



Eighty-Eight Seconds That Refused to End: The Greensboro Massacre of November 3, 1979

Hello, and welcome to the UNCG Public History project walking-tour, *Eighty-Eight Seconds That Refused to End: The Greensboro Massacre of November 3, 1979*. To get to the site of the Greensboro Massacre take Lee Street. If you are approaching from the east or from out of town on interstate 40 take a right turn on Willow Road. If you are coming from the west or downtown take a left. When you turn onto Willow Road you are one stoplight and two intersections from Everitt Street, the site of the Greensboro Massacre. Once you cross McConnell Road, find a place to park at the curb on either Willow Road or one of the side streets. Be sure to secure your vehicle. Once you are parked, proceed to the intersection of Willow and McConnell and begin your tour by walking north on Willow Road, away from McConnell, to its T intersection with Everitt. Keep in mind that the appealing neighborhood you see going up around you did not exist in 1979. In 1979 these streets were lined with single story, red brick apartments. Keep listening as you walk. If you reach Everitt before the next set of instructions, wait there and continue listening.

The deadly confrontation that occurred in Greensboro's Morningside Homes project on November 3, 1979 had its beginning on a hot, sultry July 8, 1979 in the small town of China Grove, NC. A Ku Klux Klan rally at the China Grove community center had aroused the ire of local blacks who decided to protest the rally. They were joined by a group of communists who were doing union organizing in the local textile mills.

On this July day the two groups came face to face. The protestors were armed mostly with sticks, bats and bricks, the Klan with rifles, pistols and shotguns. The Klansmen backed down. For whatever reason, the Klansmen retreated into the community center and watched in rage as the protestors circled the building and burned the Klan's Confederate flag.

The confrontation caused the Klan to seek revenge against the communists, who planned a new rally they titled "Death to the Klan." Members of the communist group, wasted no time in announcing their intention to hold their "Death to the Klan" rally on November 3 in Greensboro. In order to drum up interest they began putting up posters and holding press conferences. Both posters and press statements were provocative, calling the Klan cowards and daring them to show up on November 3.

Meanwhile there were problems with obtaining a parade permit from the Greensboro Police. Communist organizer and civil rights activist Nelson Johnson finally obtained the permit on November 1. The Permit contained the unusual stipulation that the marchers were not to carry any weapons for self-defense. When Johnson tried to argue the point, he was told to take it or leave it. The Greensboro police, he was informed, would be providing sufficient security.

The role of law enforcement is especially troublesome when considering their dealings with the Klan and Nazis. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and Greensboro Police both had contacts within the Klan and Nazi organizations. Men reporting to both agencies obtained vital information on the deadly intentions of the Klan and Nazis and passed this along to their respective organizations. But they didn't stop there. Both men took an active, even impassioned, roll in encouraging the two organizations to join forces and confront the communists and militant blacks in Greensboro on November 3.

During the final days leading up to November 3 the police have known for some time that there will be trouble. Police authorities have made several crucial decisions. First of all they have decided to allow the march to take place and to stand by their earlier decision denying the marchers the right to carry weapons. There is also a decision to not have police officers in evidence at the march and rally. Their stated reason is to avoid provocation. Rally organizers have not been alerted to the known danger. Klansman and police informant Eddie Dawson has been given a copy of the parade permit detailing the starting point and time, and route the parade will follow.

In the late night and early morning hours of November 2 and 3, a group of Nazis and Klansmen meet with Eddie Dawson for a late night/early morning drive over the parade route using Dawson's copy of the parade permit as a guide. This reconnaissance is aimed at selecting the best location for their planned confrontation.

It is now November 3, 1979. By 7:30 in the morning participants in both groups are gathering in Greensboro. While protesters gather at various homes around Greensboro before proceeding to Morningside Homes, Klansmen and Nazis meet at a home on Randleman Road, just outside of town. The Randleman Road gathering is kept under surveillance by Greensboro Police officers watching from an unmarked car. These officers report back to headquarters the presence of both men and guns. They continue to keep the gathering under surveillance, following the deadly caravan as it leaves Randleman Road and heads to Morningside Homes. Their radio reports back to police headquarters keep police officials informed of events as they unfold on an almost minute-by-minute basis.

