to come, which had been picked up by the AP wire. It is also very soon after the rock throwing incident involving the GPD and RCP in Hampton Homes. The flier, which is not dated, announces the gathering point to be at Windsor Center at 11 a.m.¹¹⁸

In any case, whoever initially raised the concerns or when, all sources agree that it was due entirely to their perception of Nelson Johnson as a dangerous troublemaker that would stir up the black community against the police, stemming from what they believed was a lead role in inciting the Dudley/A&T violence in 1969 (See From Black Power to Multiracial Organizing).

On Oct. 14, the RCP held the public meeting in the Holiday Inn conference room, with Party Chairman Bob Avakian as the invited speaker. Dawson attended, intending to collect information for the GPD, and presumably for the Klan. However, one of the RCP members present recalled that Dawson immediately stood out as an infiltrator and the meeting was announced as cancelled due to security reasons. In fact, according to one of the RCP members present, the meeting was moved to a hotel across the street, but only those who were known members were informed.

Dawson was not the only observer at the RCP meeting at the Holiday Inn. The Criminal Investigation Division also had several officers monitoring the meeting. Cooper was listening in the next room, he said so that he could assess Dawson's reliability as an informant.¹¹⁹ Thomas, however, was also aware that Dawson had expressed a desire to cause a disruption¹²⁰ and said they were surveilling the meeting because "we were on the anti-Klan march, we were interested in any reaction there might be to that gathering at the Holiday Inn."¹²¹

On Oct. 15, Griffin called Dawson and told him the Nazis are sending 150-200 persons to Greensboro and that Griffin had sent a letter of invitation to everyone he knew.¹²² Dawson reported this information to Cooper, and tells him he planned to go to a second RCP meeting on Oct. 21, again suggesting that he would like to disrupt the meeting. Although they felt there had not been much information of use in Dawson's report, Thomas recalled that Cooper and Talbott felt that "with the march coming up and our need to be informed, maybe we should give him something."¹²³ Dawson was paid \$25 for the information.¹²⁴ Thomas also reported that "a month or two before Nov. 3" he had met informally with

FBI agent Leonard Bogaty to discuss the WVO's "activity in the mills and other things." He recalled, "It seemed to me to be building, you know, the rhetoric--a little bit stronger."¹²⁵

Sometime around this time, the Hickory Klavern of Griffin's Invisible Empire met in Icard to discuss taking up the WVO's challenge to confront the Communist's anti-Klan rally. That meeting was attended by Terry Hartsoe, David Matthews, Carl Nappier, Ruby Sweet and Harry Hayes.

On Oct. 19, after the RCP/WVO fistfight at White Oak and the staff meetings at which GPD Division Commanders discussed weapons restrictions for the parade permit and the information that the Klan was planning to come to Greensboro for a demonstration on Nov. 3, 1979, Nelson Johnson went to the GPD to apply for a parade permit.¹²⁶ He met with Capt. Larry Gibson, who told him of the restrictions on weapons and the size of sticks that could be used.¹²⁷ When Johnson objected, Gibson reportedly told him that it was not the WVO's responsibility to provide protection, but the GPD's.¹²⁸ Johnson recalls it this way:

I asked Capt. Gibson, "Why are you doing this, is this a request you normally make of a group applying for a parade permit?" I said, "You know it is legal in North Carolina for people to carry firearms if they are not concealed." And then focusing intensely on Capt. Gibson, I asked him pointedly, "Do you know something I don't know?" Capt. Gibson, speaking deliberately and with authority, said, "We are responsible for the safety of this city, including you and the march. If you want a parade permit you will have to sign this document." He did not leave the room, he didn't consult with anyone, so I felt that a discussion and a decision on this matter had been made by police authorities before I arrived.¹²⁹

The parade starting point on the permit was Everitt and Carver at 12 noon. Gibson admits in his deposition that he specifically asked Johnson about the conflict between the permit starting point and the one advertised on posters as Windsor Center at 11 a.m. In Gibson's recollection, Johnson explained that they planned to transport everyone from Windsor Center to the Everitt and Carver location.¹³⁰ Johnson testified in the federal criminal trial that the posters had been made with the Windsor location before they had discussed the parade route. They decided that they would gather more people to the march if the parade began in Morningside, but that Windsor Center would be an easier gathering spot for people coming from out of town.¹³¹

Gibson has further told the GTRC that at the time that he took Johnson's permit application he had not attended and was not aware of any intelligence meetings nor of any information regarding the Klan's plan to confront the march,¹³² and we have no evidence to the contrary. Indeed, the Lincolnton Klan rally where Dawson and Virgil had taken a head count as to how many Klansmen said they would come to Greensboro had also not yet occurred at the time of that meeting between Gibson and Johnson.

On Oct. 22, Dawson reported to Cooper and Talbott on what had been discussed at the Oct. 20 Klan rally in Lincolnton. He advised them that 85 Klansmen were planning to come to Greensboro to confront and heckle the Communists, and that they had discussed bringing guns.¹³³ He was paid \$50 for this information.¹³⁴

On that same day, Capt. Hampton, the District II commander (where the march and conference would be taking place) in charge of field operations for the parade, informed Sgt. Comer that he would be providing on-the-ground coverage of the parade and would have two officers accompanying him. Comer expressed concern that additional manpower would be needed but Hampton told him there were no plans for extra officers to work the march.¹³⁵ Comer deliberately chose two black officers from his squad, T.R. Johnson and J.T. Williams, to be the officers to accompany the march because he thought

their presence would be less likely to antagonize the marchers and that they could talk with Nelson Johnson.¹³⁶

On Oct. 23, Comer met with Lt. Spoon, who was to be the field commander in charge of the march while Hampton was away at a meeting at 12 noon.¹³⁷ They discussed coverage for the parade and Comer, still concerned about the coverage because of what he calls “the nature of the WVO,” again asked if there would be additional manpower. He was told there would not be.¹³⁸

Sometime before Nov. 3, Dawson called Lt. Ford, who used to be Dawson’s handler in Criminal Intelligence when Dawson previously was an informer for the GPD in the early 1970s. Dawson told Ford that some 35-50 Klansmen were coming to confront the WVO march, that they had planned it at the Lincolnton Klan rally, and that guns had been discussed. Dawson told Ford he had also told Cooper this. Dawson said he wasn’t sure if the Klan would bring guns, “but,” he ventured, “this is a bunch of rednecks.”¹³⁹

Although he was retired at that point, Lt. Ford said he was concerned and went to see Deputy Chief Burch. He recounted the information, and said that coupled with the incident at China Grove and the fact that the WVO had publicly called the Klan cowards, he was concerned that there could be an explosive situation at the march and they should take appropriate security measures. Burch asked Ford to come to a strategy meeting and Ford said he would if they notified him when it would take place. Ford offered to arrange a meeting between Dawson and Burch, but Burch declined, saying that he’d take Ford’s word for it. Nevertheless, Ford called Dawson and asked if he would meet with Burch. Dawson said yes. Ford was never notified about a strategy meeting.¹⁴⁰

On Oct. 26, Dawson phoned Cooper to reiterate that Harold Covington’s Nazis, Virgil Griffin’s Klansmen and members of Leroy Gibson’s Rights of White People were all planning to come to Greensboro to disrupt the march, and that an unknown number of Klansmen may be coming from out-of-state. Dawson said the plan was to meet at the home of a local Klansman, Brent Fletcher, on Randleman Road on the outskirts of Greensboro, and then follow the parade to heckle and throw eggs. In addition, Griffin planned to ride the parade route the night before to look for a spot for a “confrontation.”¹⁴¹

Talbott reportedly told Cooper to instruct Dawson not to attend a meeting with Deputy Chief Burch. According to the FBI, Lt. Talbott reportedly thought that Lt. Ford was acting out of line and “Ford was interfering in this operation because he intended to make himself look good for the Chief of Police.” Talbott disagreed with that characterization of his statement, but did agree that he thought it was inappropriate for Ford to become involved with Dawson since he was someone else’s informant.¹⁴²

On or about Oct. 26, Comer reportedly asked Spoon to request extra assistance in covering the parade from the Tactical Section. Spoon said he would check into the request and advise Comer.¹⁴³

