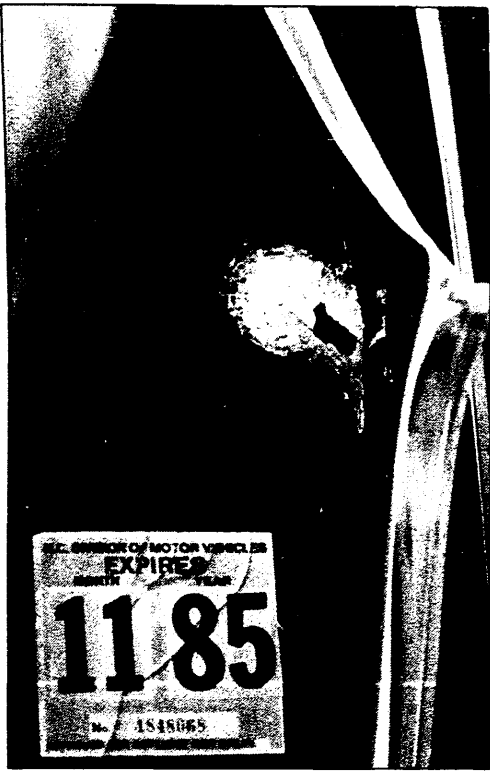
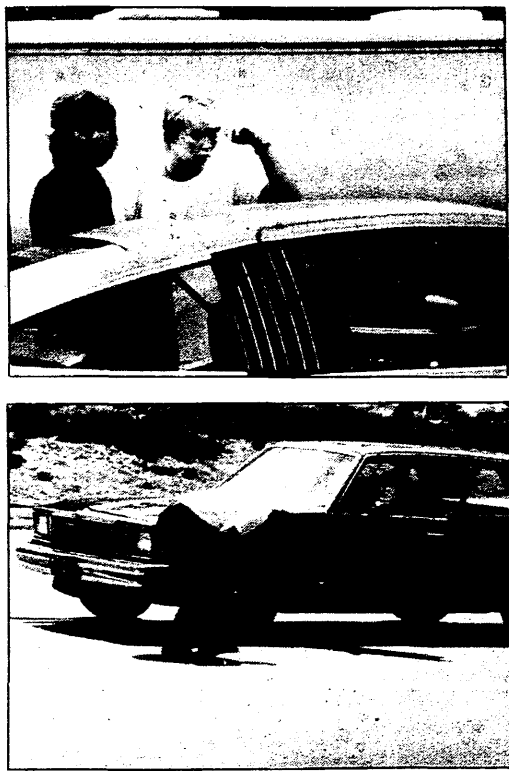




Joseph Rodriguez/News & Record



Duane Hall/News & Record

When the bullets began to fly at Friendly and College Road, two police cars were hit, as well as the car of the woman at top. Later, police scanned the intersection for shell casings, finding 11.

The Blazer went into the air as high as the telephone wires, then slammed back down and skidded into a ditch. A cloud of grayish white smoke hung over the road at tree-top height.

'Hold onto your seats, gang,' Ian said, 'this is going to be a doozie'

(From A1)

deputy, Stephen Carden, who was posing as his friend, Chris. Other cars containing officers armed with shotguns and rifles were stationed around the area. Some officers were trailing Fritz across town from Susie's apartment. Another was watching from an SBI airplane.

Once again, Ian was wearing a small tape recorder and a transmitter.

"Hold onto your seats, gang; this is going to be a doozie," he said to the officers listening on their radios as Fritz's Blazer pulled into the parking lot.

The detectives had instructed Ian to be direct and press hard, and he was even more scared and nervous than he had been when he made two other secret tapings on Friday and Saturday.

Gentry and Tom Sturgill of the SBI were worried that Fritz might be getting wise to the situation. Ian knew he was courting danger.

Ian got into the Blazer and handed Fritz the non-testimonial order. For a while, only the sound of rustling paper could be heard as Fritz studied it.

