

National

Capitol Hill rumor has snowball affect

WASHINGTON — A juicy rumor that has made the rounds of Washington for weeks broke into print Sunday.

The rumor involved Vice President George Bush, an alleged shooting, a police coverup, maybe even a romantic assignation — in short, all of the ingredients of a good story, the kind Washington loves to read.

The only problem with the rumor is that it was not true. Not a word of it. Zilch.

The rumor was that Bush had been shot at — actually wounded slightly — as he left a Capitol Hill townhouse late one night in February, and that the police and Secret Service were covering it up.

Reporters in the capital heard the rumor about two weeks ago. It was brought up officially at the regular White House press briefing last Tuesday.

At that time, deputy White House press secretary Larry Speakes was caught off guard by the question. He had not heard a word about the rumor.

"You mean literally?" he asked. "You mean fired upon?" Speakes said he would check on the rumor or "the rumor of rumors," as he put it. But other reporters went to work to determine to their own satisfaction whether there was any basis in fact.

Until Sunday, the rumor had stayed just that and had not been broadcast or printed. Sunday The Washington Post, one of a number of organizations that had pursued the item, printed the story of the rumor on its front page, and went to unusual lengths to knock it down.

The Post said the source of the rumor was a Capitol Hill artist, who had witnessed a traffic accident near her home and claimed to have heard an investigating police officer remark, "The vice president was shot today."

The policeman denies having ever said that or anything like that. The woman, whose identity was not revealed, called news organizations to check out the officer's statement and succeeded only in fanning the flames of the unsubstantiated report.

One news organization after another got word of the tidbit and the rumor mill — which has a way of embellishing things as it moves along — was soon running full bore.

Bush, who considered the talk "the craziest thing I have ever heard," was understandably annoyed and offered finally to have the FBI interview him so he could deny it officially.

As for the rumor, the FBI said: "There is nothing factual about it."

Onlookers treat Klan rally as picnic

22 people injured in confrontation

MERIDEN, Conn. — Hours before a Ku Klux Klan rally began Saturday, the tension was masked by the festiveness of supporters who munched on pretzels and soft drinks and taunted uneasy civil rights advocates with racial slurs.

Within a few hours, the tension gave way.

At least 22 people — many policemen who had tried to keep the peace — were injured, one of them seriously, in a shower of bricks, logs, rocks and golfballs as hooded Klansmen and rally watchers made a desperate dash for the safety of cars and police cruisers.

The KKK staged the rally to show support for white police officer Eugene Hale, who last month shot and killed a black shoplifting suspect, Keith Rakestraw, in a local shopping center parking lot.

Even before it began the crowd was excited, apparently stirred up at the thought of a possible confrontation between the KKK and their opponents.

Young mothers hoisted small children to their shoulders to give them a better view of the Klan march.

Older men carried drinks outside of neighborhood taverns to cheer on about two dozen hooded Klansmen. Other supporters perched on rooftops to welcome the robed marchers, shouting, "We love you klan."

Chants of "KKK, all the way" were answered by "KKK, go away."

"I'll bet 75 percent of these people came here to get into a hassle. I know I did," said a teenager between sips of beer.

White youths taunted black protesters with racial slurs and choruses of "cotton fields back home," while local blacks dared their antagonists to follow them to a nearby low-income housing project.

"Black is beautiful," repeated a young black man who had left loose with a steady stream of profanity while walking ahead of the Klan parade. "You people, you just don't know. Come down there and see how we live."

Bill Wilkenson, imperial wizard of the Invisible Empire of the Knights of the KKK, came from Louisiana to lead the rally. He said he was pleased by the show of support for the Klan.

"If there's anything we can do to help the police, we'll be by your side," he shouted through a loud-speaker on the steps of city hall.

As he spoke, bystanders noticed that the word "Atlanta" was chiseled on a Civil War Monument fronting the building.

"Now that's appropriate," one of them said, referring to the unsolved deaths of 20 black youngsters in the southern city.

Soon after, members of the International Committee Against Racism rushed a cordon of riot

police wearing helmets and gas masks who dodged flying rocks and bottles, and used night sticks to force the crowd back.

An ICAR leader urged his members on, telling police that

they would "be moved out of the way" if they continued to interfere.

Klansmen took refuge in city hall, but later insisted against advice from police that they be

allowed to march back to their cars parked about two blocks away. It was then that the tensions exploded, and 17 police officers suffered injuries as they tried to restore order.

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United Press International
An electrical engineer at the University of Arizona listens to electrical signals generated by plants, according to Science Digest magazine.

In an arid valley near Tucson, Arizona, Dr. William Gensler, has wired up a remote sensing system to eavesdrop on crops. Sitting in his air-conditioned University of Arizona office, Gensler monitors electrical signals generated by plants growing 35 miles away. These signals are produced when a plant converts nutrients and sunlight into new plant materials.

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