If you haven't reached the intersection of Willow Road and Everitt Street, please pause the program and begin listening again when you arrive. Cross the street to the north side of Everitt. Stand on the sidewalk in front of the town homes that line Everitt and look back down Willow Road to the south. You can see the Klan caravan crossing McConnell Road and headed your way, driving between blocks of single story, red brick apartments.

When the caravan turns onto Willow Road, police know for certain that the objective is Morningside Homes, the protesters located several yards to your right at the corner of Everitt and Bingham have no clue what is coming. As the caravan begins its left turn from Willow onto Everitt Street, Klansman Roland Wayne Wood, traveling in the lead vehicle, announces via CB radio that they are, in his exact words, (quote) "Heading into Niggertown."

In order to follow the route of the caravan, turn right and walk west along Everitt, past Old Heritage and Dunbar, to the intersection of Everitt and Bingham. This section of Bingham Street was a short one block section of Carver Street in 1979. Old Heritage and Dunbar

going north into the new Willow Oaks development didn't exist in 1979. Please pause the program until you reach Bingham Street. Stand on the east corner of Everitt and Bingham. Do not cross Bingham Street.

The scene that greets the Klansmen at the corner of Everitt and Carver (now Bingham) is festive, filled with singing, laughter, and conversation. The day had started out with fog but that burned away leaving a perfect Carolina day: warm, bright sunshine, crystal blue sky. The protesters that have gathered on Carver/Bingham and Everitt Streets are a diverse group; locals as well as out-of-towners, black as well as white, adults and children, men and women, active participants and curious residents. Most of the people are poor blacks from the neighborhood. The organizers are both white and black intellectuals attempting to build a communist movement with this local support. Protesters are strung out along Everitt Street on both sides of this intersection and up this one block of Bingham/Carver. Many are attaching "Death to the Klan" posters to picket sticks to hand out to marchers along the way. The sound truck is being decorated and the sound equipment tested. Sandi Smith from Kannapolis and Paul Bermanzhon from Durham both notice the lack of a police presence. Sandi comments, (quote)Its weird, no cops here.(end quote)

You are standing at east corner of Everitt and Bingham, once the east corner of Everitt and Carver in 1979. Turn so you are facing south, back across Everitt looking at the new town homes across the way. The caravan is approaching from your left on Everitt.

As soon as the first car, a white sedan sporting a Confederate flag decal on its front bumper, is seen proceeding up Everitt Street past Carver, the mood turns ugly. The crowd becomes hostile. Shouts of "Kill the Klan" and "Death to the Klan" erupt spontaneously. Some protesters begin hitting the cars with sticks. One man even shouts out, inviting the Klansmen to get out and face the crowd. As the second vehicle, a white pick-up, cruises slowly by, you can see Klansman Mark Sherer in the shotgun seat calmly loading a pistol.

Racial insults are shouted from the vehicles. Klansman and police informant Eddie Dawson, looking from his seat in the lead car, locks eyes with Nelson Johnson and shouts, (quote)You asked for the Klan, you got it, you Commie son of a bitch.(end quote)

The caravan carves a slow path down Everitt Street through the gauntlet of protesters until most of the vehicles have past this intersection with Carver/Bingham when Klansman Mark Sherer leans out the window of the white pick-up and fires a shot into the air. The caravan comes to a halt. The first shot is followed quickly by more shots which spur both sides into action. Klansmen and Nazis get out of vehicles that are stopped in the block in front of the community center and begin attacking protesters with knives and bats. Protesters meanwhile are moving back up Everitt Street toward where you are now standing and away from the shooting and fighting. This also moves them toward the rear of the caravan. The last two vehicles in the caravan are a blue Ford Fairlane followed by a yellow van. These last two vehicles come to a stop to your left on Everitt before reaching the intersection where you stand. Men jump from the van and gather at the trunk of the Ford from which they retrieve a variety of weapons and begin calmly stalking toward you through the confused crowd of protesters, taking careful aim at specific targets and firing.

