

Families, Residents Continue To Deal With Results of Verdict

BY LAURA GODWIN
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

A year has passed since Wendell Williamson marched up Henderson Street firing a M-1 rifle and leaving two men dead. While family and friends continue to deal with their losses, the rest of the community is still feeling the results of a year of shock, debate and change.

Williamson, who confessed to shooting to death Chapel Hill restaurant manager Ralph Walker Jr. and UNC lacrosse player Kevin Reichardt during his Jan. 26, 1995 shooting spree, was found not guilty by reason of insanity and is currently being held at Dorothea Dix Hospital.

Since the verdict, families and friends of the two victims have been working to inform residents about its effects. Walker's sisters, Iris Walker and June Cayton, started a petition drive in November to try to convince the state legislature to modify the current insanity defense to guilty but mentally ill.

Iris Walker said that she was unsure of how many signatures she and her family have collected to date but that she would like to continue her fight to change the existing defense. "We will do as much as we can for what good it will do," she said.

R. B. Nicholson, a Winston-Salem man who lost his son in a 1988 shooting spree,

is aiding the Walker family in its efforts. Michael Hayes, the man confessed to killing Nicholson's son was later found not guilty by reason of insanity. Nicholson said public awareness would play a major role in changing the current defense.

"More people are being exposed to the defense and more people are being defended by it."

Orange-Chatham District Attorney Carl Fox, who prosecuted Williamson, said the community had many concerns about the verdict. "I think it would be very helpful if we had a guilty but mentally ill verdict," he said. "The verdict would prevent these cases from coming out in what many people perceive as an unacceptable result."

In the General Assembly, the push for a change is coming from N.C. Sens. Patrick Ballentine, R-New Hanover, and Mark McDaniel, R-Forsyth. The two are co-sponsoring a bill that would make it possible for defendants to be found guilty but mentally ill. A guilty but mentally ill defense would require a defendant, once pronounced sane, to spend the rest of their sentence in prison. McDaniel called the current defense a last resort and a "deliberate attempt to skew the justice system."

After the verdict, the Reichardt family took steps to learn more about the events that led up to their son's death. In December, the Reichards filed a wrongful death

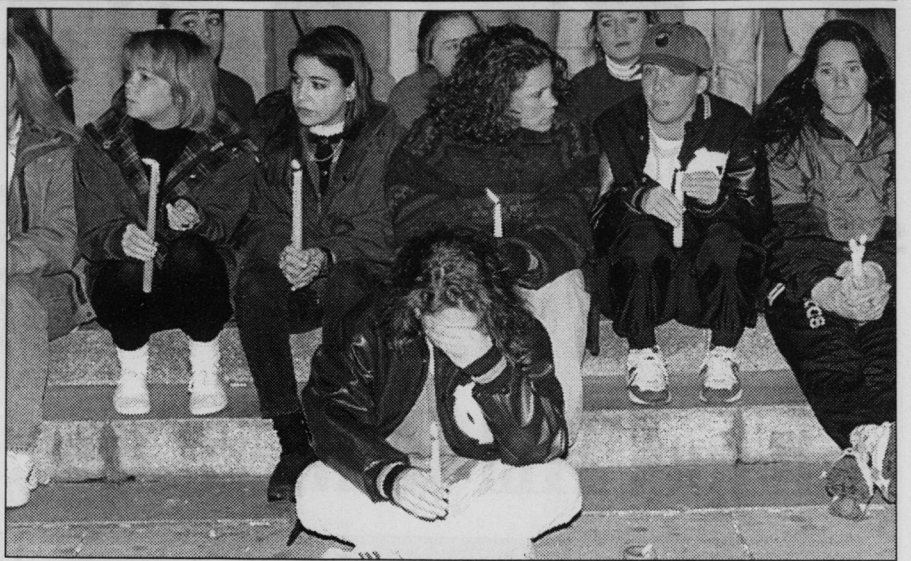
suit against Williamson and his parents, Dee and Fonda Williamson. The Reichards' attorney, Joe Poe Jr., has said the suit could answer lingering questions about Williamson's state of mind at the time of the shootings. If the family is awarded any damages, the money will be used as funding for the Kevin Reichardt Foundation Scholarship, Poe said. As of yesterday, no action had been taken on behalf of the Williamsons, Poe said.

"At this point, there have not been any answers filed to my knowledge," he said.

After the shootings, the town was faced with the possibility of a controversial reminder of the violence in the form of a sculpture. The previously planned sculpture, "621 yards / 69" was designed by UNC graduate Thomas Sayre. The sculpture is comprised of five bench-like structures made of guns buried in concrete. The guns were purchased at several "Buy Back the Hill" gun buy backs. The five pieces will be placed on Franklin Street, representing the path a bullet would take.

Chapel Hill Town Council member Barbara Booth-Powell said although the council voted to allow the sculpture, the council has delayed the project in order to give the residents more time to examine the art.

"There is quite a bit of protest," she said. "We're hearing from both sides."



A somber candlelight vigil on Franklin Street brought town residents together last January after the Henderson Street shootings. Many students joined local leaders at the emotional ceremony.

SHOOTINGS

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each new day without two members of the community has been handled differently by every person who was affected by the sudden, tragic disruption of an otherwise calm day.

"I know that I kind of enjoy coming up Henderson Street — it's good for me to drive that way to campus," Murphy said. "For someone like (my teammate), he didn't want to go by there. It means something different for everyone, whether it's remembering good things or bad things."

