

Decatur, Illinois • Monday, November 15, 1999

CENTRAL ILLINOIS A9



Herald & Review/Dennis Magee

Ku Klux Klan counters Jackson with rally



Herald & Review/Kathy J. Huff

RALLY: Standing aside from the rest of the members of the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan from Butler, Ind., a flag bearer watches the crowd of 200 assembled people during the 45-minute rally. In the photo at top, Anthony Chapman, 29, uses a piece of cardboard to make his statement about race relations in Decatur during the Rainbow/PUSH march. With the word "not" crossed out, Chapman's sign reads, "Racism is in our town." Gregory Howell, one of the expelled students, is Chapman's nephew.

Almost 200 gather in park to hear group's stand on expulsions

By PAUL BRINKMANN & BRAD MUDD
Herald & Review Writers

DECATUR — Almost 200 people attended a rally Sunday afternoon in Nelson Park in support of the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan from Butler, Ind.

The crowd roared approval for the shouts of "White Power" and for the Klan's stand against Americans and Jews. The gathering included several teen-agers and a few children.

Some individuals on the fringe of the crowd did not cheer and appeared to be observing specifically.

An unidentified Klan member opened the rally with a prayer for the school children. Several Klan members bowed their heads in prayer.

"We did not come in praise violence, but we will be back and join a march," the Klan man said. "We are here to protest and demonstrate against this (epithet) Jesse Jackson."

Jeffrey Berry, Klan Imperial wizard of the Klan faction, said "Get the gangs out of school. Make room for somebody who wants to learn."

"They shouldn't throw them out for two years," one heckler said.

"They said 'Get out of school' and the school board do their job. No outsiders should get involved."

Steve Thordood, 44, and David Bohman, 62, both of Decatur, said they came to support the Klan.

Thordood said everyone he talks to is angry about Jackson's effort to reverse the expulsions, although he acknowledged that the two-year expulsions of two years were too long.

"I think he (Jackson) wants to start trouble, and it may come," Thordood said.

Anthony Chapman was the only black man in the crowd. He said he wanted to see a little bit of history.

"There's a lot going on in this nation, and the Klan is a part of that," Chapman said. "I don't feel uncomfortable. I'm out here peacefully, and if they can say what they want without getting in my face, then I'm fine with them without getting in their face."

An unidentified Klan member wearing hood and robes read a Klan list of 10 points to revive the expulsions contention. Their plan included alternative schooling, counseling, public apologies and banning the teen-agers from all extracurricular activities.

One Klan member, who said he was a local resident, said he Decatur students arranged to rent the pavilion and invite their parents. He also said the Klan was preparing "something big" in Decatur in about two weeks that involved local Klan members "coming out of the closet."

"We didn't come in to be bad, but just a reminder," the Klan man said. "We are here to protest and demonstrate against this (epithet) Jesse Jackson."

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Herald & Review/Kathy J. Huff

'TAKE OFF YOUR MASKS': Nancy Waterman of Decatur expresses her opinion of the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Sunday in Nelson Park as she shouts, "Take off your masks, cowards," at the 10 Klan representatives from Butler, Ind.



Herald & Review/Phil Jacobs

◀ NO-MAN'S LAND: The crowd that gathered in Nelson Park on Sunday to see the Klan and hear its message had to endure a 100-foot buffer zone with a substantial police presence.

Decatur school board member Mike Setina's car was the target of vandals on either Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning as it was parked at his residence. While he has no proof the incident was related to the controversy in which he was involved, Setina said he believes it is related because the vandals made an effort to determine the car's owner before the windows were broken.

Former school board member Jeffrey Perkins talking about what should happen after the dispute over the seven expelled students is resolved

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"We have to have a truthful dialogue among the people that be in the car from both the black and white communities. We need to sit down and try to work out a solution that's good to help us move forward."

Former school board member Mike Setina's car was the target of vandals on either Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning as it was parked at his residence. While he has no proof the incident was related to the controversy in which he was involved, Setina said he believes it is related because the vandals made an effort to determine the car's owner before the windows were broken.

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"We've finally found something that is bringing the community together on the schools. But I wish it were something else."

School board member Dan Oakes, who took his seat on the board Tuesday.



Herald & Review/Joseph C. Garza

Demonstration draws civil rights veterans

Three with histories dating back to King answer the call again

By BRETT WILCOXON
Herald & Review

► MARCH VET: Dottie Chambers Casey of Chicago holds a "Keep Hope Alive" sign in her left hand as she handles a crutch in her right hand during the march for the seven expelled high school students Sunday. Casey has participated in 133 marches over 65 years.

Since then, Scott has taken part in "countless" civil rights marches across the nation. He now lives in Chicago and was born Sunday selling civil rights pins and buttons to the marchers in Decatur — and sales were good.

Scott is among several veterans of civil rights demonstrations who came from Chicago to participate in Sunday's march.

At the head of the crowd was Dottie Chambers Casey, a veteran of 123 marches during the past 65 years, including

some with King. Holman, head of the Rainbow/PUSH banner in her left hand, Casey marched forward with the aid of a crutch under her left arm.

Casey said she didn't hesitate for a moment when the call was issued for Chicagoans to come to Decatur in support of the exploited.

"This is history," she said. "Today is a very special day; it's a holiday."

"We're fighting for freedom of education," Scott echoed those com-

ments, saying he is glad the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King is motivating people to continue the fight for civil rights into the next millennium.

"People are too complacent," he said. "55-year-olds don't have \$100,000 homes."

"They have the things that they never had. They have homes that have not been paid for (from injustice), that job cannot save you."

Scott said the size of the crowd reminded him of the marches of the '60s.

"Numbers make a differ-

ence," he said. "It's the only way we'll get (the students) back in school."

Scott and Casey were not the only people at the march who once walked behind King. She has 69-year-old Jackie Peterson, 62, and 15-year-old great-granddaughter.

Peterson said Sunday's march was like a trip back in time.

"It's about the same magnitude as the marches in the '60s, but a lot more calm," she said.

— Billy Iyus and Amy Burch contributed to this story.

Notes & quotes

An employee from Del Carmen's Pizza found the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition march to be an inexpensive marketing opportunity. He rode his bike through the hungry crowd wearing signs advertising specials on slice pizza.

"This could happen anywhere. I don't think that Decatur is the only place this could happen."

— Kate Ward, 21, a computer student at Millikin University, originally from Tennessee

At the KKK rally in Nelson Park, Klan members belittled the policemen who stood around the pavilion partially to protect them from possible counter-protesters.

A hooded and robed Klan man said local police are welcome to go to these crack houses and do their jobs. The Klan man then said Decatur-area Klan members would patrol the streets and making citizen arrests.

"I brought them to see history and to see what the (civil rights) struggle is like. It may be in broken pieces, but it still goes on."

— Billy Mueller of Decatur, who along with his two grandchildren, Mike White, 9, and Angela White, 3, sat on the curb near Garfield Montessori Magnet School and witnessed the march

Klan Imperial Wizard Jeffrey L. Berry told potential recruits in the crowd that they must be Christians to become KKK members. He lauded Illinois white supremacists Millie Hale's church of the Nazarene, which had members at the rally passing out literature. "He's an atheist," Berry said of Hale.

While the conflict has been perceived through mostly negative terms, 65-year-old Decatur resident Curtis Clark insisted the march brings the community together. And, he said, Sunday's rally conveys a positive message about Decatur-area residents.

"This is like a good thing, to get together and do this as a community. I love it," he said. "I love it because it's a black and white thing. It's a beautiful thing."

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