On or about Oct. 28, individual supremacist groups met to further discuss plans for Greensboro. There was a Klan rally in Lincolnton, with about 25 Klansmen in attendance.¹⁴⁴ The Rights of White People met in Louisburg and some 40-50 people attended. Chris Benson, Virgil Griffin’s close advisor, reportedly spoke to this group about the plans for confronting the Communists in Greensboro. Miller and Covington also were present.¹⁴⁵ The Hickory Klavern held a meeting in Icard to discuss their plans for Greensboro, and their anticipation of violence.¹⁴⁶ Nappier said that he told the group, “I figured we’d probably have to fight,” but that he wanted to use their fists, not to bring guns because that would make them look afraid. However, Nappier said others present insisted they would bring guns, “so they could kill them somebody.”¹⁴⁷ Terry Hartsoe was present that evening and said he brought his shotgun “in case of trouble” because he thought the WVO would be armed.¹⁴⁸ Hartsoe says they talked about carrying signs, but admits they neither made nor brought any signs.¹⁴⁹ David Matthews, also present,

was one who insisted on guns. He later told the GPD, “We heard the CWP was going to shoot us, so we brought shotguns.”¹⁵⁰

Sometime around Oct. 27, Sgt. Burke received a report from an off-duty officer who had information that a Winston-Salem Nazi had possession of a machine gun and planned to come to Greensboro to “shoot up the place.” Burke says he gave this information to Cooper and attempted to contact the ATF but his call was not returned.¹⁵¹

On Oct. 29, Nelson Johnson called Lt. Henderson (commander of the Traffic Unit in the Field Services Bureau) to ask about the permit. Henderson replied that he hadn’t received it yet.¹⁵²

On Oct. 30, Comer asked Hampton if his request for more assistance in covering the parade had been acted upon. Hampton said he didn’t know anything about it and referred Comer to Spoon.¹⁵³

On Oct. 31, Dawson again contacted Cooper and reported the results of the individual Klavern (Klan unit) meetings. He re-emphasized that members of the Rights of White People, the Nazi Party and the Invisible Empire were planning to meet in a house in Greensboro and go as a group to the WVO rally to ride alongside the parade and heckle the marchers and throw eggs. He further informed Cooper again that Griffin planned to ride the parade route the night before to “look for a place for a confrontation.” Cooper asked what kind of confrontation and Dawson replied that he had not asked Griffin that.¹⁵⁴

Also on Oct. 31, Capt. Steele (Hampton’s supervisor, commander of the Field Operations Bureau) told Maj. Wynn (Daughtry and Gibson’s supervisor) that he was concerned about possible problems and expressed the need for a planning session. Steele reported to Wynn that Hampton was scheduled to be off on Nov. 3.¹⁵⁵ Gibson told the GTRC that both he and Steele were concerned about Hampton’s planned absence and that Steele had asked the Chief to order Hampton to be on duty.¹⁵⁶ The Chief apparently declined.

Meanwhile, Lt. Talbott reported to Comer that he had received intelligence from an informant that the Klan was planning to come to the march and might bring weapons,¹⁵⁷ and that there was “unconfirmed” information of a purchase of an automatic weapon.¹⁵⁸ Comer in turn again approached Hampton about the need for assistance from the Tactical Section. Together they went to Capt. Gibson’s office and spoke with him and Lt. Daughtry about supplying tactical units for backup on Nov. 3.¹⁵⁹

Comer testified before the Grand Jury that until Oct. 31, he had planned to have his patrol officers, T.R. Johnson and J.T. Williams, in position at Carver and Everitt at 11 a.m. We have seen no evidence indicating why this plan was altered on Oct. 31.¹⁶⁰

Nelson Johnson, meanwhile, was still attempting to obtain the parade permit. He tried again on Oct. 31 to pick it up but was told it wasn’t ready because the city manager was out of town and hadn’t signed it. In fact, Maj. Wynn had received a copy of the signed permit earlier that day and noticed it didn’t have the weapons restrictions on it, so he sent it back to the city manager’s office for correction.¹⁶¹ Faced with an approaching march planned for months, and still without a permit, a frustrated and angry Johnson told the GPD that he planned to hold a press conference on the steps of the department the next day, and that the march would go forward with or without a permit.¹⁶²

Meanwhile, Bernard Butkovich, the ATF agent, reported to his case agent, SA Fulton Dukes, that the Nazis were planning to go to Greensboro on Nov. 3, and were meeting at Wood’s on Nov. 1 to discuss plans. Dukes reported this to his superior, SAC John Westra, who told him that neither Dukes nor Butkovich are to attend the march.¹⁶³ So on the morning of Nov. 3, Butkovich said he deliberately

showed up late to Wood's house so that he would miss the car leaving for Greensboro. He said he then went to the office to write up his report on the Nov. 1 meeting. However, he said he was "killing time" before a noon meeting with Dukes so he decided to make a "reconnaissance trip" to Greensboro (see Federal Law Enforcement).¹⁶⁴

In a signed affidavit, he says he left Winston-Salem at around 10 a.m., which would have put him in Greensboro right around 11 a.m. Also at 11 a.m., the caravan was leaving to head toward the march and paused on the highway because some of the Nazis thought they saw someone they recognized, and whom they had expected to come to the march, drive past on Interstate-85.

Countdown

While animosity between the WVO and the Klan was ratcheting up, WVO members were increasingly enraged at the police for the delays in obtaining their parade permit from the GPD and what they believed was intimidation of the church where their conference was to take place. They openly accused the GPD and city officials of collaborating with the Klan, which served to further increase the enmity between them. In turn, the GPD became increasingly suspicious of "Communists." Coupled with pre-existing suspicion of Nelson Johnson in particular, the GPD was more interested in collecting information on WVO activities.

On Nov. 1, formal planning for police coverage of the march began to take shape in two key meetings. First, at 9 a.m., Deputy Chief Burch chaired a high level meeting with Capt. Thomas, Det. Melton, Det. Cooper (from the Investigations Bureau), Police Attorney Cawn, Maj. Wynn (from the Field Services Bureau), Capt. Steele, and Capt. Hampton (from the Field Operations Bureau).¹⁶⁵ Those present discussed:

- the latest intelligence that some 85 N.C. Klan members and an unknown number of Nazis and out-of-state Klansmen were planning to come to heckle and disrupt the parade¹⁶⁶
- that the Klan was attempting to get a copy of the parade permit and that Virgil Griffin planned to ride the route to look for a spot for a "confrontation"¹⁶⁷
- "unconfirmed rumors" that a Nazi from Winston-Salem had bought a machine gun¹⁶⁸
- possible discrepancy in parade starting locations due to difference in parade permit and posters¹⁶⁹

Police Attorney Cawn recalled that they discussed the fact that the informant told Cooper there had been questions raised about whether or not the Klansmen could bring guns.¹⁷⁰ Notes from this meeting also show that Virgil Griffin was specifically discussed as having "a short fuse and a hot head."¹⁷¹ Nelson Johnson's "strategy" was discussed as starting with a very small group but assembling a large crowd from the public housing neighborhoods on the way to the rally. This strategy seems to have been a particular concern to the police, who worried that a riot might ensue.¹⁷² It was discussed that the intelligence indicated the Klan was not planning to wear robes, but would don them if there was a large crowd.

In light of these discussions, Deputy Chief Burch decided to have tactical units on hand as backup, but to keep the coverage "low profile" that is, out of sight of the march so as to not provoke a confrontation with the WVO.¹⁷³ Maj. Wynn asked that a photographer accompany Cooper.¹⁷⁴ All officers assigned to the parade function would communicate on police radios on designated event Frequency 3.¹⁷⁵

Regarding the starting and ending locations for the parade, there was discussion about the potential discrepancy in starting points between the permit and the posters.¹⁷⁶ Gibson, however, said he did not recall discussing with anyone the conversation he had had with Johnson about the two starting points.¹⁷⁷ The termination point for the parade was identified as the Cosmos Restaurant parking lot at Freeman Mill Road and Florida Street.¹⁷⁸ However, Hampton informed the group that there was to be a rally in

the All Nations Pentecostal Holiness Church at that location following the parade, and that the tactical units were to remain on standby.

