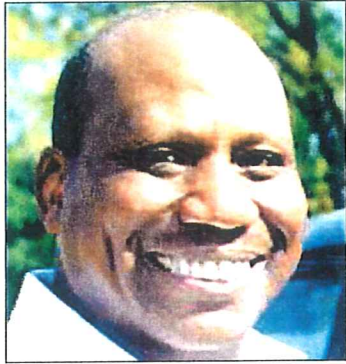


A COOKIE CRUMBLES

by Gene Forte



When I first heard that Charles Lee "Cookie" Thornton in Kirkwood, Missouri had killed three City Officials, two police officers, and wounded a mayor and a reporter, I wasn't surprised in the least bit.

I didn't say Hooray for Cookie! Only a crazy person would cheer, and I'm not crazy. I could not, did not, and will not justify Cookie's acts, which is quite different than being able to understand why Cookie snapped.

The dealings I have had with uncivil civil servants and reporters in California for 7 years gives me a very unique perspective to speak from. It is those experiences that allow me to provide meaningful commentary from a more credible perspective than media folk and civil servants that are up in arms.

With that said, I would like to give you my reactions and comments interspersed with glimpses of my own experiences.

"ALL WE WANT IS JUSTICE! SHOOT THE MAYOR!"

My first reaction was to wonder what the city officials could have done that caused Cookie to crumble? I got on the internet perusing news articles.

The earliest news reported that Cookie, before shooting, shouted "All we want is justice. Shoot the Mayor!"

Later, news reports deleted "All we want is justice" down to only "Shoot the Mayor!"



It seems the media didn't want the public to worry about something as trivial as a person shouting

about wanting justice.

The reports held no surprises and there was a remarkable continuity to them as if they all came from the same press room.

It was reported that the tragic event took place in a serene Norman Rockwell community where everyone knew each other and nothing ever happens.

The descriptions of Kirkwood brought memories of Mayberry, RFD where friendly unarmed police officers like Andy and Barney walked the streets.



At any moment, I was expecting to hear the reactions of Aunt Bea to the horrific event.

The councilmen, mayor, policemen, and reporter that were shot were reputed to be local folk heroes.

It was said that Cookie was a black gadfly asphalt contractor who had filed bankruptcy in 1999. He repeatedly accused the City Council member folk heroes of being corrupt and prejudiced against him. Cookie was convicted twice of disorderly conduct during city council meetings.

1. gadfly: somebody annoying; somebody regarded as persistently annoying or irritating.

One of the convictions stemmed from an incident where Cookie called the mayor a jack-ass and had the audacity to neigh like one.

The term jack-ass and his neighing were considered vulgar and offensive to a city councilwoman, Ms. Connie Karr. Cookie was then arrested and dragged from the council chambers, kicking and screaming by a police officer. It was said that Cookie had a personal vendetta against those he killed because they had him arrested.

Well, I have never filed bankruptcy. I have said that I considered Mayor Jones a metaphorical jack-ass for spreading the

rumor that he knew for a fact that I was a dangerous member of the KKK.



In fact, I filed a lawsuit against the jack-ass for doing it.

I was arrested in a courtroom by a Judge Robert O'Farrell for disqualifying him with what is called a Peremptory Challenge. The court record shows that I was saying "pardon me your honor, excuse me your honor, you're not letting me speak" when he was trying to stop me from doing so.

O'Farrell said I was belligerent and contemptuous. He ordered me handcuffed behind my back for three hours and had the bailiff throw me against a concrete wall while he stood grinning at me in a dark hallway out of the view of witnesses. O'Farrell then denied me an attorney, tried me himself, found me guilty, and sent me off to jail for the rest of the day.

O'Farrell acted as judge, juror, and an executioner (but without a gun).

O'Farrell said I was screaming, struggling, and fighting with the bailiff. A few months later, neutral eye-witness attorneys testified under penalty of perjury that they saw me do nothing disrespectful. They said I didn't scream, struggle, or fight with the bailiff, and I certainly didn't speak in a disrespectful tone of voice to O'Farrell.

