## **Holocaust Museum** Protester Later Beaten

## D.C. Police and FBI Investigating Attack

Page Cl, The Washington Post, April 29, 1993

By Laurie Goodstein

David Willcox waved his Palestinian flag last Thursday at a protest against the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, saying he believed someone needed to be there to speak for the Palestinians. Yesterday, doctors at Washington University Hospital removed 12 stitches from Willcox's head.

Willcox said that after the demonstration and lunch with friends, he was waiting to cross 11th Street NW when three men in dark-colored uniforms-matching jackets pants-and yarmulkes emblazoned with the Star of David attacked him and beat him on the head and legs

with a metal pipe.

The D.C. police department's intelligence division is investigating the incident as a potential hate crime and has no suspects, police spokesman Joseph Gentile said. The FBI is investigating the beating as possible "domestic terrorism," bureau officials said yesterday. An analyst with the FBI's terrorism unit saw the attack on Willcox and reported it, according to FBI spokesman Frank Scafidi.

Michael Schneider, who identified himself as a Washington area leader of the Jewish Defense Organization, said this week that members of his group, whom he did not identify, followed and beat Willcox and three other protesters that afternoon. He said organization members wear matching T-shirts. Gentile said there are no police reports of any other incident in the vicinity that day.

The Jewish Defense Organization, a group of self-styled militants based in New York, recently has reinvigorated its campaign to target people it considers to be Nazis and antisemites, said Schneider, who returned a telephone message left on the group's answering machine in New York.

Schneider said he is coordinator of the group's new chapter in this area. The announcement on the New York answering machine touts "our program of self-defense, going after the Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan, [Nation of Islam leader Louis] Farrakhan, the skinheads or other Jew-haters.

Schneider said about three dozen East Coast members of the organization, some of whom he said were recruited at the University of Maryland at College Park's Hillel Jewish Student Center, traveled to the Holocaust Museum opening prepared to intimidate protesters such as Willcox.

"He's one of several of these Nazis or people that went to a Nazi rally who we had a confrontation with," Schneider said. "Perhaps if Jews would have confronted Nazis that way in 1923 and beaten them in the streets, a lot more Jews would be alive today.'

Willcox, 52, an employee of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, said he wanted to distance himself from other protesters drawn

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urging Jews to arm themselves. Citing differences in attitudes toward the Arabs in Israel, the group broke away in 1985 from the Jewish Defense League. The league was founded by Rabbi

Meir Kahane, who was shot to death in 1990. The two groups are still warring. Mordechai Levy, the JDO's national director, is appealing a conviction for first-degree assault for spraying gunfire at California JDL members from the roof of his group's Manhattan headquarters, injuring a passerby.

Most mainstream American Jewish organizations shun their tactics. "Every community has its extremists," said Myrna Shinbaum, spokes-woman for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. "The JDO is not part of mainstream Jewish organizational life."

Willcox is a familiar figure to some Washingtonians. Every Friday for nearly four years, he has paced back and forth in front of the Israeli Embassy carrying a Palestinian flag. Every Saturday for nearly three years, he has done the same in front of the White House.

In a personal essay written this year, Willcox said that as a teenager, "I had all but turned into a little Nazi." Falling in love with a Jewish woman, a former girlfriend, changed that, he wrote. His involvement in the Palestinian cause began in 1987, when after prayer, "God informed me that from that moment onward, it would be my bounden duty to work for the freedom and independence of the Palestinian people."

## Attack Investigated as Possible Hate Crime, Terrorism

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to the museum's opening ceremonies. They included skinheads, members of the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party, said John Nugent, of the right-wing Liberty Lobby, which obtained the permit for the protest.

"I agonized over it for about a month before the [museum] dedication whether I should go," Willcox said at the hospital yesterday. "I thought this kind of thing is bound to attract the antisemites, the bigots, the people who have hate in their hearts. But I thought that somehow that day we had to make a presence for the Palestinians."

Willcox said he and Jeanne Locher, 31, his fiancee, were waiting for the traffic light to change at 11th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW when Willcox felt somebody tug at the plastic case in which he carries a folded Palestinian flag.

"I turned just in time to see this man with this big, heavy pipe slamming it down on my head," Willcox said.

Three people wearing dark uniforms Willcox described as "paramilitary" with matching jack-ets, pants and boots, all carrying pipes, "all joined in and started hitting me on my head and my body, while I put my hands up trying to fend off the blows," he said.

Willcox, who is 6-foot-4, described the men as having "Semitic-type features." Locher said the first man to hit Willcox had a light sandy beard,

light mustache and freckles.

"They didn't say a word," Locher said. "They were very quiet and very swift and disciplined ... It was almost as if they had practiced what they were going to do." One man held Willcox's arm; one hit him, and the third stood as a lookout, Locher recalled. "It just happened all so quickly."

Willcox said a bystander across the street chased the men off. The bystander later told po-

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- David Willcox

lice he saw the men get into a white car with Vermont license plates, according to Willcox.

The FBI has begun a preliminary investigation into the incident, Scafidi said. "If this group is saying, 'We sent people down there to crack heads,' we would have to look into it. Then you have a group who is crossing state lines to commit crimes.

The Jewish Defense Organization recently has raised its profile in the New York area, holding rallies in the Russian immigrant community and