Following this meeting, at 10:30 a.m., Nelson Johnson finally got the permit. Encountering each other briefly in the hall at the GPD, Hampton and Johnson agreed to meet at Carver and Everitt at 11:30 a.m. on Nov. 3.¹⁷⁹ Hampton did not see any need to share any information he had just received about the possibility that Klansmen and Nazis would confront the demonstrators. "I had read (Johnson's) flier. He was inviting them to come, so..."¹⁸⁰

Infuriated by what he believed were deliberate obstacles and harassment of the WVO in an attempt to obstruct or prevent the conference, Johnson stood before the press that day and condemned what he called the GPD's "slimy tactics," saying, "At every point, the police department has tried to disrupt and disorganize our plans." He recounted delays in the permitting process, removal by police of parade announcement posters on utility poles where election signs already hung, and spreading rumors of violence that intimidated the church scheduled to be the site of the conference into canceling the use of their facility. "Police," Johnson said, "have been boosting the fear around the Klan by claiming they are going to come to the march and throw bombs." Referring to the weapons restriction on the permit he added, "They said they would protect us. This is sheer madness! The bloody crimes of police brutality are well known to the people. We say to the police, 'Stay out of our way. We'll defend ourselves.'" ¹⁸¹

Johnson now claims that the subsequent and persistent interpretation of this statement as a request for police to stay away from the march is a willful misrepresentation:

It seems nearly impossible to misinterpret my meaning. I, therefore, see that misrepresentation as an intentional act. Why would I go to such efforts to get the parade permit and to discuss accurately with Lt. Hampton our meeting time and place and then ask the police to stay away? On its face, this makes no sense. But those with the power to frame the story brushed aside all our explanations and faithfully reported the position of Mayor Melvin and the police without serious scrutiny of its accuracy.

The post-murder explanation offered by then-Mayor Melvin and the Police Department is, in my opinion, a falsification, justifying the unjustifiable behavior of the police department. Consider with me that I did actually ask the police to stay away from the march, which I did not. But for the sake of this discussion, suppose I did say, "Stay away from Morningside." With the police unquestionably clear that a hostile, armed caravan of Klan members were advancing on a group that had a legal parade permit, why in God's name would they stay away? It would be like the police having knowledge that a bank was to be robbed but the robber asked them to stay away and they decided to stay away because they say they were asked to do so. This is simply not logical. Yet, neither the Greensboro Police Department nor former Mayor Melvin has ever retracted this absurd view.

Johnson now recalls how they learned that the church had withdrawn their facility as a result of intimidation from the police department:

I learned that the use of All Nations Pentecostal Holiness Church at Freeman Mill Road and Florida Streets, where we were to have the labor conference, had been withdrawn. This information came through Miss Fanny Miller,¹⁸² an elderly woman who lived in Smith Homes and who was a part of our movement and a member of that church. Miss Fanny informed me that a member of the church that also worked in the police department as a secretary (or a laborer in some capacity) told the pastor that

*a police officer had warned her that hand grenades would be thrown in the church if we used it.*¹⁸³

Gibson recalled that he watched the press conference from the GPD lobby because he wanted to see what Eddie Dawson looked like.¹⁸⁴ The Internal Affairs Memo on “Summary of Planning Activities” for Nov. 3 states that while they were there, Sgt. Burke came in and gave Gibson literature he had received from the WVO at the press conference. Gibson said he reviewed the literature and gave it to Capt. Steele, who said he would pass it on to Chief Swing.¹⁸⁵ Sgt. Melton reported that he and Cooper and Thomas listened to the press conference outside.¹⁸⁶

Meanwhile, Eddie Dawson had also arrived at the GPD in time for the press conference and joined the crowd on the steps in front of the building. Without identifying himself as a Klansman, Dawson asked Paul Bermanzohn if the Klan was really still around. Bermanzohn, taking him for an interested tradesman, invited Dawson to come to the march. Dawson agreed.

After the press conference, Dawson went to see City Attorney Jesse Warren to ask if he could get an injunction to stop the WVO rally, but was refused. We have seen no evidence that Warren asked why he wanted to stop it. Dawson later claimed he told Warren, “Tell you what, next damn time I’ll bring you a bucket of blood.”¹⁸⁷ Dawson also told Cooper and Talbott that he had gone to see the city attorney to stop the march, but they also admit they did not inquire about Dawson’s concerns.¹⁸⁸

However, having been denied an injunction, Dawson did not then take his own steps to reduce the possibility for violence. Rather, he took steps that would further contribute to the violence. Dawson immediately asked Cooper and Talbott for a copy of the permit with the parade route. Dawson claims that Cooper told him the parade starting point had changed and that he could get a copy of the permit with the new assembly point on it.¹⁸⁹ Cooper denies this and says he told Dawson that he didn’t know if the permit was a public document, and that he would have to request it from Gibson.¹⁹⁰ Dawson’s claim is supported by Talbott’s recollection in his deposition that after Dawson left, he (Talbott) told Cooper, “The GPD obtains information, it does not supply information, and that he (Cooper) should not be giving Dawson any information about the parade.” However, Talbott claims he does not know how Dawson was aware of the existence of a parade permit, and speculated that perhaps he read it in the paper.¹⁹¹ Dawson’s claim that Cooper told him to get a copy of the permit is further supported by Gibson’s recollection that when Gibson told Dawson he wasn’t sure if he could release a copy of the permit, “(Dawson) said, ‘Well Sgt. Cooper said you could,’ and I replied to him, ‘Sgt. Cooper don’t run this office. I do.’”¹⁹²

Around 11 a.m. on Nov. 1, Dawson arrived in Capt. Gibson’s office to ask for a copy of the permit and Gibson, unsure if it was public information, sent Lt. Henderson to check with the police attorney. While they were waiting, Gibson asked Dawson if he was a Klansman and Dawson said yes.¹⁹³ The answer came from the city attorney that the permit was public information, and Gibson gave a copy to Dawson.

On the permit were the underlined parade restrictions against weapons, giving the Klan now not only the assembly point and parade route, but also the knowledge that the WVO/CWP demonstrators were required to be unarmed.¹⁹⁴ Even after the discussion of Klansmen and Nazis planning to come, possibly bringing a machine gun, and knowing that a Klansman had picked up a copy of the permit, Gibson recalled that he still felt the primary danger of violence was from the WVO because of what Johnson had said at the press conference.¹⁹⁵

Later that afternoon, at 4:30 p.m., Hampton held the second key planning meeting with Lt. Spoon, Capt. Gibson, Lt. Daughtry and Sgt. Hightower to discuss the details of field operations for the parade. Two

of the three field officers in charge of parade coverage, Sgts. Comer¹⁹⁶ and Burke,¹⁹⁷ were off duty in the days immediately preceding Nov. 3, 1979, and did not attend key planning meetings. Comer, under Lt. Spoon's command, would have primary responsibility for the parade with one officer in front and one behind. Sgts. Burke and Hightower, under the command of Lt. Daughtry, would lead two tactical units several blocks from the parade, but on call for backup. One tactical unit would begin at Dudley High School and then move to Calvin Wiley School after the parade had passed Lee Street and Benbow Road, where it was discussed that a confrontation was possible between demonstrators and counter-protestors. The other tactical unit was to be at Gillespie School.¹⁹⁸

Also at the 4:30 planning meeting, officers discussed the intelligence that ten local Klansmen were planning to attend the march (and an unknown number of out-of-state Klan and Nazi members); the Klan's plan to ride the parade route beforehand to look for a confrontation spot; and the apparent conflict in starting locations.¹⁹⁹ They agreed that Everitt and Carver was the starting point at noon since that was what the permit designated. There was no discussion of the possibility that the Klan might be armed, although Hampton specifically asked Spoon to check the All Nations Pentecostal Church for bombs on the morning of the march. Hampton was apparently unaware that the church had already cancelled its offer to host the conference at the end of the parade, as Nelson Johnson had announced from the GPD steps earlier in the day, as Gibson watched. We have seen no evidence that any possibility of guns was discussed at this meeting, including the information that Burke had received about a Nazi who had a machine gun and was planning to come to Greensboro and "shoot up the place."²⁰⁰

Spoon called Comer later in the day to update him on plans to use tactical units as backup and on the fact that they would be "on duty at 10 a.m.," and to relay intelligence from Talbott that some 80-85 Klan and Nazi members were coming and would ride beside the marchers heckling, that the Klan had a copy of the permit, that they might be armed and that there was a "rumor" that one had purchased a machine gun.²⁰¹

That evening WVO discussions about the security of the march took place in both Greensboro and Durham. One WVO member who was an older black man from South Carolina said that his experience with the Klan had been that they act with impunity in broad daylight. He argued strongly for marchers to carry weapons, or at least to have neighborhood residents stand on their porches with guns to protect the march. Fliers were printed and distributed with that message:

We, the working class people, have to defend ourselves and depend on each other –we should not depend on the police. So, on Saturday, we want everyone on the march route to protect the march. We want you to sit on your porch or stand in strength is the people –Black and White united!