It is my position that O'Farrell wanted to trump up an arrest of me so I would be publicly branded as a crazed person with the help of his news reporter amigos splashing it as front page news (which they did).



(COOKIE, see page 50)

(COOKIE, from page 49)

Forevermore, anything I say about O'Farrell being corrupt would be perceived as said by someone who had a personal vendetta against him. O'Farrell became the civil servant victim of a disrespectful, angry, disgruntled litigant.

I was convicted in a court of law and for most citizens, that is all they need to know. It makes it official and legal.



It doesn't matter if I say I didn't get justice in the court of Judge "Roy Bean" O'Farrell, who found me guilty.

The details leading up to my arrest in the

courtroom were not reported. Such as the fact that O'Farrell was not assigned the court motion I made to take the deposition of the person that would reveal O'Farrell had fixed the case against me with my attorney, Larry Lichtenegger and another attorney, Mr. Dennis McCarthy. He just popped up on the stand and said he "took the case."

The public also did not know that the attorney, Dennis McCarthy, was the attorney that morning at the hearing trying to stop me from taking the deposition of the witness who he had hidden a document for, so that the witness' (his client) perjury would not be revealed.

The public would not know that just a few days prior to being arrested, O'Farrell had received my opening appellate brief requesting that his ruling dismissing my lawsuit against Lichtenegger be reversed.

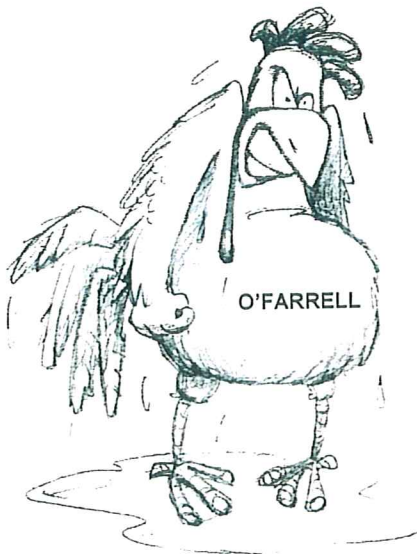


O'Farrell was not assigned the Lichtenegger case either. But, when I made a motion to take the deposition of

Lichtenegger, O'Farrell popped up and dismissed the case which stopped me from deposing Lichtenegger.

Lichtenegger said that his deposition testimony would only "foment discomfort amongst the local judiciary" and O'Farrell certainly agreed.

The appeal O'Farrell read with supporting evidence was all about O'Farrell's acts of fixing the trial with Lichtenegger and McCarthy. To say that O'Farrell was probably madder than a wet hen when he walked into the courtroom and "took the case" would be an understatement.



A few months later, the ruling of O'Farrell was overturned dismissing my case against Lichtenegger. The Sixth Appellate Court was asked to address the matter of O'Farrell and my attorneys fixing the case, but didn't say a word about it in their ruling. It was as if it never happened.

The day after I won the appeal, I suffered a heart attack in a courtroom and was taken by ambulance for emergency open heart surgery.

I won't go into all of the details now, but O'Farrell had accused me of being a bad father and of being mentally unstable. The media made sure to print that as front page news without interviewing me, or getting my side of the story.

The local media also did not feel it important to inform the public that I had O'Farrell's ruling overturned, or that I suffered a heart attack in the courtroom

and underwent open heart surgery.

What I found interesting is that the newspaper was directly across the street from the courtroom I suffered the heart attack in. Even after I contacted them from my hospital bed and had my wife send the proof to them of my winning the appeal and exposing the corruption, no one ever contacted me about it, even until this day.

Now, hypothetically speaking, I submit that if I ever went nuts (which I won't) and killed O'Farrell (which I won't), no one would ever report about my winning appeals evidencing the corruption or attorneys saying that I wasn't being contemptuous. No one has yet.

