Trouble Erupts At Herndon High

by Joseph Gatin

"The scene was a bad scene and anyone who wants to minimize the gravity is fooling themselves," said Fairfax County Police Captain Dan W. Kriss in describing the fighting between black and white students which erupted at Herndon High School on Tuesday.

No arrests were made and only one student was reported injured, but classes were dismissed early on Tuesday and cancelled on Wednesday.

According to Herndon High principal James H. McFarland, fighting broke out near the cafeteria between a black and white youth around 11:30 a.m., with the situation developing to where "sides were being taken" along racial lines.

Eventually, according to school spokesmen and police on the scene, 50 to 60 black and a like number of white students — boys and girls — confronted each other on the school grounds, pushing, shoving, and taunting each other with hostile epithets.

Police arriving on the scene — no more than 25 officers — used mace to quiet the troublemakers and then withdrew beyond the parking lot as two Roving Leaders negotiated an uneasy truce.

One student, Robert Rogers, 19, of Poener Place in Herndon was struck in the left shoulder around 1 p.m. by a flying bottle, transported by ambulance to Fairfax Hospital and released later in the day.

"There were confrontations all over the school — people were out looking for trouble," said student body president Michael Friedlander, who blamed the disorders on a rumor initiated on Monday. Other students agreed.

on Wednesday, McFarland told a group of about 1000 parents who met at the school Tuesday night for a previously scheduled "back to school" gathering.

"We won't have school until it is safe," McFarland said.

The parents meeting turned into an open forum where both faculty and Herndon High administrators listened to parental fears and suggestions for returning the calm.

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According to Friedlander and others, a black girl and a white girl had fought in a gym class on Monday — and both had gone home. But the rumor mill had it that the white girl was pregnant, had miscarried, and was suing the county for $7,000. Yes, the two girls had fought, McFarland said, but none of the ensuing rumors were true.

A Roving Leader at the school, Gail Ellerbreake, blamed the fighting on a tense mood of suspicion ex-

"The county has put the largest percentage of subsidized housing of the county in Herndon," one parent said, adding that "these kids are getting antsy." Citing a lack of recreational facilities,
The parent asked "who the hell can afford $2.50 to get to the movies."

More discipline at the school was needed, another parent said, while another urged parents to insist discipline at home.

Another Roving Leader, Lee Young, advised the parents that the Herndon High incident was "happening all over the county."

"It's a serious situation and some students could have gotten killed this afternoon," Young urged the formation of a biracial student group to discuss and handle future incidents at Herndon.