DEFEND THE MARCH WITH GUNS!!!
DEATH TO THE KLAN!!!
SMASH POLICE BRUTALITY
THE PEOPLE UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED!!²⁰²

However, for reasons that are unclear to us, that plan was scrapped. For that reason, the South Carolina man refused to attend the march.²⁰³

Meanwhile in Durham, there was another WVO meeting to discuss the march. Don Pelles recalled,

At a meeting at the WVO bookstore on Nov. 2, Cesar led the meeting. Cesar laid out what he saw as main dangers: 1) that there would be a provocateur inside the march trying to cause

trouble, 2) that the police would block the route of march, 3) a distant third, was that the Klan might show up, but we wouldn't expect trouble even if they did. In regards to 1) and 2), there was to be a fight team, to be prepared if necessary to block the provocateur and/or the police. I was to be part of that. ..

Morning of, we gathered at Jim and Signe's. He showed me the closet, where I selected a stick, a tree branch, to be used as a club.

Liz Wilderman:

Realizing the seriousness of what we were about to undertake, the Military Defense (MD) was set up. This was a group within the CWP. They were in charge of making sure that everyone was safe. It had been said that, if we were going to step out and organize against big business and the Klan, we needed to exercise our right to bear arms. Therefore, we all practiced "MD." We all had to learn how to use our guns. Even though our slogan was "Death to the Klan" we weren't planning to go out and shoot anyone. "Death to the Klan" didn't mean death to any particular individual but just the concept of the Klan. November 3rd was to be a day for the working people of North Carolina. In my view, if the Klan was organizing in my state and in my country, then that means that I'm not an outsider and have the right to protest them anywhere²⁰⁴.

Nelson Johnson recalls,

The public advocacy for the right to armed self-defense was a position that we politically wanted to take and felt we should take and we felt that the community should feel comfortable asserting that right and we wanted to model that. When we sat down with the police and they told us that we couldn't have weapons. We had actually planned to model the right to armed self-defense. It really was not based on the expectation of the Klan coming. We were going to say that people had the right to carry guns and we were actually going to openly carry guns. Once the police raised this, the issue shifted from modeling something for political purposes to discussing the real problem we had with police which was how should we deal with this provision from the police. That question got down to whether you really expect any violence from the Klan, and I took a powerful and unequivocal position that the Klan coming from distant places to an African-American community, a place that they are not familiar with in the middle of daylight with a lot of policemen around, I really did not expect that to be a source of any kind of violent problem. I was strongly opposed on that by "Big Man," who argued that-- and he was arguing out of his experience—that in South Carolina he had seen the Klan drag men and kill people and nothing had been done about it.

And I was respectful of his position but I tried to make the point that the problem we have here is really not the Klan in the sense of robe-wearing groups who are card carrying. Every difficulty that we have had is directly related to this is directly traceable to the police and this provision that we have been put under is related to the Police and I think is tied to trying to get us to violate it and I didn't know that it was legally unenforceable. That arose subsequently. That is why there has never been a discussion about violating it because you can't legally enforce it anyway...

We discussed – I will say this as clearly as I can – various scenarios to maintain the modeling posture and one was who do we know along the route who would allow us to stand on the porch with an openly displayed weapon and we said this is just going

to frighten people...I took the position that it would be a great mistake for us to be modeling weapons against the ordinance. First of all, I signed it. I thought the police would be there and that they would provide whatever security would be necessary. I didn't think that the Klan was coming. I didn't think that they would be a danger if they came because I thought the police would be there and engage that.

I said let me tell you what I believe deeply is a danger that in some way or another that this police department might be looking for a way to goad us in some negative behavior with itself and I was saying therefore, I think the most likely form that will take, and I said it almost in these words, is that someone will be in our ranks with a gun and that it gets displayed and I think that I even got up and demonstrated that someone is wearing a light jacket and they got a gun and their jacket swings open and the police say there is someone with a gun and they all run over to this person and grab him and we run over to them and say 'let the brother go' and they run up to us and there is this whole thing.

So I said, listen, if anybody comes up and displays a gun, and the police rush up to him, don't rush up to him. Rush away. He's not with us. Cause we have agreed that we are not going to be displaying any weapons out there. That was the discussion and those were the instructions so all of this nonsense about expecting the Klan was a total invention. That's why some of the testimony and some of what has now become kind-of community knowledge or common-sense, it just didn't happen that way. We can be criticized for the plan to model these weapons. And I am certainly open to that. It is not something I would do again. You can make an argument going both ways on that. I would not make an argument for it right now. It is not what my views are. We've had marches since then. I have not argued that. But to argue that we wanted the Klan to come and to have a confrontation and that we expected that is totally inaccurate.²⁰⁵

That same evening in Winston-Salem, Roland Wood and members of the Nazi Party held a press conference in Wood's garage, which served as their makeshift headquarters. Wood says the main purpose was to "roast" Joe Grady, who accused them of being Communists. But they also wanted to gain publicity for the Nazis and their ideas through the media.²⁰⁶ Butkovich, Harold Covington, Roger Shannon, Charles Finley, Gorrell Pierce, and Bill Babbit were all in attendance, and Chris Benson, Jerry Paul Smith and Coleman (Johnny) Pridmore came as Klan representatives from Virgil Griffin's Invisible Empire.

After the media departed, they discussed plans for disrupting the march in Greensboro. They would heckle the Communists and throw eggs. Benson explained that they should meet at Brent Fletcher's house on Randleman Road at 10 a.m. They discussed the challenge to the Klan to attend from the WVO; Butkovich remembered that they discussed Nelson Johnson as issuing the challenge. Jerry Smith reportedly said that he had made a pipe bomb that would work well "if thrown into a crowd of niggers."²⁰⁷

Gorrell Pierce says he told his associates that evening that he would not attend the rally because he did not want to get involved in any violence,

I informed them that I was not going. I had been ordered by my Imperial Wizard not to go, and common sense would tell me not to. I told them, I said, "Fellas, somebody is going to get killed. This crowd is organized, they're dedicated, and they're just as willing to die for what they believe in as you are. And when you have people who are

ready to die for what they believe in ... People are going to get killed.” And I didn’t go to Greensboro, and I’m glad I didn’t. ²⁰⁸

Wood now also claims he had a bad intuition about what would happen at the march and did not want to go, but Covington ordered him to go or lose his command. Wood further said although they did not intend any violence they brought weapons “because it was part of being a bad ass.”²⁰⁹

Butkovich said conversation at the meeting was winding down so he left early (about 10:15 p.m.) to meet Dukes and a WSPD officer to let them know the Nazis were going to Greensboro to heckle and throw eggs, and might be bringing a pipe bomb. Butkovich said he did not inform the GPD about this information because he thought it was “common knowledge, and had received wide media attention that there would be a confrontation.”²¹⁰ Dukes said he did not relay this information to the GPD because he did not think there would be any trouble.²¹¹ Dukes also said they didn’t warn the GPD because Nelson Johnson had held a news conference, “So I kind of figured, seeing that he gave the invitation on the steps of the police department, there would be no need to tell them that they were going to have a parade and that they were invited.”²¹² However, it is not clear how Johnson’s press conference, which was an outcry against GPD interference with the march, was relevant to knowledge about a Klan and Nazi confrontation.