"The stuff on the back is what got me," Ian said. "My beard looked similar to yours that night. Something's wrong here. Level with me, Fritz."

"I didn't have a gold car," Fritz said. "I had a brown car."

He paused. "I'm not playing games with you, Ian."

"Fritz, did you murder the Newsoms?" "Ian, I never murdered anybody."

"Something's sure fishy here."

"Ian, I'm not going to let you be involved. Nobody saw you. Nobody can involve you."

"If they tie you into this thing, that's going to take me down with you," Ian said. "I've got some grave doubts, Fritz."

"I'm being set up, for what reason, I don't know. I'll pop a capsule. I will not —"

Fritz's voice had changed. His bedside manner was gone. He sounded preoccupied, impatient.

"I'll write a paper saying you were not knowingly involved, that you believed you were on a covert mission for the government," he said. "I've got things to do ... I won't see you again."

The meeting lasted less than 15 minutes. Ian blew out a heavy breath as he walked back to the car that would deliver him safely to the SBI office. Not until a few hours later would he learn that he had been sitting atop a bomb.

Moving in for the arrest

Several unmarked police cars followed Fritz as he drove slowly back to Susie's apartment in Guilford College, nine miles by the most direct route, a 20-minute drive at posted speeds.

The officers assumed from what Fritz had said that he planned to make a run, or kill himself. If he made a run, they suspected it would be to kill somebody else. All along they'd believed the mission to Texas he'd told

Ian about really was a mission to New Mexico to kill Tom Lynch, Susie's former husband.

The officers wanted to arrest Fritz, but they had no warrants. As Fritz made his way back to the apartment, two cars involved in the operation stopped at a gas station pay phone.

Gentry, Sturgill and Forsyth Detective John Boner were in one car. The other, the command car for the operation, was driven by Detective A.G. Travis of the Greensboro Police Department. Travis had been assigned to the case that morning as liaison officer.

With him were Ed Hunt, supervisor of the SBI's northern Piedmont district; Capt. Ron Barker, chief of Forsyth County Sheriff's Department criminal investigation division, and Lt. Dan Davidson, a detective with the Kentucky State Police.

Hunt was the officer in charge. Two Kentucky detectives, Lynn Nobles of the Oldham County Police and Sherman Childers of the Kentucky State Police, were in a dark blue Mustang driven by Terry Spainhour, a Forsyth County narcotics officer. Spainhour continued following Fritz's Blazer.

Nobles and Childers had come to North Carolina the previous week. They were investigating the murders of Tom Lynch's mother and sister in 1984. They wanted to compare cases with Forsyth County officers.

They stayed from Wednesday until Saturday, when they ran out of clean clothes and money. They drove home, stayed three hours and came back, bringing Davidson with them. Davidson was the chief investigator in their case.

At the pay phone, Hunt and Sturgill called District Attorney Tisdale and told him what Fritz had said. Tisdale authorized his arrest.

Gentry, Sturgill and Boner went back to the SBI office to pick up an SBI car so they would have a Highway Patrol radio. With three different law enforcement agencies involved, the officers knew they would have a communication problem. With the SBI car, they could relay messages to all departments through the Highway Patrol dispatcher. No SBI cars had been used in the surveillance because they looked too much like unmarked police cars.

Fritz arrived at Susie's apartment a little after 2 p.m. Five police cars soon were stationed within sight of the apartment.

A burgundy Camaro driven by Forsyth narcotics officer Marc Fetter was behind the apartment. SBI agent Walt House also was in that car.

A Chevrolet Impala driven by SBI agent J.W. Bryant was on the east side of the apartment with a view of the parking lot. Stephen Carden, who'd posed as Ian's friend Chris, was in that car.

The command car, a tan Buick Riviera, was in the parking lot of the Big Star supermarket just up the street from the apartment.

Sturgill, Gentry and Boner arrived at the Big Star in a gray, four-door Ford. The Mustang driven by Spainhour also was there.