The only thing that would be reported is that I killed O'Farrell because I was a mentally unstable, a bad father who had a personal vendetta against O'Farrell who had found me guilty of contempt of court.

Therefore, unless I see the video tape of exactly what Cookie did at the City Hall meetings, I'm not going to necessarily believe any court finding of a judge in Kirkwood. Who knows, maybe the judge who tried Cookie did lunch with the Mayor and every one of the deceased City Council members personally. Like I said, who knows?

SQUARE PEGS AND ROUND HOLES

Cookie filed lawsuits against the City of Kirkwood and the council members which is the right way to do things if you think you have a legitimate grievance. But he was trying to force a square peg into a round hole.



The early ones were written by an attorney who later made a motion to the

(COOKIE, see on page 51)

(COOKIE, from page 50)

court to withdraw as Cookies' counsel saying that Cookie had filed documents without his knowledge or permission.

I read some news reports that said Cookie had mortgaged his mother's house to pay for legal fees.

I'm only speculating but I think the reason why the attorney may have baled out of Cookie's cases was because he had drained Cookie of all of his money.



Attorneys have a general propensity that when they want to dump a client they tell the court it is because the client did something wrong.

Lichtenegger told me he needed to withdraw from my case to save himself from judges getting angry at him because I was exposing trial fixing by them. In court papers he filed he said it was because I was asking him to do things that were unethical.

Cookies' federal court case which was dismissed on January 28th, 2008 claimed his Constitutional Right of Freedom of Speech was violated. By all accounts, the dismissal was said to have been the straw that broke the camel's back.

Cookie's federal lawsuit was filed without an attorney. He did not have a grasp of the law or how to articulate his legal claims. The vast majority of media only reported that Cookie's case was dismissed. They did not point out that he was not represented by an attorney.



It appears that Cookie fell for what I found to be a sucker's play where Federal Court procedures encourage in pro per litigants to write their complaints in plain

language with the assurance the Federal Court will translate it to legalese. (Note: Don't believe that for a second.)

After reading the court transcripts, I can tell you that Cookie did not have a snow ball's chance in hell of winning any of them. The first major obstacle Cookie had to overcome is what is called qualified quasi-immunity.



Translated, it means that a civil servant could theoretically urinate on your face in public but as long as the civil servant says *he thought* he was doing it in the performance of his job because you looked thirsty and he was trying to help you out, well, you can't sue him for it.

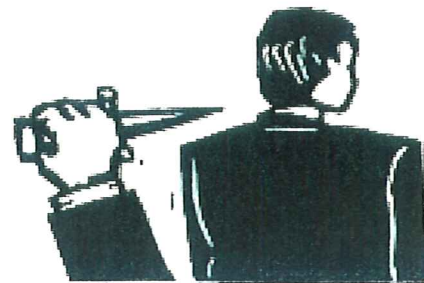
I will also say that Cookie seemed fairly articulate and respectful when speaking to the Federal judge from the court transcripts I read, but somewhat naïve as to what was taking place. I sense that he felt that now that he was in Federal Court, he would get a fair break that he was not getting in the state courts. Perhaps, that is why when the Federal judge dismissed his case, it was the final straw.

For those that have not been in a courtroom situation, they are unaware how a judge can talk in code to the opposing counsel while at the same time making you feel that he is going to rule in your favor. When he rules against you, it's like being struck by lightning.



From a personal perspective, Lichtenegger, my attorney, made a motion to the court (O'Farrell) to withdraw 38 days prior to the trial I was a

real estate plaintiff in, and after I had already paid him \$75,000.00. Lichtenegger told O'Farrell that we had irreconcilable differences and that I was asking him to do unethical things.



When I offered legally recorded phone conversations with Lichtenegger saying he was, "throwing me to the lions to save himself, judges were manipulating trial dates and sabotaging motions, and that Judge Terrance Duncan had been gotten to throw the case," O'Farrell didn't want to listen to them.

O'Farrell then let Lichtenegger withdraw and denied me a continuance of the trial to get a new attorney. I then went before Judge Duncan and lost the trial and about a million bucks.



