

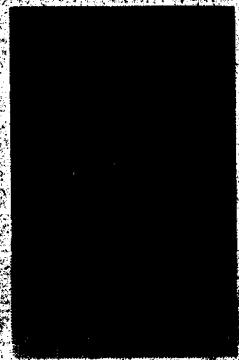
Avowed Minuteman Spokesman Runs Town's All-White Teen Club

By Jim Mann
Washington Post Staff Writer

The avowed East Coast spokesman for the right-wing Minuteman organization, who is an admitted white supremacist, now runs an all-white teen club for the town of Brentwood, Md., after leading a move to close a previously integrated club.

His leadership, which includes the formation of a rifle and pistol club and a girls' karate club for teenagers, apparently has the support of much of Brentwood which is near the District line off Rhode Island Ave. in Prince George's County.

The man identified himself to reporters Monday as George VanNess, a press liaison for a reorganized, white-supremacist Minuteman group. Law enforcement officials confirmed this week that



JESSE C. STEPHENS
... used an alias...
the man is in fact a member of the Minutemen, the organization that advocates preparedness

for armed guerrilla warfare against an alleged Communist threat.

His real name, however, is not George VanNess, but rather Jesse Clayton Stephens, 46, a World War II hero, Brentwood resident and self-employed electrical engineer.

Since he moved to Brentwood three years ago, Stephens has been a central figure in racial conflict in the Brentwood area. The town of Brentwood is predominantly white, but it is surrounded by white, black and North Brentwood, which is predominantly black.

An investigation this week revealed that Stephens severed his relations with the Prince George's County Minutemen group this year after Stephens' opposition to the director, who he said was encouraging racial integration. See MINUTEMAN, A5, Col. 5

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MINUTEMAN, From A1

The teen club was reorganized on a restricted membership basis and is now being run by Stephens, parents and teenagers. Although some officials have officially given him that title "organizer."

Stephens now is awaiting trial in Prince George's People's Court on charges of disorderly conduct, trespassing and destruction of private property. The arrest came after Stephens placed a notice on a neighbor's door that said "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is watching you." Stephens denies the allegation.

Last year, when children from North Brentwood first began to attend Brentwood Elementary School, a number of "several" occasions handed out "go back to Africa" literature to black

children. County school officials and black parents identify the person as Stephens, but Stephens says he was not the man.

Last spring a cross was burned in the small park adjacent to the Brentwood police department and teen center.

Brentwood was the scene of a joint meeting last year of the Ku Klux Klan, American Nazi Party and Minutemen. Stephens was present.

At this time to fight Stephens held a press conference in Montgomery County announcing the reorganization of the national Minuteman as a white supremacist group and allowing himself to be interviewed and photographed under the

name George VanNess.

After a story was published on Tuesday, several Prince George's County residents called The Washington Post to identify the man as Stephens, and Stephens confirmed later that he had used an alias.

"We needed the publicity," he explained. "And I knew that if you knew who I was, you wouldn't show up." He said newspapers were familiar with him because of the name of his home, "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan." In addition, he said, newspapers of his past home might have damaged his business as an electrical contractor. Stephens said he was not a member of the Minutemen and that he was not a member of the Ku Klux Klan. He said he was not a member of the American Nazi Party and that he was not a member of the National Minuteman. He said he was not a member of any of these groups.

when he traveled to El Paso, Tex. and found that, "Mexicans were flooding in the border." He said he then began reading right-wing literature.

The purpose of the trip to Texas, Stephens said, was "to find a Mexican wife" after what he described as two unhappy marriages to American women. He succeeded, and is married to a 28-year-old Mexican woman.

Three years ago, they moved to Brentwood, a community of about 3,300 people.

Stephens' home is across the street from a park and a building that houses the town's police department and recreation facilities.

Until this year, the recreation center had been staffed by a member of the Prince George's County recreation department, whose job was to organize teen activities.

From May, 1968, until this spring, the teen director was Frank Kube, a young college graduate.

It is not clear whether the recreation center was ever integrated before Kube arrived, but afterward, Kube attempted to foster racial cooperation among the teenagers.

"I used to allow the kids to come over from North Brentwood, which was unheard of," Kube recalls. "I was trying to wake up the town to the realities of the 1970's."