Kwame Cannon, ten year old son of rally organizer Willena Cannon, is with a group of children dressed in red berets and tan shirts who are on Carver Street playing near this intersection. He sees the lead car with the confederate battle flag on its bumper and hears the first shots. At first he thinks the sound is coming from cap guns. He realizes the danger is for real and the whole group runs.

Protesters flee up Carver/Bingham into Morningside Homes looking for safety from the rain of bullets. Many residents, out of fear, close and lock their doors.

Cesar Cauce stands at the corner of Everitt and Carver, right where you are now standing, trying to protect fleeing protestors, his only weapon a stick. He is clubbed to the ground and shot to death.

Now turn around so you can look up Carver/Bingham Street to the north away from Everitt. The through street you see today didn't exist in 1979. Carver Street back then ran one short block north before making a right turn and continuing east until it intersected Jennifer Street two blocks away. This leg of Carver ended in a maze of single story, red brick apartments.

Paul Bermanzhon is right in front of you, a few steps behind Cesar on Carver Street when he sees his friend get killed. Paul is shot in the head attempting to take Cesar's place. He feels the blow to the head and the contact with the ground when he falls. He tries to get up and realizes he can't. He sees blood on the pavement and slowly realizes that it is his. Others can see him lying in the street with one arm and leg flailing as he tries to move.

Jim Waller attempts to retrieve a rifle from a pick-up truck parked to your left along the west curb of Carver Street next to the community center (the new Willow Oaks Community Center is located on the same site as the old Morningside Homes Center). In a short scuffle with a Klansman, Waller loses possession of the weapon and is shot in the back as he tries to flee across Carver/Bingham. He falls near the red brick apartments lining the right side of the street. Willena Cannon and Nelson Johnson see Jim go down and rush to him. They try to talk to him when Willena, in her words,(quote)sees the light go out in him.(end quote)

Mike Nathan is shot point-blank in the face and body in the middle of Carver Street while attempting to help Cesar and Paul.

Bill Sampson takes cover behind a car parked across Carver Street near where Jim Waller lost his battle for possession of the rifle. He is trying to fire back at the Klansmen with a pistol and takes a fatal bullet in the heart.

Nelson Johnson is all over the place trying to organize people to protect themselves and to give aid where he can. He is stabbed three times in the arm with a knife protecting a wounded protester.

Sandi Smith is on the right side of Carver Street about half way up the block toward the side and rear the Morningside Homes community center (the new Willow Oaks community center is on the same site). She gets clubbed in the head while helping some children to safety. Dale Sampson helps her to her feet, and they continue attending to the safety of the children before Sandi finds cover behind the porch of the community center with a white friend named Claire who is wounded and disoriented. Claire breaks cover and looks over the porch rail. She sees a rifle aimed at her. She ducks and warns

her friend, Sandi, who takes one split second to look for herself. Sandi is killed by a well aimed bullet between the eyes.

Eighty-eight seconds elapse between the firing of the first shot and the last. As the shooters calmly return their weapons and prepare to leave the scene, four protesters lie dead, one other is dying and nine others are wounded, some seriously.

Where are the police? They are eating lunch or otherwise out of the area as ordered. When they do arrive, there is no pursuit of the Klan/Nazi caravan. The last Klan vehicle, the yellow van, is stopped and its occupants arrested. The shooters were slow to leave the scene, and the arresting officers arrived sooner than other police units. When police do arrive, they arrest several protesters. Nelson Johnson, stabbed and angry, yells at the police, "It's gonna be war."

Ambulances finally arrive. EMTs find four dead. They are Cesar Cauce, Bill Sampson, Sandi Smith, and Jim Waller. Two others, Mike Nathan and Paul Bermanzohn, are seriously wounded. Mike will die at the hospital. Paul survives a head wound with permanent paralysis. All six were principle organizers of this particular rally as well as of union activity in textile mills all over the central part of the state.