Judges don't want to hear about judges fixing trials. It would be bad for the judicial industry. Face it, who would want to pay legal fees knowing it's a rigged game and justice is a farce.

The most important pledge of the judiciary, and it is written as part of their judicial code of ethics, is to "Uphold the appearance of fairness." It's a con.

There is a huge difference between "keeping up the appearance" of fairness and true fairness. It has come to mean keeping the unfairness and corruption concealed instead of exposing it.

(COOKIE, from page 51)



So, just because Cookie lost in court it doesn't mean that what he said hadn't happened, that he was wrong, or that the City Council members were not corrupt, or not abusing him.

However, it still did not give Cookie the right to summarily execute them.

reporter who I would describe as follows:

"We got the bubble-headed-bleach-blonde who Comes on at five She can tell you about the plane crash with a gleam In her eye Its interesting when people die-Give us dirty laundry"
(Don Henley, Dirty Laundry)

Gerald said that Cookie had declared war against those he believed had abused him and declared war on him. Gerald said Cookie targeted his perceived enemies, took out their defenses (referring to the policemen), and killed them.

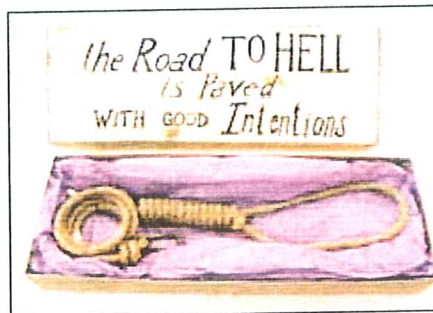
The reporter did not ask how or why Cookie thought he was abused but repeatedly spoke over the top of Gerald asking only one question to the point of shouting which was,

"Were you surprised by the shooting when you heard about it?"

It seemed that she wanted Gerald to say,

"Heck no, not at all! I loaded the gun for him and was waiting outside in a get-away car."

Blogs are saying that the Thornton family should take responsibility for what Cookie did and be held accountable.



President Bush at a black history month event on Tuesday, February 13th, 2008 said, "The noose is not a symbol of prairie justice, but of gross injustice. Lynching is not a word to be mentioned in jest."

Hopefully, those good god fearing townfolk of Kirkwood that elected the white city council members and mayor were listening to President Bush's

speech and don't put some rope in the toolboxes of the bulldozers.

People who had known Cookie for a long time said he was a happy-go-lucky sort of a fellow that always greeted you with a smile and tried to help everyone.

Acquaintances said the only thing they ever saw Cookie upset over was his issues with City Hall.

Beyond that glimpse of a happy-go-lucky guy gone crazy, I just cannot tell you all of the bad things (though singularly repetitive) that have been reported about Cookie. Cookie is forever damned.

A sign in front of Kirkwood City Hall reads, "South St. Louis City mourns for Kirkwood's fallen Heroes!"

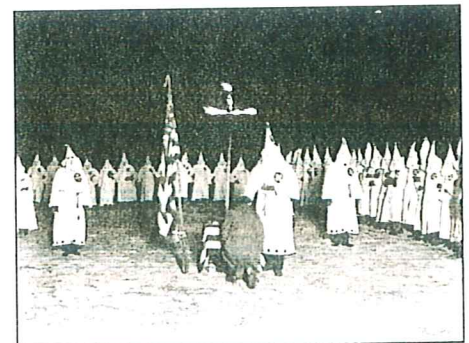
Mark my words, within the year there will be statues sitting on the front lawn of Kirkwood City Hall, and rightfully so.

They should be commemorated because they did not have the opportunity to prove themselves innocent of what judge, juror, and executioner Cookie alone found them guilty of.

ASSASSINATION OF ONE'S GOOD NAME IS AKIN TO MURDER

Speaking frankly, Cookie was a black man living in a State that is not known for its overt fondness of black people or racial tolerance.