A year after students and community members grasped for explanations to questions that were impossible to answer, the events that resulted in two deaths still are impossible to forget. "It was a beautiful day, warmer than usual and a man was shooting at me. It seemed so clear to me what I was supposed to do in the next few minutes — I was supposed to keep him from going to Franklin (Street)."

Although the pain may never subside, the families of the victims will always have the photographs and the memories of the

times spent with their lost loved ones.

"I went through (Ralph's) stuff (Tuesday). All I have left of his are letters. We're living through this," said Iris Walker, Ralph Walker's sister.

Carol Reichardt, Kevin Reichardt's mother, said the support of family and friends have made the difference for her family over the past year. "Right now, we're doing the best that can be expected," she said. "It's just a really sad, difficult time."

As much as people try to move on from the day that shook Chapel Hill, the day that changed the peaceful atmosphere and the way residents perceived the town's safe stability, some will always hear the echo of gun shots ringing in the background.

Courtney Riley, a sophomore from Concord, was near Silent Sam when Williamson fired his shots on Henderson Street. "Every time I pass the tree I hid behind (last January), I think of the stray bullets. I think of that day," Riley said.

Still, those who do remember Jan. 26 and the events that followed most often think of the families who lost loved ones. "One has to feel awful for the families and the people they lost. One also has to feel for Wendell and his family because in a sense he lost his life that day, also."

FORUM

FROM PAGE 1

Hanover, and Mark McDaniel, R-Forsyth, will lead the debate.

Reichardt's family and former teammates established The One Four Kevin Foundation as a play on the number 14 he wore on the lacrosse team.

In 1989, Ballantine and McDaniel proposed a bill to modify the verdict to guilty but mentally ill. The proposal arose from a 1988 shooting spree in Winston-Salem. The gunman in this case was also found not guilty by reason of insanity.

Ballantine said tonight's forum would aid the bill's future in the N.C. legislature.

"I feel that this forum will eventually lead us to passing this legislation," Ballantine said. "This is a victim's rights bill. We've got to change the law."

Williamson, who is being held at Dorothea Dix in Raleigh, will come before a judge once a year for commitment hearings. If he is found mentally stable, Williamson could be released.

"After the verdict, I think Mrs. Reichardt was more angry than anything. I think she wanted there to be some awareness," Murphy said. "She wanted the people in the community to realize — how Williamson can be released each year."

The forum's sponsors hope to get the information on the two separate verdicts out to the public.

"There can only be a positive outcome from something like this," he said. "Our target audience is the entire community, the entire state for that matter. Hopefully, this will be something that will get the ball rolling as far as getting some legislative action one way or another in whatever way the state sees fit."

Campus Calendar

FRIDAY
12:00 p.m. **ROBERT FISCHER**, former principal legal adviser to the Commission of the European Communities, will give a free talk in the School of Law's classroom 2.

CATHOLIC AWARENESS WEEK: Come join in a discussion of "Social Justice" in Union 226 presented by Professor Jim Stasheff.

1:15 p.m. **ASTRONOMY/ASTROPHYSICS JOURNAL CLUB:** Chris Thompson (UNC-CH) presents "Gamma Ray Bursters" in 277 Phillips Hall.

4 p.m. **STUDY ABROAD** will hold an information session on programs in Germany and Austria in 105 Caldwell Hall.

PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY COLLOQUIUM: Andrew Abrahams presents hyperbolic solutions for grand challenges in 265 Phillips Hall. Refreshments at 3:30 p.m. in 277 Phillips Hall.

ANNE MARIE SCULLION, from the University of Iowa, will speak about "Fascist Male Boding in the Sports Arena" in 305 Dey. Sponsored by C.E.S. and the department of Romance languages.

6 p.m. **FOCUS**, the Graduate Chapter of Interservice Christian Fellowship, will host economist Ken Elzinga on the topic "Response to Atheism." Join us for dinner and the talk at 413 Granville Rd., or call 914-0121 for more information.

7 p.m. **NEW GENERATION CAMPUS MINISTRIES** invites all out to Friday Night Fellowship in 205-206 Union. Come worship the Lord with us!

8 p.m. **THE MISSION — FREE!** Come watch this movie starring Robert deNiro and Jeremy Irons in Hanes Art Center Auditorium.

SATURDAY
6:30 p.m. CUAB presents "The Snapper" in the Student Union Auditorium; also showing at 9 p.m.

8 p.m. **CATHOLIC AWARENESS WEEK:** Come sing, and have fun at Karaoke Night in Carmichael Ballroom.

SUNDAY
4 p.m. **STUDENTS INTERESTED** in the support of Charlie McNairy and Justin Harty for the offices of senior class president and vice president are meeting to organize. Call Julie at 929-2983 for location and details.

6:30 p.m. CUAB presents "Unzipped" in the Student Union Auditorium; also showing at 9 p.m.

PERSONAL HYGIENE ITEM DRIVE to benefit the IFC shelter. Please bring toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, etc., to the drop boxes located in the Student Union, the Newman Center and Cobb, Carmichael, Hinton James and Morrison Residence Halls.

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For the Record

The headline on the Jan. 25 story, "MBA Student Denied Bail by Wake Superior Court," should have stated that a district judge refused to set bail for William Boychuk. Boychuk will appear before a superior court judge Monday.

The Daily Tar Heel regrets the error.

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