In the immediate aftermath of the shooting several protesters, including Nelson Johnson and Willena Cannon shout accusations at the police, accusing them of planning the attack. Signe Waller, kneeling over the body of her husband Jim, shouts, (quote)Long live the Communist Workers' Party.(end quote) When she finally gets up she screams at the police, (quote)You protect the capitalists. You protect the Klan.(end quote)

Proceed up Bingham and continue past the jagged intersection at Spencer. Please continue listening as you make your way to the cemetery, which will be on your right along Bingham.

Reactions were strong in the days immediately following the shooting. Morningside residents were angry that outsiders brought their conflict to the neighborhood. Rumors abounded that exaggerated the violence, prompting some residents to seek temporary shelter outside the neighborhood. Others who witnessed the bloodshed were afraid to leave their homes during the day. The neighborhood, they said, fell quiet for days as residents, on edge, expected the worst was yet to come. CWP members dealt with the deaths of their friends and feared gunmen might show up on their doorsteps. The mayor of the time considered the aftermath the community's finest hour because there was no follow-up violence, yet the City of Greensboro also feared an escalation of violence and took measures to prevent it, from instituting a curfew to declaring a twenty-four hour state of emergency. When the CWP planned a November 11 funeral march toward the cemetery you are headed for; the city responded by banning demonstrations and so-called "clustering" in neighborhoods, prohibiting the carrying of weapons, enabling searches, setting up a rumor-control center, and advising residents to stay away from the march. On the day of the march, at least four hundred CWP members were met by four hundred state and local police as well as five hundred national guardsmen, who lined the rainy path with their shotguns and bayonets. Victims, marchers, and residents were troubled by the city's aggressive response toward themselves during a time when they most needed protection and assurance.

For other city residents, the criminal trials following the shooting were the most disturbing outcome of the shooting. Two criminal trials, both with all-white juries, ended in acquittals. At the later civil trial, the Klan, Nazis, and Greensboro Police

Department were found jointly responsible for one of the deaths. Enraging to some was the fact that the city of Greensboro paid the settlement for all defendants in this civil trial, effectively relieving the Klan and Nazis from any financial responsibility. Still, many considered the verdict a long-awaited victory for the CWP, considering the alleged scandal surrounding the criminal trials.

Some have questioned the validity of those trials. To begin with, witnesses flip-flopped their testimony and criminal prosecutors suffered from conflicts of interest. The Federal trial was prosecuted under a statute that required proof of racism, thus making a conviction impossible. The commitment of the state's prosecutor also came into question; before the state trial, prosecutor Schlosser assured the press, "I fought in Vietnam and you know who my enemy there was," meaning the Communists. He also remarked that "Most of the people in Greensboro believe the CWP got about what they deserved." Schlosser also never called informant Dawson to testify or made jurors aware of he or his gathered intelligence existed. Yet the biases were reportedly not limited to unreliable prosecutors and witnesses; some jurors were accused of being anti-Communist or pro-Klan, referring to the Klan as "patriotic." The anti-Communist atmosphere made sense for 1979; as Klan leader Virgil Griffin pointed out, "...we whooped Communists over there [in Vietnam], we'll whoop it in the United States and clean it up here." Others saw both the Communists and the Klan as fringe groups and had no problems letting the two fight each other. But those who suspected this attitude in the police department felt the shooting ominously demonstrated that Americans could be penalized for holding unpopular views. For many, the criminal trials destroyed their faith in the justice system.

Yet the feelings of betrayal at the hands of a corrupt government were not the only long-lasting consequences for those affected by the shooting. Emotionally, some experienced psychological trauma and strained relationships. CWP organizers and their young children felt the intimidation and blame of acquaintances and coworkers. Organizing and protest in general quieted down out of fear. Nelson Johnson earned the reputation of the "most dangerous person in Greensboro" and was monitored wherever he went. Even six years after the shootings, Willena Cannon, who tried to protect Johnson from the police in 1979, suspected her reputation had an effect on her teenaged son's trial for burglary; the seventeen-year-old was given an outrageous two life sentences for burglarizing five hundred dollars' worth of property, though he was finally freed thirteen years later.