The Realm of Missouri is member of what is called the Imperial Klans of America – Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.



They are well funded and organized.



AUNT BEA HAS SOME ISSUES

The LA Times reported that the brother of Cookie, Gerald Thornton, while laying flowers down in front of City Hall was screamed at by a woman saying,

"You don't deserve to be here! Your brother is the reason we're grieving."

Gerald Thornton, a lanky black gentleman who walks with the aid of a cane, was "jostled" by only a few of the god fearing people of Kirkwood paying

jostle: to knock or bump against somebody, or push or elbow somebody deliberately, sometimes as an expression of aggression or hostility.

homage to their fallen civil servant heroes as they walked by, others had the good manners only to "glare" at Gerald.

As I perused internet blogs, I found that the Aunt Beas in that lovely little haven of Kirkwood were saying they should bulldoze down Meacham Park where Cookie lived.

Meacham Park is "historically and predominantly populated with blacks." There is a furor over Cookie's comments about white city council members having a plantation-like mentality.

I watched a taped news interview of Cookie's brother, Gerald Thornton, by a

(COOKIE, from page 52)

Here is an example of what The Realm of Missouri accomplished in 2001:



The United States Supreme Court declined to review the Ku Klux Klan/Missouri Adopt-A-Highway clean-up program case.

This denial lets stand a lower court's decision, which stated that Missouri must allow the Klan to join the litter clean-up program.

"The First Amendment does not need to protect pretty words and noncontroversial groups," said Sandra Davidson, MU associate professor of law.

"Thus, it is controversial groups such as the KKK that end up making case law supporting freedom and tolerance, even of intolerant groups." (Professor S. Davidson, University of Missouri)"

Cookie was a standout athlete on the high school track team and still holds the state record for the triple jump. He started his own construction company, and even though he filed bankruptcy, he still amassed close to \$500,000.00 in debt, meaning that at some point in time, he was also making money.

I would speculate Cookie earned more money than your average black person, or perhaps even your average white person in Missouri. I would also say that accomplishing such for a black man in Missouri is not an easy task.

With that said, I would also think that Cookie took pride in his accomplishments as any man would. Maybe Cookie thought the only thing that he had left was

his good name, and he spent every penny he had trying to cleanse it.

Perhaps, he felt his good name was being trashed by those he was accusing of being corrupt to discredit him to cover up their own crimes against him? It appeared from what I gathered that his wife was no longer living with him.

At that point, he may have thought to himself he had nothing more to live for, and he snapped. Like they say, the assassination of one's good name is akin to murder, and trust me it is very painful.

Again, from a personal experience perspective, I can relate to what he may have been feeling.



Joseph McCarthy (right) and Roy Cohn²

Deputy Attorney General Paul Hammerness emulating the infamous king of smut, the late Senator Joe McCarthy, made a motion to declare me what is called a California Vexatious Litigant.

Hammerness swore to the court that I supported the murdering of judges and judicial hangings. Attorneys know that the accusation alone, even though totally false accomplishes what they want to discredit someone. It is called a smut ball.

The motion was made on behalf of Chief Justice Ronald George, Governor Schwarzenegger, and then Attorney General Bill Lockyer.

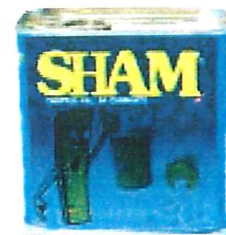
Let me make this very clear, it was not an "official action" by the State of California but done in their personal capacity. They just used citizens' funds for the ruse.

To be declared a California Vexatious Litigant, I would have had to repeatedly sued Chief George, Schwarzenegger

and Lockyer, and/or filed slanderous documents and frivolous pleadings.

I never sued any of them.

The retired Judge John Golden who heard the motion denied it on each and every single count and then some. It was a sham.



Judge Golden found that Supreme Court Justice George, Schwarzenegger and Lockyer didn't even have legal standing to bring what he called a "purported motion". He found that none of my filings in my cases were frivolous or slanderous.

