

Black Panthers to Hold 25th Reunion On Saturday in City

By DAVID L. DILLARD
Chronicle Staff Writer

In 1969, John Moore had just gotten out of the army and moved from Norfolk, Va., when he noticed something that changed his life.

"I saw black men and women walking down town in all black, looking mean and serious as hell," he said. "What impressed me was the sincerity the guys displayed for the black community. And they were real sincere, so immediately I joined up."

Moore is referring to the Black Panther Party, an early 1970s group that carried guns to protect the black community from police harassment. The Black Panther Party was started by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in 1966 in Oakland, Calif. The national headquarters officially chartered the Winston-Salem chapter in 1970.

Robert Grier, the Panther Captain of Defense, was one of the founders of the early black group that, later became the Black Panthers.

Grier and some friends were "drinking beer and having fun" when he said they began noticing how the police harassed blacks.

"We were in a liquor house one day and the police kicked the door in," he said. "They just mistreated the people and we were hearing about this all the time, but this time we were right there and saw it."

Grier said that group became the Organization for Black Liberation and later the National Committee to Combat Fascism.

While in training to become officially Black Panthers, several members of the top brass, most notably Panther Captain Geronimo Pratt, a decorated Vietnam veteran serving a life sentence in a California State prison.

Nelson Malloy, a North Ward alderman and former Black Panther, said the chapter chose Larry Little, now a political science professor at Winston-Salem State University, to get training from headquarters.

"Larry was a brilliant cat," Malloy said. "He could talk, he was

minister of information — he was the logical choice. So we sent him to get training."

Malloy said the Panthers used their energy to protect the community from police harassment and teach self-love. But today's youth, he said, are doing just the opposite.

"The black community has always had guns, that's no new phenomenon," he said. "(Guns) are just more readily available now because black youth are practicing fratricide. They are using the guns to intimidate the community we put our lives on the lines to protect."

The local Panthers got together five years ago, at their 20th reunion, and formed Black Men and Women Against Crime to stop violent crime and drug abuse in the black community.

This weekend, the Black Panther Party in Winston-Salem is holding its 25th reunion on Saturday at 4 p.m. at 1305 Highland Ave.

For more information, call 773-0992.

"Panther Babies" Remember Social Programs Of The Black Panthers

By DAVID L. DILLARD
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North Ward Alderman Nelson Malloy had a surprise visit by a old friend he knew since she was a child.

Pam Moses, who lives at 714 Patterson Ave., remembers Malloy from his days of patrolling the streets as a Black Panther.

"I was one of the kids they used to feed," she said. "They took care of most of the kids in the neighborhood."

Moses was one of many "Panther babies" who benefited from the organization's social programs and said the Panther Party taught her to love her people.

"I remember when they used to feed us at the place they had on Fifth Street. I was about 8 years old then," said Michael White, another Panther baby.

White, 36, who lives in Salem Gardens, said his family wasn't too poor, but he needed the breakfast program.

"To me it was mandatory that I went because we had a brotherhood," he said. "I love the Panther Party because they were there for us. We got too many brothers out here now shooting each other. I'm down for (the Panthers) right now."

In the early 1970s, the Winston-Salem chapter of the Black Panther Party provided the black community with services, including free food and clothes, tutoring, transportation, ambulance service and health screening.

Larry Womble, a former alderman, said the Panthers were fore-runners of social programs that government and community-service agencies are now providing.

"They were providing a service that was sorely needed," Womble said. "They provided the kind of services that mainstream agencies were not or could not or for whatever reason, just did not provide. The Panthers filled that void."

Womble, who served on the board of aldermen with former Panthers Larry Little and Malloy, said they continued with the Panther philosophy of helping the disadvantaged while serving on the board.

"Larry was a very effective and dedicated member of the board of aldermen and was loyal to the citizens he represented. That's what an alderman is supposed to do, and Nelson is still doing that today," Womble said.

"They brought concerns to the table that were not popular concerns, but they were the right concerns. Joining the board of aldermen didn't lessen their commitment; they were just doing it in a different way," he said.

Malloy said the Panthers believed in carrying weapons to

protect their community, but he said protection primarily meant offering services that blacks were denied.

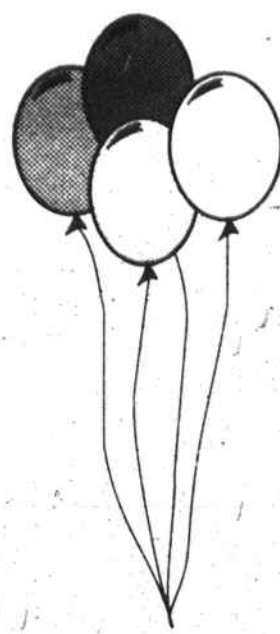
He said many people were skeptical because the media focused on blacks walking the streets with guns.

"They refused to give us the credit for programs that have serviced thousands of people in the community," he said. "The media didn't want to deal with that. And blacks are still having problems with the media."

Malloy said bad press, the

FBI's Counterintelligence Program and the "day-to-day pressure of being in the Party," led to its demise.

"We were only humans taking on a monumental task — the United States government," he said. "But we all knew at some point that we would serve our purpose and go out of existence. ... We weren't afraid to put our lives on the line because we knew with the injustice going on, that we could die at any time from just doing nothing. So if we're going to die, we wanted to die doing something."



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