Kube claims that from time to time, Stephens would insult black youths at the center. Stephens says that's not true.

Other Incidents

Stephens say Kube "was an integrationist. He permitted the kids from North Brentwood to come up here."

Other incidents were taking place in Brentwood while the teen center was being run on an integrated basis.

The all-black North Brentwood Elementary School was closed after the 1968-69 school year and the students there were sent to other schools, among them Brentwood Elementary. During the 1969-70 school year, there were several occasions when black youngsters were handed ersatz boat tickets good for passage "Back to Africa" by a man identified by a number of people as Stephens.

Stephens held his Minuteman-Klan-Nazi meeting on Oct. 17, 1969, attracting county police and FBI agents to the neighborhood, a town policeman recalls. Last spring, according to Kube and Brentwood residents, a white

youth, or youths, burned a cross in the park next to the police station.

As for the teen center, Andre Trainum, 17, an officer of the current all-white teen club, recalls, it "was the only thing we had in Brentwood. The coloreds were taking over."

A Prince George's County policeman who lives in the neighborhood, Everett G. Husk, remembers, "You couldn't keep doors open for the hell that was raised" at the club.

Last May, Kube sponsored a teen-age dance, attended by 70 or 80 youths, white and black.

Stephens say the dance erupted into a riot after "they (black youths) broke loose and started fooling around with white girls."

Kube say the dance was peaceful and was "the best dance we ever had." But, he says, Stephens distributed flyers in the community saying that there were knitting at the integrated dances.

It was the last dance for a while. The town soon closed the recreation center. Kube was assigned to other duties by the county. Fred Glasscock, a town councilman on the recreation board, attributes the closing to the fact that Stephens and Kube could not get along.

Within weeks, Stephens was working with white youths, urging them to demand a reopening of the teen club by the town, with no affiliation with the county recreation department. After balking briefly, the town allowed the teenagers to use the recreation center. Stephens was not allowed to be the adult director, but was named "sergeant at arms." Glasscock says. He concedes that Stephens is in effect running the club.

Since then, the teen club has been operated on a restricted membership basis. Anyone in Brentwood is allowed to join, provided club officers and Stephens approve the application. Friends from nearby Mt. Rainier, Colmar Manor and Cottage City may join if they are sponsored by a member.

By several estimates, the club has an active membership of about 30 youths who hold chaperoned dances every Friday night at the town's recreation center. Stephens says the total membership, including people from adjoining towns, is about 200.

The club is now all white. "We have not had any colored children even apply for membership," Stephens says.

(Black youths from North Brentwood now use the former North Brentwood Elementary School as a recreation center.)

"We had a few colored troubles when the county had the recreation center," Glasscock says. "We haven't had any more since he took over." Though there are no Negro members, he says, "We've had colored bands." The Friday night dances are the major teen club events. But Stephens claims, and other Brentwood residents confirm, that he has been sponsoring a rifle and pistol club for the teenagers on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings. Stephens says the group uses CO2 guns which fire harmless pellets.

He also is about to start a karate class for girls, designed, he says, to teach self-defense in the schools.

Stephens appears to enjoy his involvement with the club, and claims he never mixes it with his political beliefs. "The teen club activities are completely divorced from any political activities," he declares.

"I do not push any right-wing or white supremacist literature on these kids."

Some of Stephens' neighbors agree with that statement. "I have three children in the teen club, and I don't feel he's done anything but help them," Husk says.

"As a policeman, I know this man. And as a neighbor with kids in his teen club, I know this man. I have no complaints with him as director of the teen club."

"Don't Drink Anymore"

Says Trainum, a member of the club: "He's straightened a lot (of youths) out. They don't drink anymore."

Other people are less convinced. Kube recalls several incidents in which he claims Stephens distributed Nazi literature and encouraged youths to use "white power" slogans. Stephens denies this.

"The town's aware of the man. They know what he stands for," Kube says. "But nobody will stand up against him."

Glasscock asserts, "I don't know what you can do to stop him. He causes a lot of trouble if you buck him."

"He don't say nothing (political) to the kids because we don't let him. We always have someone with him, so he doesn't put crazy things into kids' heads."

Another Brentwood resident has another explanation. "The neighbors are afraid of him, and I am too," she says.