Golden further found that there was no evidence whatsoever that I ever supported the murder of judges and judicial hangings, but actually the opposite.

My opposition papers warned them of the danger of not exposing the judicial corruption I had evidence of before citizens



who were encountering the same problems started killing public officials.

Hammerness brought the motion when he was defending Judge O'Farrell (but did not bring it on behalf of O'Farrell) and repeatedly referred to my being arrested for contempt as the reason why I sued O'Farrell.

After Judge Golden ruled against the top three top government officials of the state, The Monterey Herald was provided a copy of the order.

No newspaper mentioned one word about it. Imagine, a lowly in pro per defeating the top three civil servants of

(COOKIE, see page 54)

(COOKIE, from page 53)

the 6th largest economy of the world with evidence of their corruption, and no newspaper said a word about it.

My winning opposition contained hundreds of court exhibits showing exactly how and why George, Schwarzenegger, Lockyer were trying to silence me by discrediting me with the "purported motion."

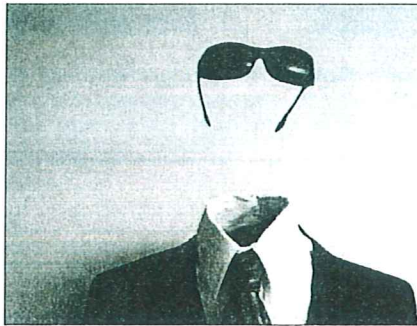


questioned how I supported myself alluding that I may be a drug dealer. They stated that Judge O'Farrell questioned my mental stability and my treatment of my children.

About two weeks later, The Herald printed a small correction on the back page saying that due to an error in the court record, they had said I had been declared a vexatious litigant when I had not.

It was a set-up between O'Farrell and his buddies at the Herald, who became part of McClatchy Newspapers, to defame and discredit me to keep me from exposing them.

When I asked Judge Golden to refer the state officials over for investigation, he disqualified himself from the case without giving the required written reason why, and vanished.



With that said, I would say that Cookie would have snapped a lot sooner if he had been submitted to what I have been through.

COOKIES' LAST PROCLAMATION

Cookie left a one line note on his bed proclaiming, "The truth will come out in the end." The media is calling it a suicide note, but Cookie did not shoot himself. There are discrepancies in that some media reports say that the note read, "The truth will win in the end."

Cookie may have thought that since he would have national media attention, someone would tell his side of the story. Cookie was naïve.

He didn't realize the newspapers of our nation are owned and controlled by a small handful of people who will not bite government hands that feed them for any reason. The less known as to what happened, how and why, is best

left buried.

Heaven forbid, in the government's way of thinking, if it was discovered that the city council members were partaking in denying Cookie his right to justice, it could turn into a national culling season on government officials by those that have been pushed to the edge.

I have little doubt that Cookie may have thought that the local media was under the control of the local officials.

I've never been to Kirkwood, but I did have a radio program broadcast nationally. I heard from scores of people in many states that believe their local media is in bed with local government.

In Monterey County, Merced County, Sacramento County, Fresno County and Ozaukee County, Wisconsin, the media is in bed with government. I have no reason to doubt that Kirkwood is not the same.

The councilwoman killed, Ms. Connie Karr, was a journalist for many years as can be seen on page 55, see right. I can't say if Ms. Karr helped keep a lid on what Cookie thought may have been happening to him or not.

Cookie did wound a reporter, Todd Smith, during the shooting. His brother Gerald said Cookie picked his victims with purpose.



I noted that witnesses said that Cookie held his guns straight up in the air when he was trying to find those he wanted to kill.

It seems that Cookie wanted to make sure he didn't accidentally shoot what he considered innocent bystanders who were not part of the war he believed had been declared on him, and that he believed he was engaged in.

For you to get a sense of what efforts Cookie made to get his story reported, you will find excerpts "Fig. 14, page 55" from a story by Randal Roberts.

