

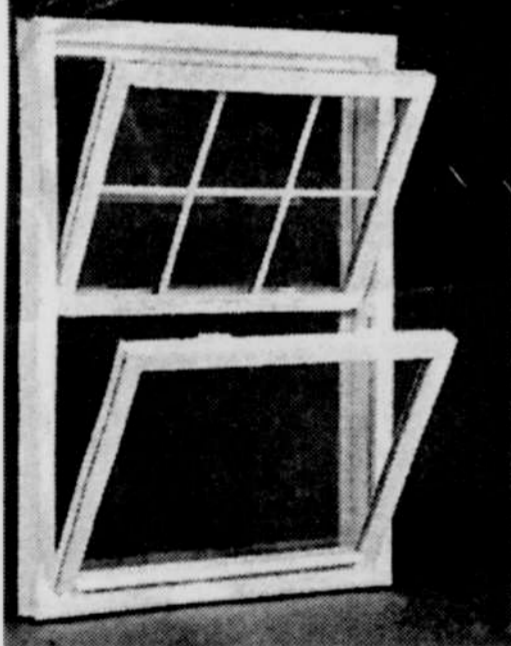
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NATIONAL news

TEARS AND FEARS

San Diego pride parade tear-gassed, gay parents group targeted; reward grows, and mayor gets involved by Rex Wockner

San Diego police want to see amateur videos and photos of the July 24 pride parade in hopes of catching a glimpse of the person who tear-gassed the gay and lesbian families contingent and hundreds of spectators.

Meanwhile, local activist Nicole Murray Ramirez's reward pot has grown to \$16,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the attacker, and Mayor Susan Golding has issued an appeal for help in finding the criminal.

San Diego Police Western Division Detective Sgt. Robert Nunley says five or six video tapes have been turned over to the police but not one was helpful.

"We've got a couple of people going through the evidence full time," Nunley explains. "Everybody we've got so far has had video and pictures from the east pointing west. We're looking for somebody that was pointing the other direction, but we're looking at everything they give us."

Nunley adds: "How we solve a lot of this stuff as time passes is the reward [money]. The guy finally can't keep the secret anymore and he says, 'You know, I did that.' And it could be a month down the road. He could brag to somebody."

The incident took place at 12:50 p.m. on the north side of University Avenue near 10th Avenue, Nunley says. Someone detonated a soda-can-sized, military-issue tear gas canister, then fled westbound on foot, he says.

As smoke engulfed the city's gayest block, panic ensued.

"All of a sudden I see these hundreds of people screaming and running past the reviewing stand," recounts Murray Ramirez, who was master of ceremonies for the parade. "It was like a Godzilla-is-coming stampede from the movies. One minute the street was packed with thousands of people and then...it was deserted."

Hardest hit was the Family Matters contingent, which consisted of lesbian and gay parents

and their children, including toddlers and babies.

"There were all these little kids in strollers crying with this gas in their eyes," says Murray Ramirez.

It was pandemonium, spectator Guido Gaietta adds.

"People were screaming, 'Run, run, run,' and, 'Get away, get away, get away,' so obviously, I started running because all these people are running toward me," he says. "Then all of a sudden there were tears in my eyes, and it got in my throat. It was pretty nasty. We ran for a couple of blocks to escape it, and our faces were all red. Some people were vomiting in the street."

C. Ray Drew, head of the national Family Pride Coalition and a marcher in the Family Matters contingent, calls the gassing "a terrorist act."

"Mentally disturbed people feed off the hate-filled rhetoric of the radical right," he says. "It emboldens the violent, disturbed person with a sense of legitimacy. We

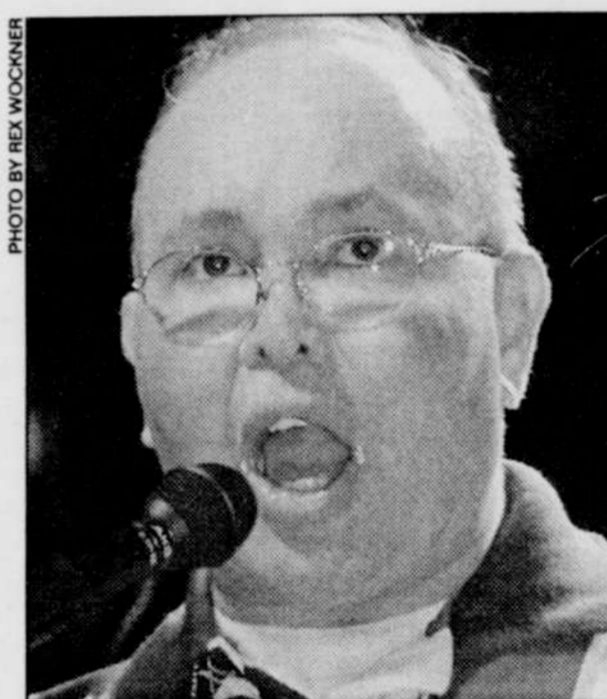
as a nation must recognize the profound harm to children and families caused by the radical right and hold them accountable for their hate."

Pride's executive director, Mandy Schultz, calls the incident "a huge eye-opener."

"It just goes to show how much hate there is out in the world," she says. "But our community didn't run away in fear. We came back and were able to continue the parade and celebrate and be a strong, united front. It was a horrible and unfortunate moment and yet it was beautifully gratifying to see that we could all stand together."

Mayor Golding, meanwhile, is calling for help in finding the bomber.

In a written statement she said, in part: "Hate crimes cannot be tolerated by a civilized society. The leaders of this city will not allow such ignorance and violence to go unpunished. And I am asking for your help."



Nicole Murray Ramirez

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