After Butkovich left Wood’s house, the remaining Nazis and Klansmen watched the 11 p.m. news to see the story on their press conference, and by coincidence also see Nelson’s press conference, during which Wood claims Smith aimed his gun at the TV.²¹³ As Smith aimed Wood recalls him saying, “Kill the communist.”²¹⁴ Wood said later that “We all thought there would probably be a fistfight,” that he wanted to attack them with his own hands and “see them run instead of us running.”²¹⁵

Chris Benson testified twice in court that, also on Nov. 2, Klan members Johnny Pridmore of Lincolnton, Jerry Paul Smith of Maiden and Virgil Griffin met at Griffin’s home to target possible demonstrators for attack. From a photograph of the China Grove rally, “We sat around and pointed out who we wanted to get when we got to Greensboro ... ‘Get’ meant beat up.”²¹⁶

In the early hours of Nov. 3, Smith, Pridmore and Griffin arrived in Greensboro and met Dawson at a restaurant. After all the discussion of Griffin’s plans to ride the parade route, Griffin had a woman with him and wanted to go to a hotel. So Dawson, Smith and Pridmore dropped them off and drove the route using the permit that Dawson got from the GPD. Dawson took the opportunity to plaster posters over those advertising the march. Under a drawing of a silhouetted body hanging from a tree limb, the Klan poster read,

*Notice!
To the Traitors, Communists, Race-mixers, and Black Rioters
Beware
Even now the cross-hairs are on the back of YOUR necks
It’s time for old-fashioned American Justice
KKKK*

■ Notes

¹ Don Pelles, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 23 December 2005. See also Sally Avery Bermanzohn, *Through Survivors’ Eyes* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003), 181-182.

² Don Pelles, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 23 December 2005.

³ Rosalyn Pelles, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 23 December 2005.

⁴ *Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO)*, "Proposal to Continue the Anti-Klan Campaign: Assuming Leadership to Build Up the Party," 30 August 1979; *WVO*, "Southern Regional Bulletin," July 1979, Part I page 3, and Part III: Sum Up of Victorious Battle Against the Klan, page 2; *WVO*, "Then and now – the Bloody History of the KKK," Landis, NC (no date); *WVO*, "Death to the Klan!!! Promote Armed Self-Defense of the Community," announcement of Nov 3 march (no date).

⁵ Paul Bermanzohn, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 14 March 2005.

⁶ China Grove residents, confidential interviews with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (GTRC), 9 January 2006.

⁷ FBI "Subject: Paul Bermanzohn," Charlotte Field Office (CE 44-3527 – Sub. A, Vol. 5, part 1): in this folder, see FBI SA in Greensboro, Interview on 8 April 1982, 14; FBI SA in Salisbury, Interview on 16 April 1982, 1.

⁸ Now deceased.

⁹ Luckey, FBI pre-trial interview (16 April 1981), 2.

¹⁰ China Grove resident, confidential interview with GTRC, 9 March 2006.

¹¹ Lt Edward Klutz Testimony, *US v Griffin* (19 March 1984), cited in Elizabeth Wheaton, *Codename GREENKIL: The 1979 Greensboro Killings* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 85. We have not had access to the transcript of this testimony but a pretrial FBI interview with Luckey also confirms that he sought a permit from the police for the protest and was denied one because there was not enough time to call an Alderman's meeting to approve it, but was given "verbal permission" (16 April 1982), 2. Willena Cannon (interview with GTRC, 30 March 2005) and a China Grove resident (China Grove resident, confidential interview with GTRC, 9 March 2006) both participated in the protest and said they thought they had obtained a permit. Media footage of the even shows the group marching in the street, which suggests they must have had at least the verbal approval of law enforcement.

¹² Luckey, FBI interview (16 April 1981), 2-3.

¹³ Lt Edward Klutz testimony, *US v Griffin* (19 March 1984), cited in Elizabeth Wheaton, *Codename GREENKIL: The 1979 Greensboro Killings* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 85. Larry Gibson told the GTRC that after Nov. 3, the GPD obtained newspaper photos of the protest that showed the riot police in full view of the protestors and the Klan/Nazis. (Gibson, interview with the GTRC, 5 May 2006). In fact, he said that is why they believed only a few officers would suffice in keeping violence from occurring on Nov. 3. However, we have viewed news footage from two separate news stations and neither shows any riot police in view. Taken with the eyewitness testimony that claims only a very few uniformed police officers were present and that they were unaware that there were any additional police standing by, we find Capt. Gibson's recollection that these could have acted as a deterrent to be inaccurate.

¹⁴ FBI interview with James Mason, a member of the Klan's inside circle known as the "Yellow Dogs." Mason speculated that the source of the information was in the Sheriff's department where Grady had friends, but said that Grady did not specify. We note that there were posters and fliers related to the event and this could have been the source of the information about the planned protest. See FBI Special Agents Brereton and Lowe, interview with James Allen Mason at Cleveland office, CE 44A-3527 (12-13 November 1981), 3-4.

¹⁵ Grady told group they had made arrangements to use CG Civic Center and signed a contract giving them sole authority to use the Center. FBI Special Agents Brereton and Lowe, interview with James Allen Mason at Cleveland office, CE 44A-3527 (12-13 November 1981), 4, 6.

¹⁶ A letter to the RCP from Harold Covington (dated 11 Sep 1979) also talks of this agreement, but it is not clear whether Covington heard this from Grady or one of his associates or whether he had independent knowledge of it. (The letter is published in the RCP newspaper *The Revolutionary Worker*, 9 November 1979, 4. Copy in GTRC files.). Further, we have not been able to authenticate that the letter was indeed from Covington. As a result, the Commission was unable to confirm this allegation.

¹⁷ Signe Waller, *Love and Revolution: A Political Memoir* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2002), 194-195.

¹⁸ China Grove resident, confidential interview with *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 9 March 2006.

¹⁹ Don Pelles, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 23 December 2005.

²⁰ FBI "Subject: Paul Bermanzohn," Charlotte Field Office (CE 44-3527 – Sub. A, Vol. 5, part 2 cont'd): in this folder, see FBI SA in New York, Interview on 13 April 1982, 16-17; FBI SA for Greensboro, in Washington DC, Interview on 12 April 1982, 12-13; FBI SA in Winston-Salem, CE 44-3527, Interview (27 April 1982), 9.

See also Waller, *Love and Revolution*, 197.

²¹ After the march, many participants recount that in fear of retaliation both WVO and local residents armed themselves with guns and kept watch in the neighborhood through the night. See Waller, *Love and Revolution*, 199. See also FBI “Subject: Paul Bermanzohn,” Charlotte Field Office 44-3527-Sub A, Vol 5, part 2: in this folder, see for example, FBI SA in Winston-Salem, Interview (29 April 1982), 10; FBI SA in Winston-Salem, CE 44-3527, Interview (27 April 1982), 6-10; FBI SA in Winston-Salem, CE44-3527, Interview (8 April 1982), 18-20. See also FBI SA Thomas Brereton, “Memo on Greenkil re: Background to China Grove,” to SAC Charlotte 44A-3527 P (18 October 1982), 3.

²² Waller, *Love and Revolution*, 196.

²³ Paul Bermanzohn, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 14 March 2005.

²⁴ Roland Wood, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 7 December 2005.

²⁵ Gorrell Pierce, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 16 July 2005.

²⁶ China Grove resident, confidential interview with *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 9 March 2006.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Don Pelles, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 23 December 2005.

²⁹ Rosalyn Pelles, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 23 December 2005.

³⁰ Willena Cannon, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 30 March 2005.

³¹ Liz Wilderman, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 14 May 2005.

³² Marty Nathan, quoted in Sally Bermanzohn, *Through Survivors' Eyes* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003), 189.

³³ Sally Bermanzohn, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 14 March 2005.

³⁴ Sally Bermanzohn, quoted in Bermanzohn, *Through Survivors' Eyes*, 189.

³⁵ Sally Bermanzohn, quoted in Bermanzohn, *Through Survivors' Eyes*, 189-190.

³⁶ Paul Bermanzohn, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission* Public Hearing, 15 July 2005.

³⁷ Nelson Johnson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 12 August 2005.

³⁸ Floris Weston, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005.

³⁹ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, “Southern Regional Bulletin,” July 1979, 9-11.

⁴⁰ Jean Chapman, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 14 May 2005.

⁴¹ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, “Proposal to Continue the Anti-Klan Campaign: Assuming Leadership to Build Up the Party,” 30 August 1979, 1.

⁴² Sally Bermanzohn, quoted in Bermanzohn, *Through Survivors' Eyes*, 190.

⁴³ Don Pelles, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 23 December 2005.

⁴⁴ A copy is in GTRC files.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Wheaton, *Codename GREENKIL: The 1979 Greensboro Killings* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 91-93.

⁴⁶ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, “Proposal to Continue the Anti-Klan Campaign: Assuming Leadership to Build Up the Party,” 30 August 1979, 1.

⁴⁷ China Grove residents, confidential interviews with GTRC, 9 January 2006.