To enter the cemetery, turn right into the entrance. Follow the road through the cemetery. Take the first left. The CWP marker is on the right between the wooden posts 30 and 30a. the gravestone has a high profile, and the words "Communist Workers' Party 5" are engraved across the top.

This gravestone honors Jim Waller, Cesar Cauce, Mike Nathan, Bill Sampson, and Sandy Smith. These five were fatally shot on the corner of Carver and Everitt on November 3, 1979. All but Sandy Smith are buried here in Maplewood Cemetery. Each victim was also very involved in the leadership of the Communist Workers' Party. Walk around to view the opposite side of the stone, and take a moment to read and listen to the words used to remember the CWP 5...

Nov. 3, 1979, the criminal capitalist class, with government agents, Klan and Nazis murdered Jim Waller, Cesar Cauce, Mike Nathan, Bill Sampson, and Sandy Smith. Heroically defending the people, the 5 charged gunfire with bare fists and sticks. We vow this assassination will be the costliest mistake the capitalists ever made, and the turning point of class struggle in the U.S.

The CWP 5 were among the strongest leaders of their time. Their deaths marked an end to capitalist stabilization (1950s – 1970s), when American workers suffered untold misery, yet overall remained dormant for lack of their own leaders. In 1980, the deepest capitalist crisis ever, the working class was awakening.

The CWP 5 lived and died for all workers, minorities, and poor. For a world where exploitation and oppression are eliminated and all mankind freed – the noble goal of communism. Their deaths, a tremendous loss to the CWP and to their families, are a clarion call to the U.S. people to fight for workers' rule. In their footsteps, waves of Revolutionary fighters will rise and join our ranks.

We will overthrow the criminal rule of the monopoly capitalist class! Victory will be ours!

Nov. 3, 1980

-Central Committee, CWP, USA

Fight for Revolutionary Socialism and Workers' Rule

Perhaps one of the first questions we can ask is, “Why were these radical communist activists in Greensboro to begin with?” Part of the answer to that question is very simple. These activists lived and worked in Greensboro, and they established their headquarters here. Other reasons for their presence in Greensboro are more complicated and can partly be traced back to the confrontation at China Grove.

The Communist Workers' Party of Greensboro were trying in the late 1970s to appeal to a broader base of people, and were especially interested in portraying themselves as a biracial organization. To this end, they set out to recruit African Americans. When the Ku Klux Klan announced a recruitment meeting in China Grove in July, the local community's African Americans organized a protest. The CWP in Greensboro decided to join ranks with them in order to create solidarity with working-class blacks. They were welcomed in China Grove insofar as they were there to protest the Klan, but the communist ideology they represented made little or no impact on the black community in China Grove. However, the CWP either ignored or were unaware of that fact. In November, when the CWP decided to stage their “Death to the Klan” rally in a poor black neighborhood, they were fully expecting the support of that community.

Social injustice was a problem in Greensboro in 1979, as it was all over the southeastern United States. In fact, the front page headline of the *Greensboro Daily News* the morning of November 3, 1979 read, “South Worst in Violation of Wage Law.” Between 1978 and 1979, federal investigators found that workers in eight southeastern states were illegally underpaid more than \$17 million. This counted for almost a third of all minimum wage violations nationwide. According to Department of Labor figures, employers in the Southeast also failed to pay their workers nearly \$14 million for overtime. Richard Robinette, then Department of Labor assistant regional administrator for wage and hour regulations in the Southeast cited several reasons for the high

incidence of wage violations. Lack of unionization in the South was one of those reasons. Members of the CWP saw a need to protect workers in Greensboro, and they were truly dedicated to their cause. Paul Bermanzohn and Jim Waller gave up medical practices to work in the mills in Greensboro. Jim began treating mill workers who came to his home in the evening. Bill Sampson and Mike Nathan quit medical school at Duke as they became more involved in anti-Vietnam demonstrations and human-rights issues. Cesar Cauce and Sandy Smith were very involved in organizing mill workers into unions. The CWP leadership were willing to make personal sacrifices in order to fight for the working class, but they did so in a way that was radical and dangerous.