(COOKIE, see page 55)

**Always Trust What You Read
Without QUESTION**



All Written With YOU In Mind

Cheerfully provided by all those who know what is best for everyone everywhere

(COOKIE, from page 54)



I got a sense he was reporting on a sensationalistic conversation with Big Foot. Roberts faults Cookie by saying he was arguing his case like he was talking to a judge. It does take two to argue. See Fig. 14, bottom.

Randall then says he didn't do a story on it because he didn't have much of a case. I will only say, thank you, Judge Randall, for your ruling which may have contributed to the shootings.

Perhaps, if someone would have told Cookie's side of the story, he wouldn't have snapped. They didn't have to agree with what he said, just report what he was saying.

Cookie may have been blinded by the images of journalists that have been created from movies and the media themselves. (See Images of The Journalist in Popular Culture, page 28). I know I was.

The public has no idea what takes place unless they actually try to get a reporter to listen to a story about civil servant corruption. I've had reporters tell me that it happens so often they don't bother to report on it, or that I am only upset because it was happening to me.

It now doesn't matter if the truth was that the City Councilmen were members of the Ku Klux Klan with videotapes of them taking bribes to put Cookie out of business.

Even if the council members were guilty of everything Cookie accused them of, their deaths at Cookie's hands have made them heroes, and Cookie shouldn't have killed them.

Maybe if Cookie had read "The Zen of Building a Badger Trap for a Corrupt Public Official" (page 17), he would have understood that Rule #1 is to never break the law against those that control the law, especially if they are breaking the law against you.

Maybe he would have known better not

to take the law into his own hands.

THE AFTERMATH

In the aftermath of the tragedy, civil servants across the country are demanding tighter security to protect them from crazed citizens like Cookie.

The government will grant itself even more protection from citizens since 9-11 and use the "Cookie going over the edge saga" to ratchet down tighter on citizens that have issues with government corruption.

Internet blogs are awash saying there are other "crazy citizens" blaming government for their problems and whining about not receiving justice. Could the blog originators be government agencies? Who knows, but that's not the point. The banter is there to confuse uninformed citizens fooled by the media and the government into thinking everything is just hunky dory.



I have to be extra careful when I reach into my pocket for my silver handheld recorder in a courtroom, or the last words I may hear are, "Look out! He's got a gun!" while a bullet whizzes through my head.



THE END



During Mrs. Karr's career as a journalist, she was known by her maiden name, Connie Conroy. Former colleagues say she was a feisty, witty, tenacious news hound while working for the now-shuttered St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

There, she worked as a copy editor and reporter and was regarded as a tremendous advocate for her co-workers. She was among a group of employees who worked in 1985 to force the newspaper's owner, Jeffrey M. Gluck, into bankruptcy after paychecks started bouncing. A judge ruled in the employees' favor.

Mrs. Karr's journalism career also included stints with the short-lived tabloid, the St. Louis Evening News and the Moline (Ill.) Daily Dispatch.

When the Globe-Democrat closed, Mrs. Karr went to work for Casey Communications, a public-relations firm. She then worked as a media-relations specialist for Maritz Inc. and in public relations for Millennium Communications."

Excerpt: St. Louis Post-Dispatch

"My Conversation with Charles "Cookie" Thornton"

"I don't remember much about the conversation, but enough of it to know that this morning when I heard NPR report that a lone gunman had walked into a city council meeting in Kirkwood, Missouri and killed five people and wounded two, the first thing that popped into my head was, "I wonder if it was that Cookie dude."

"I spoke with him on the phone – and he may have even come by....but my memory is shoddy on that."

"He called a few staff writers, pleading to each of us to write about his case. We bounced around the idea of writing a news story on his plight."

"I recall him being calm but determined, almost as if he was arguing his case not to a reporter but to a judge."

"It seemed so obvious to him that he was the victim of a broken system, and that a miscarriage of justice was occurring. Ultimately, we decided not to do a story because, well, Thornton didn't have much of a case."

Figure 14—Excerpts from story by Randall Roberts/LA Times.