⁴⁸ These documents were reportedly taken from Nelson Johnson’s briefcase “that came into the possession of the police.” Meredith Barkley, “CWP warning may have affected police tactics,” *Greensboro News & Record*, 20 May 1985. Attorneys on both sides of the civil trial questioned Nelson Johnson and Paul Bermanzohn extensively on the so-called ‘briefcase documents’ dealing with the WVO’s planning and activities surrounding confrontations with the Klan in China Grove and the plans to hold the anti-Klan march in Greensboro on Nov. 3, 1979. The documents were contained in Johnson’s briefcase, which ‘came into the hands of Greensboro police in the spring of 1980.’ This was used by defendants in the civil suit to discredit the plaintiffs. As authentic documents that are part of the court record, they are now housed in the UNC archive so the Commission feels it is not unethical to refer to them in our deliberations, even though their original acquisition may have been by illegal means.

⁴⁹ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, “Directive: from the SE: Immediately Take Up the Klan Campaign and Use to Build the Party as we Build for a RED HOT Demonstration and Conference on November 3rd” (no date), 1.

⁵⁰ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, “Southern Regional Bulletin,” July 1979, 10; *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, “Proposal to Continue the Anti-Klan Campaign: Assuming Leadership to Build Up the Party,” 30

August 1979, 3.

⁵¹ There is no date on this document but it discusses the need to have conference posters and fliers out by Oct. 10, so the date must have been before then.

⁵² Nelson Johnson, interview to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 12 August 2005.

⁵³ Nelson Johnson, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005.

⁵⁴ Don Pelles, interview to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 23 December 2005.

⁵⁵ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, "Then and Now – The Bloody History of the KKK," (no date).

⁵⁶ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, "...What made a difference in China Grove," (no date). Emphasis in original.

⁵⁷ Associated Press, "Group seeks confrontation with the Klan," *Charlotte Observer*, 12 October 1979.

⁵⁸ Wood Testimony, *Waller* (3 May 1985), 30.

⁵⁹ *Resurgence*, documentary film by Pamela Yates and Thomas Sigel (Skylight Productions: Emancipation Arts, 1981).

⁶⁰ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, "Then and Now – The Bloody History of the KKK," (no date).

⁶¹ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, "...What made a difference in China Grove," (no date). Emphasis in original.

⁶² Paul Bermanzohn, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 15 July 2005

⁶³ Gorrell Pierce, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 16 July 2005.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Letter from Covington dated 11 Sept 1979, printed in the *Revolutionary Worker*, 9 November 1979, 4 (on file at GTRC).

⁶⁶ Griffin Testimony, *Waller* (10 April 1985), 46.

⁶⁷ *WVO*, "Death to the Klan!!! Promote Armed Self-Defense of the Community," announcement of Nov 3 march (no date); *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, "An Open Letter to Joe Grady, Gorrell Pierce and All KKK Members and Sympathizers," 22 October 1979.

⁶⁸ Bill Moss, "Communists' challenge KKK to come to rally," *Salisbury Evening Post*, 11 October 1979, 8.

⁶⁹ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, "An Open Letter to Joe Grady, Gorrell Pierce and All KKK Members and Sympathizers," 22 October 1979.

⁷⁰ Mark Sherer, GPD Statement (12 May 1980), 192.

⁷¹ Floris Weston, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005

⁷² Nelson Johnson, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005.

⁷³ Paul Bermanzohn, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 15 July 2005

⁷⁴ Hearing statement

⁷⁵ Gorrell Pierce, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 16 July 2005

⁷⁶ Roland Wood, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 7 December 2005.

⁷⁷ Sally Bermanzohn, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005.

⁷⁸ Sally Bermanzohn, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 14 March 2005.

⁷⁹ Paul Bermanzohn, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 14 March 2005.

⁸⁰ Nelson Johnson, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005.

⁸¹ Nelson Johnson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 16 August 2005.

⁸² *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, "To the people of Hampton Homes from Worker's Viewpoint Organization," (no date).

⁸³ Joyce Johnson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 4 May 2005; Willena Cannon, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, (30 mar 05); Dale Sampson Federal Grand Jury Testimony, 15.

⁸⁴ Willena Cannon, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 30 September 2005.

⁸⁵ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, "'Death to the Klan' March and Conference Calls Out Klan's Secret

Supporters,” 1 November 1979, 2.

⁸⁶ Tammy Tutt, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 1 October 2005.

⁸⁷ Candy Clapp, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005.

⁸⁸ Willena Cannon, interview with *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 30 March 2005.

⁸⁹ Nelson Johnson, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005.

⁹⁰ Evelyn Taylor, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 16 August 2005.

⁹¹ In addition to winning new members, they targeted China Grove as a way to gain a stronghold in the Charlotte area and in SE and SW regions of North Carolina. See FBI SA Brereton and SA Lowe, interview with James Allen Mason at Cleveland office, CE 44A-3527 (12-13 November 1981), 2.

⁹² Gorrell Pierce, statement to *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 16 July 2005; Roland Wood, interview with *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 7 December 2005.

⁹³ “Group Seeks Confrontation with the Klan,” *Charlotte Observer*, 12 October 1979. Gorrell Pierce also told the GTRC that his Grand Wizard instructed him not to go because of the risk of violence, see Pierce, statement to *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 16 July 2005.

⁹⁴ In January 1971, violent demonstrations had erupted in Wilmington, N.C. after city authorities denied black students’ request to hold a memorial service for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. During the violence that erupted, Chavis and his associates (nine black and one white) took shelter in a Wilmington church that was attacked by white supremacists, including members of the Klan and Leroy Gibson’s Rights of White People. Afterwards, Chavis and his associates were arrested and charged with firebombing a grocery store and shooting at police officers. They were sentenced to a collective total of 282 years. The case was overturned in federal court in 1980, after Amnesty International took up the case of the Wilmington 10 as political prisoners. The court found that the State had illegally withheld material exculpatory evidence and that the trial court had denied the defendants their constitutional rights to confront witnesses against them by improperly restricting the cross-examination of the State’s main witnesses.

⁹⁵ The case aroused widespread controversy among civil and human rights activists throughout the state, nation and even internationally.

⁹⁶ In GTRC files.

⁹⁷ “RCP Press Conference,” 7 November 1979, in GTRC files; Letter dated 11 Sept 1979, printed in the *Revolutionary Worker*, 9 November 1979, 4 (on file at GTRC). We have not been able to authenticate this letter as being indeed from Covington.

⁹⁸ ATF SA Lazar, “Report to SAC Charlotte, Re: Harold A. Covington,” to SAC Charlotte, 3 October 1979.

⁹⁹ Robert Fulton Dukes Deposition, *Waller* (20 December 1984), 254-256; Bernard Butkovich Deposition, *Waller* (17-18 July 1984), 71.

¹⁰⁰ Now deceased.

¹⁰¹ Bogaty did not report this conversation until after Nov 3: SA Leonard Bogaty Memo to the SAC Charlotte (44-3527), (20 November 1979), on file at GTRC; Declaration of Special Agent Leonard Bogaty, *Waller* (14 June 1984), 1. In Dawson’s Pre-Grand Jury Interview, he alludes to not knowing differently and having to call GPD. See Edward Dawson, Pre-Grand Jury Interview with Department of Justice Attorney Michael Johnson and FBI SA Thomas Brereton, Winston Salem (22 June 1982), 29.

¹⁰² Now deceased.

¹⁰³ FBI SA Brereton, “Greenkil Report: Civil Rights,” to US Attorney, Greensboro 44-81521, FD-204 (no date), 8-9.

¹⁰⁴ Virgil Griffin, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 16 July 2005.

¹⁰⁵ Gastonia reporter Joel Graves, statement to GPD (29 January 1980), 1. Griffin reportedly privately denied to Graves that he made this statement, but upon hearing that it had been recorded declined to do so formally. In his civil testimony, Griffin admitted that in numerous public rallies he had made the statement that “if a white woman were raped and killed, (by a black man) they should find a hundred dead niggers in the street the next day.” Griffin Testimony, *Waller* (10 April 1985), 46.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Dawson Deposition, *Waller* (13 June 1984), 315-317; IAD DC Williams, Transcript of interview with Detective Jerry Cooper (20 November 1979), 6; Jerry Cooper Deposition, *Waller* (25 June 1984), 62-63; IAD DC Williams, “Incident at Everitt St and Carver Dr, Nov 3, 1979,” interview of R.L. Talbott (20 November 1979), 3; RL Talbott Deposition, *Waller* (1 November 1984), 115.