The morning after the shooting was tense. Community leaders were on television and in newspapers asking for people to remain calm and not seek revenge through further violence. Greensboro's mayor Jim Melvin rushed to assure the city that this heinous act had been perpetrated by people "from outside our community." He said, "Not a single person involved was from our city." While it was true that the Nazis and Klansmen were from areas surrounding Greensboro, Greensboro was very much affected and involved, especially the residents of Morningside Homes. In the rush to distance the city from any racial ramifications of the shooting, this poor black neighborhood was, if not ignored, at least neglected.

Understandably, Morningside Homes residents were very angry. The residents were dissatisfied with the performance of the police once the shooting began, but even more upsetting was that the CWP was in their neighborhood in the first place. Rev. Frank Williams, pastor of the New Jerusalem Baptist Church on McConnell Road, a half block from the site of the shooting said, "The community is asking why the parade was permitted to pass through an area heavily concentrated by blacks and children. Residents of the community are angry at the Klansmen and at the police and disenchanted with the marchers for taking a route through a thickly populated, residential area." Morningside Homes resident Chris Caldwell wondered why the CWP switched the protest site from the Windsor Community Center to Morningside Homes. "It gives us a bad name," he complained. "It's not a bad community. They used us yesterday. They used our neighborhood." And he was exactly right. A man identified only as a friend and empathizer of Mike Nathan said, "We picked Morningside because we were making a strong push for blacks. Obviously black workers are more responsive to the threat of the Klan."

Unfortunately for those wounded and killed and those whose lives were otherwise adversely affected by the events of November 3, 1979, the CWP underestimated the Klan/Nazi front's capacity for violence. Immediately following the tragedy, Nelson Johnson and his allies began calling the slayings, "The Greensboro Massacre" and he and the remaining CWP raised this monument in front of you to the deceased, making them martyrs for a cause that would fail to bring about a working-class revolution. The CWP would fade away and return to the radical fringe occupied by other extremist organizations, but November 3, 1979 would continue to cast a forbidding shadow on the residents of Morningside Homes and the community of Greensboro. The neighborhood fell into such a bad state that its own residents called for its complete destruction, making room for a fresh start and a new community that would not have to live under the negative influence of its past. We will return to the Morningside Homes community as we discuss the far-reaching effects of the shooting on the city of Greensboro.

To return to the Willow Oaks development, leave the cemetery the same way you entered it. Turn left on Bingham and follow it to Spencer. Turn left on Spencer and right on Jennifer. Continue waling toward Everitt Street.

The most long-lasting effect of the shootings on the city is an ugly tension between the Greensboro that wants the city to right perceived wrongs, and the Greensboro that wants to put the past behind it. This tension is evident in the controversy surrounding the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or TRC. The TRC was created to investigate the happenings of November 3, 1979, to bring a complete and cohesive story to the public for the first time, and to assist the healing of Greensboro's old wounds. A racial split in support for the commission—whites against, blacks for—clearly illustrates Greensboro's need for discussion and reconciliation. Unfortunately, the commission faced hostilities from its conception, from alleged vandalism of its files and illegal audiotaping of meetings, to the bullying of those participating in its hearings.

Michael Schlosser, the former state prosecutor, called the TRC a waste of time and an opening of healed wounds. He also expressed doubt at the ability of the commission to actually find "truth" when no Klan or Nazi members were expected to testify. Yet neither the city of Greensboro nor the state of North Carolina officially supported the committee, so it did not possess powers of amnesty or subpoena as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in other countries have possessed. In 2005, Mayor Keith Holliday complained that the TRC would be bad for business, and that it was a plot to create a history that never happened. TRC supporters, however, feel the city wants to make a very real history disappear. In the end, the TRC controversy is a struggle between two groups who each want to make their version of history the "official" one. Who controls history controls the present, but both are still up for grabs in this city.

