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RACIST ACQUITTED IN BOOKSTORE MURDERS
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described the weapons of the attackers as handguns that appeared to be equipped with silencers. The tip of the gun placed to his temple had a soft, foam rubber feel, he said.

Parris thinks he may have fallen unconscious, because the next thing he remembered was realizing that the building was getting hot.

"He got up, ran into a wire book rack, and then bumped into someone wearing a sweater. He asked if the person was John Anthony, someone he knew was in the bookstore. He didn't answer me," said the *Star* report.

Parris was blinded totally right after the shooting, but managed to find his car key by touch. He tried to start the first car he reached, but the key would not work. He finally found his own car, pulled it to the highway, and blinked the headlights until a passer-by stopped and telephoned the emergency service number, according to the *Observer*.

"Firefighters and investigators arrived to find Parris and Anthony in their cars, both bleeding from gunshot wounds. Inside were the bodies of Melton, Godfrey and Weston," said the *Observer*.

A friend of Melton's told the court about a telephone threat the store clerk received about five months before the shootings. A female called and said she "was coming up to kill all the homosexuals and lesbians," said Terry Wayne Humrick.

Most of the witnesses for the prosecution have been prisoners who informed the authorities about Sheets' alleged boasting about the murders. Clifton Patterson of Baltimore, Md. said that Sheets had given him handwritten notes while the two of them were incarcerated at Butner Federal Correctional Institution. Bobby Gene Pryor, a former cellmate of Sheets' in the Cleveland County jail, said that Sheets told him that "two soldiers went in [the bookstore] and shot them [the victims] while Sheets and [Robert] Jackson poured kerosene and gasoline on them. He said he used a .22 and a .45 [calibre guns]."

"Sheets told me that he would never be tried because they were going to get him out. He said he would blow this damn building to hell," Pryor added, according to the *Star* (5/10/89).

"He said if they had not left those two queers alive, he would not be here [in jail]. He said two of those queers were still alive," Pryor said.

Pryor said Sheets told him the victims were supposed to die because they were "impure." Another Baltimore prisoner, Clifton Patterson, also testified that he had discussed the murders with Sheets and Jackson.

A friend of Sheets', former White Patriot Party member Robert Stoner, said that Jackson told him that he, Sheets and two other men — Hugo Black and Jeff Johnston — had committed the Shelby murders. He also said that they had robbed the bookstore of \$600 in cash so the motive would appear to be a robbery, rather than the killing of homosexuals, according to the *Star* (5/11/89).

Groups who work against hate-group violence held a press conference at the beginning of the trial to emphasize the importance of anti-gay violence and the possible impact of the Shelby case. Bob Sikorski of the North Carolinians Against Racism and Religious Violence of Durham said, "Whether guilty or innocent of the Shelby murders, [the defendants] are, along with those who support them, guilty of a violent bigotry for which we can hold no place in North Carolina."

According to the *Star* (5/4/89), he said that violence against gay people "must be understood as violence against each of us," and that white supremacist groups like the White Patriots are once again becoming active throughout the state.

Kevin Berrill of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Anti-Gay Violence Project said he is concerned about the possible ramifications of any not-guilty verdict. "I'm afraid that if these people get off, the bullies and bashers will consider it open seasons on, not only gays and lesbians, but anyone who is perceived to be different."

After Sheets was acquitted, Betty Godfrey — mother of one of the victims — screamed at defense attorneys Don Bridges and Les Farfour as they left the courtroom. "I hope they have children, and somebody murders them like he murdered my son," she said. "I hope you go through the same thing I did."

Another mother, Faye Melton, said "I think the whole thing stinks. I hope that justice will prevail down here, although it hasn't so far."

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