¹⁰⁷ Edward Dawson Deposition, *Waller* (13 June 1984), 323.

¹⁰⁸ FBI SA Brereton, "Greenkil Report: Civil Rights," to US Attorney, Greensboro 44-81521, FD-204 (no date), 9.

¹⁰⁹ Lisford Carl Nappier Testimony, *Griffin* (1 February 1984),.

¹¹⁰ Dawson Deposition, *Waller* (13 June 1984), 348. However, Sgt. Melton, Cooper's squad supervisor, recalled in his deposition, "The best that I remember, Cooper came to me and told me he was going to try to contact Dawson because he (Dawson) had been an informant for the FBI while he was involved with the Klan. He (Cooper) was going to contact him to see what he (Dawson) could do for us." Melton Deposition, *Waller* (30 October 1984), 61.

¹¹¹ Dawson Deposition, *Waller* (13 June 1984), 324, 386, 391.

¹¹² Dawson Deposition, *Waller* (13 June 1984), 348; Cooper Deposition, *Waller* (25 June 1984), 20. Although Det. Cooper puts this first meeting around Oct 11, SA Bogaty recalls being called by Dawson around this time to confirm Cooper's reliability. Declaration of Special Agent Leonard Bogaty, *Waller* (14 June 1984), 1; FBI SA (redacted), "Memo on Subject: Greenkil." to SAC Charlotte 44-3527. 20 November 1979.

¹¹³ Dawson Deposition, *Waller* (13 June 1984), 348.

¹¹⁴ IAD DC Williams, Transcript of interview with Detective Jerry Cooper, 20 November 1979, 2-3, Dawson volunteered to go there and bring back information, they advised about arrest if disruption, Dawson met with them after RCP meeting to give information and was paid; Robert L. Talbott Deposition, *Waller* (1 November 1984), 104; Cooper Deposition, *Waller* (25 June 1984), 18-19, 23, 31.

¹¹⁵ GPD Chief Swing, "An Administrative Report," 19 November 1979, 2.

¹¹⁶ Maurice Cawn Deposition, *Waller* (14 August 1984), 29.

¹¹⁷ Larry Gibson Testimony, *Griffin* (9 February 1984), 7-14.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* See also Chief of Police William Swing, "An Administrative Report of the Anti-Klan Rally, Greensboro, NC, Nov 3, 1979," Greensboro (19 November 1979), 7. Other police documents put the receipt of this flier at Oct 20, which seems impossible since that would be the day after Johnson had applied for the permit with Gibson, IAD Planning Memo: IAD DC Williams, "Planning Activities for the Anti-Klan March Scheduled November 3, 1979" (7 December 1979), submitted by Internal Affairs Division Commanding Officer, Capt. DC Williams, 2.

¹¹⁹ *Workers Viewpoint Organization* flier, copy in GTRC files.

¹²⁰ Cooper Deposition, *Waller* (25 June 1984), 18-19.

¹²¹ B.L. Thomas Grand Jury Testimony (26 August 1982), 14, 93; IAD DC Williams, "Incident at Everitt St and Carver Dr, Nov 3, 1979," interview of R.L. Talbott (20 November 1979), (20 November 1979), 2.

¹²² B.L. Thomas Grand Jury Testimony (26 August 1982), 10.

¹²³ City of Greensboro Police Department, "Police Chronology of Events," (28 February 1980), 23.

¹²⁴ B.L. Thomas Grand Jury Testimony (26 August 1982), 20.

¹²⁵ Cooper Deposition, *Waller* (25 June 1984), 43; Talbott Deposition, *Waller* (1 November 1984), 112.

¹²⁶ Thomas Grand Jury testimony (26 August 1982), 107.

¹²⁷ IAD DC Williams, "Planning Activities for the Anti-Klan March Scheduled November 3, 1979" to GPD Chief Swing (7 December 1979), 1; Nelson Johnson, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005; GPD, "Application for Parade Permit," witnessed and signed by Capt L Gibson, 19 October 1979.

¹²⁸ Gibson said that as far as he knew, these restrictions as a condition of a parade permit were unprecedented (Larry Gibson Grand Jury Testimony (23 August 1982), 10) even for Nelson Johnson, who had requested and received numerous permits in the years since 1969. See also William Swing Grand Jury Testimony (17 August 1982), 73. Gibson also recalled that it was sheer coincidence that he was the one who took the application because their small staff were all in the field dealing with motor vehicle accidents. Gibson said he had never taken an application before or since. (Gibson, interview with the GTRC, 5 May 2006).

¹²⁹ Gibson Grand Jury Testimony (23 August 1982), 13

¹³⁰ Nelson Johnson, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005.

¹³¹ Gibson Federal Grand Jury testimony (August 23, 1982), 30-31.

¹³² Nelson Johnson Testimony, *Waller* (no date given on transcript), 91-92.

¹³³ Larry Gibson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 5 May 2006.

¹³⁴ IAD DC Williams, "Incident at Everitt St and Carver Dr, Nov 3, 1979," interview of R.L. Talbott (20 November 1979), 2; IAD DC Williams, "Planning Activities for the Anti-Klan March Scheduled November 3, 1979" to GPD Chief Swing (7 December 1979), 3 (hereinafter referred to as IAD Planning Memo).

¹³⁵ IAD interview of Talbott, (20 November 1979), 2; Talbott Deposition, *Waller* (1 November 1984), 180.

- ¹³⁶ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 2; FBI interview of Sgt W.D.Comer (28 November 1979), 1-2.
- ¹³⁷ Comer, FI interview 20 November 1979), 3.
- ¹³⁸ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 3.
- ¹³⁹ FBI interview of Sgt W.D.Comer (28 November 1979), 1-2.
- ¹⁴⁰ S.N. Ford Deposition, *Waller* (19 July 1984), 69
- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* Ford also told GPD Capt. Jenkins that “there might be violence.” Ford said he didn’t explain further but Jenkins seemed to understand. (*Ibid.*, 64).
- ¹⁴² IAD DC Williams interview of Det. Cooper (20 November 1979), 7-8; Cooper Deposition, *Waller* (25 June 1984), 117-118.
- ¹⁴³ Summary (“302”) of FBI SA Lowe and SA Beckwith interview of R.L.Talbott (28 November 1979), 3. Talbott denies this characterization of his statement.
- ¹⁴⁴ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 3; FBI interview of Comer (28 November 1979), 2.
- ¹⁴⁵ GPD, “Police Chronology of Events,” (28 February 1980), 30.
- ¹⁴⁶ GPD, “Police Chronology of Events,” (28 February 1980), 31.
- ¹⁴⁷ GPD, “Police Chronology of Events,” (28 February 1980), 20, 31-33; GPD Fuller and Warrant, Statements of L.C.Nappier (3 November 1979), 2, 19, 22; GPD Fuller and FBI Phillips, Statement of D. Matthews (3 November 1979), 2-3; GPD Warrant and FBI Brereton, Statement of T.Hartsoe (3 November 1979), 2.
- ¹⁴⁸ GPD, Statement of Nappier (3 November 1979), 21-22.
- ¹⁴⁹ GPD, Statement of Hartsoe (3 November 1979), 1.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵¹ GPD Fuller and FBI Phillips, Statement of D. Matthews (3 November 1979), 3.
- ¹⁵² IAD interview of Sgt T.L.Burke (3 June 1980), 2. Burke also said he attempted to communicate this to the ATF but his call was not returned.
- ¹⁵³ “GPD Account of Handling of Parade Permit,” Plaintiff’s Exhibit p-400, in *Waller v. Butkovich* (C-80-605-G), page 4.
- ¹⁵⁴ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 3.
- ¹⁵⁵ IAD interview of Cooper (20 November 1979), 3-4
- ¹⁵⁶ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 3.
- ¹⁵⁷ Gibson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 5 May 2006.
- ¹⁵⁸ FBI interview of Comer (28 November 1979), 3.
- ¹⁵⁹ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 4.
- ¹⁶⁰ FBI interview of Comer (28 November 1979), 2; IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 4.
- ¹⁶¹ Comer Deposition, *Waller v. Butkovich* (27 June 1984), 31
- ¹⁶² “GPD Account of Handling of Parade Permit,” Plaintiff’s Exhibit p-400, in *Waller v. Butkovich* (C-80-605-G), 3-4.
- ¹⁶³ Nelson Johnson, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005.
- ¹⁶⁴ “Defendant John C. Westra’s Response to Plaintiffs’ Interrogatories,” *Waller* (12 July 1984), 1.
- ¹⁶⁵ Butkovich Testimony, *Waller* (9 May 1985), 308-310, (cites a sworn affidavit, page 16 paragraph 46). See also Fulton Dukes Deposition, *Waller* (20 December 1984), 202-203.
- ¹⁶⁶ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 4.
- ¹⁶⁷ There is dispute in the exact number discussed. See IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 5. (see subsequent chapter on IAD investigation) Since Thomas was the one to convey this information we accept his recollection that the number discussed was 80 North Carolina Klansmen and an unknown number of Nazis and out or state Klansmen, see B.L.Thomas Grand Jury Testimony (26 August 1982), 32-33. Thomas got this number from Talbott’s reports of his conversations with Dawson. Talbott also recalls Dawson mentioning the number 85 Klansmen, see IAD interview of Talbott (20 November 1979), 2.
- ¹⁶⁸ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 6; GPD “Staff Meeting Minutes,” 9:30am, 1 November 79; IAD DC Williams interview of Lt Col W.A. Burch (30 November 1979), 3.
- ¹⁶⁹ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 5-6.
- ¹⁷⁰ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 6.
- ¹⁷¹ Cawn Deposition, *Waller* (14 August 1984), 53.
- ¹⁷² IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 6
- ¹⁷³ Gibson, interview with the GTRC, 5 May 2006.
- ¹⁷⁴ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 7
- ¹⁷⁵ Capt. Thomas also asked Det. Belvin if he has any local contacts who could act as informants inside the