Physical evidence of the city's efforts to move on can be seen in the Willow Oaks development surrounding you. The Greensboro Housing Authority was chartered in 1941 as a quasi-governmental corporation that plays a key role in providing housing options for low and moderate-income citizens of Greensboro. The Housing Authority currently manages 17 different communities throughout the city, and distributes 2,600 vouchers that allow low-income families to rent privately owned housing units at a reduced rate. Morningside Homes opened in 1951 as one of the city's first public-housing communities. This red-brick complex, which looked similar to the homes on your left, began as a vibrant neighborhood where residents took pride in their community. Over the years, the neighborhood suffered from drug-dealing, prostitution, and the continuous coming and going of detached strangers. The shooting made Morningside Homes housing of last choice. The stigma of the Klan, Nazi, Communist shootout contributed to the decline of Morningside Homes until it became one of Greensboro's poorest, most crime-ridden public housing complexes.

In 1996 a public-private partnership including Greensboro Housing Authority, the City of Greensboro, private developers, and Morningside Homes residents began looking for funding to redevelop this neighborhood. The \$76 million Willow Oaks Revitalization Project was announced in 1998. The project's plan was to transform about 240 acres of dilapidated, drug and crime infested housing into a healthy working-class neighborhood. Residents on the redevelopment committee felt the only way to do that was to completely demolish the Morningside Homes complex. They wanted to remove any vestige of the

old complex including its name, and as you can see from your maps, they even changed the street pattern.

In 2001 Morningside Homes residents were given help finding housing while the new Willow Oaks development was being built. Former Morningside resident Melodney Stephens was sad to see her home disappear underneath a wrecking ball, but for the sake of her children, she was thankful they would no longer hear gunshots across the street and that there would be no more drunks staggering up to her front porch in the middle of the afternoon.

Looking at the houses on the west side of Jennifer and throughout the Willow Oaks development, one wonders whether the Morningside Homes residents were displaced and denied financial access to these new homes. The plan called for residents who were elderly, working, or training to become financially independent to have the right to return to the neighborhood once the construction was complete. For the most part, this seems to have been realized. Many of today's residents of Willow Oaks, especially those who are elderly, once lived in Morningside. Those who did not return, left space for others like them. Claire Alexander is originally from the island of Trinidad in the Caribbean. She lived for 35 years in New York City and when she retired from Wall Street, needed to find affordable housing. She came to Greensboro and instantly liked the look and affordability of Willow Oaks. She knows about the 1979 shooting because some people warned her that she was making a mistake, moving into such a neighborhood, especially as a black woman, but she is not bothered by it. Her neighbors are friendly and the community is beautiful and vibrant. She is proud of the community center and the child development center there. She is happy to call Willow Oaks her home.

Edna Stokes is a former resident of Morningside and current resident of Willow Oaks. In 1979 she could see the corner of Carver and Everitt from her house. She remembers shutting her door when the shooting started. She did not know anyone there and she certainly did not know there was supposed to be a march for equality and social justice. More than 25 years later, she can still see the corner where the shooting happened from her front porch and she still does not know much about what happened that day, but it does not matter. This is not the same neighborhood. That was Morningside. This is Willow Oaks.

The developers of Willow Oaks appear to have achieved their goal. To create a successful, inviting, mixed-income neighborhood where low-income families can afford to live alongside middle-class families. However, there are still those in the community who disagree, including Nelson Johnson. In 2003 he said, "The lack of trust, the tension, the racial division – that's the state of our relationship today." He also said the shooting could be a gift to Greensboro if the community claimed it, but today they refuse to do so.

On November 3, 1979, it took 88 seconds to end 5 lives and destroy many others. Now, 27 years later, Greensboro is still dealing with the repercussions of those 88 seconds. Obviously there is still work to be done, but is the city healing or merely burying its past? Is it refusing to deal with it? Is it in danger of repeating it?