march. Thomas, Deposition *Waller v. Butkovich*, 109-110, 118. Henry Byrd gave a statement on the evening of Nov.3 about having witnessed the shooting because he happened to be in the neighborhood taking his son for a haircut (although he lived on the other side of town). Byrd, GPD statement (3 November 1979). Byrd later told the Federal Grand Jury that Belvin had asked him to infiltrate the march, which Belvin denied. Byrd was later convicted of perjury for this and other claims he made about criminal behavior in the police department. Byrd Trial Transcript, US v Byrd (21 June 1983), 938-940.

¹⁷⁶ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 8

¹⁷⁷ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 6.

¹⁷⁸ Gibson Grand Jury Testimony (23 August 1982), 30.

¹⁷⁹ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 5.

¹⁸⁰ Nelson Johnson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 16 August 2005; "GPD Account of Handling of Parade Permit," Plaintiff's Exhibit p-400, in *Waller v. Butkovich* (C-80-605-G), 5; Hampton, FBI interview (29 November 1979), 4; IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 9; IAD DC Williams, "Summary Report – Incident at Everitt and Carver Street," to Chief Swing (6 November 1979), 1.

¹⁸¹ Hampton Federal Grand Jury Testimony (24 August 1982), 23.

¹⁸² *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, "Death to the Klan' March and Conference Calls Out Klan's Secret Supporters," 1 November 1979.

¹⁸³ Now deceased.

¹⁸⁴ Nelson Johnson, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 26 August 2005.

¹⁸⁵ Gibson, interview with GTRC, 5 May 2006.

¹⁸⁶ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 8. NOTE that Burke was not in the planning meeting later that afternoon at 4:30 but in this report is reported as being in the Department. If that is so, it is not clear why he did not attend the afternoon planning meeting since he was the leader of one of the tactical units tasked with parade security.

¹⁸⁷ Furman Melton Deposition, *Waller* (13 October 1984), 89.

¹⁸⁸ Transcription of Eddie Dawson Interview, with Emily Mann and Mark Wing-Davy, Greensboro NC, (November 1994), 30. We have been unable to corroborate in any of Dawson's sworn statements that he made such a statement to Warren, and Cawn denies ever hearing about this statement from Warren, which was provocative enough to not be easily forgotten. Cawn Deposition, *Waller* (14 August 1984), 93.

¹⁸⁹ Cooper Deposition, *Waller* (25 June 1984), 67-68.

¹⁹⁰ Dawson Deposition *Waller* (13 June 1984) 493.

¹⁹¹ Cooper Deposition, *Waller* (25 June 1984), 147; IAD interview of Cooper (20 November 1979), 4.

¹⁹² IAD interview of Talbott (20 November 1979), 4.

¹⁹³ Gibson Testimony, *Griffin* (9 February 1984), 49; Gibson Deposition, *Waller* (26 June 1984), 91.

¹⁹⁴ Gibson Grand Jury Testimony (23 August 1982), 27; Larry Gibson, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, (5 May 2006).

¹⁹⁵ Gibson Testimony, *Griffin*, (February 9, 1984), 28.

¹⁹⁶ Gibson Grand Jury Testimony (23 August 1982), 29-30; Gibson reiterated this view in his interview with the GTRC, 5 May 2006. See also Nelson Johnson, interview before the Greensboro, NC, *Citizens Review Committee* (10 March 1980), 38.

¹⁹⁷ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 4.

¹⁹⁸ The police reports make no specific mention that Burke was off duty or absent from these meetings but he is not listed among those in attendance and no other officers recall his presence. See FN 181 above.

¹⁹⁹ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 9. Another document, the IAD DC Williams, "Summary Report – Incident at Everitt and Carver Street," to Chief Swing (6 November 1979), 5, says the second group was going to be at Lincoln Junior High and would move to Freeman Mill and Terrell Street..

²⁰⁰ IAD Planning Memo (7 December 1979), 9; "Answers of Defendant Hampton to Plaintiffs' Interrogatories," *Waller* (23 July 1984), 2; "Answers of Defendant Daughtry to Plaintiffs' Interrogatories," *Waller* (5 July 1984), 2; Gibson Deposition (on cross examination), *Waller* (26 June 1984), 92-93; Spoon Deposition, *Waller* (14 August 1984), 19.

²⁰¹ Burke IAD interview 29 November 1979, 4. Burke does not appear to have been in attendance at this meeting, although Hampton and Gibson were in attendance and had been in the earlier meeting that morning where this gun was discussed.

²⁰² FBI interview of Comer (28 November 1979), 5. Spoon denies in his deposition that there was any discussion of guns. (Deposition *Waller v. Butkovich*, 14 August 1984, 41)

²⁰³ *Workers Viewpoint Organization*, “Death to the Klan – Promote Armed Self-Defense of the Community.”

²⁰⁴ Textile worker and former WVO member, confidential interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 24 May 2005.

²⁰⁵ Liz Wilderman, interview with *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 14 May 2005.

²⁰⁶ Nelson Johnson, interview with *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 12 August 2005.

²⁰⁷ Roland Wood, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 7 December 2005.

²⁰⁸ Butkovich Testimony, *Waller v. Butkovich* (10 May 1985), 249; Plea Bargain “Statement of Mark J. Sherer,” (10 March 1983), 2, signed by Daniel L. Bell II, U.S. Dept of Justice Attorney, witnessed by FBI Thomas Brereton, 1-2, confirms he and Smith had been experimenting with pipe bombs and Smith wanted to make more.

²⁰⁹ Gorrell Pierce, statement to the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Public Hearing, 16 July 2005.

²¹⁰ Roland Wood, interview with the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 7 December 2005.

²¹¹ Butkovich Deposition, *Waller* (17-18 July 1984), 342.

²¹² Fulton Dukes Deposition, *Waller* (20 December 1984), 177-79.

²¹³ Fulton Dukes Deposition, *Waller* (20 December 1984), 88.

²¹⁴ GPD Belvin and FBI Alznauer, Statement of R. Wood (no date), 23; also referenced in GPD Belvin and FBI Brereton, interview of R.W. Wood on 4 November 1979, page 4.

²¹⁵ GPD Belvin and FBI Brereton, interview of R.W. Wood on 4 November 1979, page 4; Chris Benson Testimony, *Griffin* (7 February 1984), 55 recalls Smith’s words as “I’ll kill you, son of a bitch.”

²¹⁶ GPD Belvin and FBI Brereton, interview of R. Wood (6 November 1979), 4.

²¹⁷ Chris Benson Testimony, *Waller* (7 February 1984), 60.