The SBI airplane circled overhead.

The officers knew that Fritz would be heavily armed and might even have explosives. They didn't want to have to risk a stand-off at a big apartment complex. They decided to try to lure Fritz out.

Sturgill called the apartment. Susie answered, and Sturgill asked if Fritz could come to the SBI office.

"He's not here," Susie said. "Do you know when he will be?" Sturgill asked. "You can try about 6:30 or 7," Susie said.

The officers had to come up with another plan. Sturgill and Gentry would approach the apartment and try to make the arrest. But they decided it would be better to have a uniformed officer with them. At 2:38, Travis radioed for assistance by a uniformed Greensboro officer.

Gentry already had planned what he was going to say to Fritz when he arrested him. He knew that Fritz admired Gordon Liddy, the tough former CIA agent involved in the Watergate break-in. Like Fritz, Gentry had read Liddy's book, "Will." He had chosen a quote from it for Fritz: "In a battle of wits, you came unarmed."

Squad leader L.C. LeClear responded to Travis' call for a uniformed officer. He was on Mendenhall Street headed toward police gas pumps on Smith Street downtown. He said he would come after he got gas.

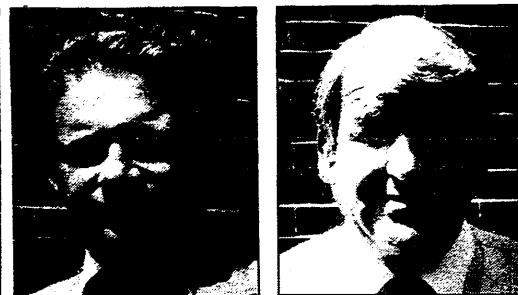
Squad leader Tommy Dennis, near the coliseum, radioed that he was on his way.

Then officers saw Fritz and Susie begin ferrying things to Fritz's black Blazer. The Blazer was well-outfitted. It had roll bars, seven headlights capable of throwing a 180-degree arc, two large lights on the rear bumper, a heavy steel front bumper with a large winch. The windows were tinted black.

Officers saw Fritz put what looked like three automatic weapons into the vehicle. Susie carried duffle bags.

The officers were alarmed to see Susie's sons, John and Jim, dressed in camouflage fatigues. They had assumed the boys were in school, but Susie had kept them home that morning.

All four got into the Blazer, along with Susie's two black chows. Fritz backed out of the parking space and slowly started the winding drive along Hunt Club Road



Nobles

Childers

As Nobles tried to get down in the back seat, a bullet struck the 9-mm Smith and Wesson pistol he was bringing across his chest. Childers' left arm was bleeding where it had been sprayed with broken glass.

toward the apartment complex's main entrance on Friendly Avenue.

The police cars began to scramble.

'I've been hurt. I've been shot.'

Five minutes after Travis put in the call for a uniformed officer, both LeClear and Dennis were on the way, LeClear coming out Friendly Avenue from downtown, Dennis on Interstate 40 from the coliseum.

Travis radioed again to ask where the uniformed officer was. Dennis reported he was just arriving at College Road, a few minutes away.

"What's it in reference to?" LeClear asked.

"Just tell him to come on, and I'll fill him in," Travis said. "Tell both of 'em to pull in front of the Big Star."

At 2:47, Travis called to Dennis: "303, where are you?"

"Just passing the fire station," Dennis said.

A minute and a half later, Dennis reported his arrival at the Big Star.

By then, Travis had left the store. He went north on College Road, then west on Friendly to head off Fritz at the apartment complex entrance.

Dennis spotted a gray Ford pulling out of the Big Star lot onto College Road. He recognized it as an SBI car. A dark blue Mustang was close behind.

Travis radioed again. "That uniform car, come on out Friendly. Be the exit to Guilford Hills. Rush it up."

The Ford and Mustang stopped in the left turn lane at the traffic light at Friendly Road. Dennis, driving an unmarked dark blue Malibu police cruiser with a blue light on the dash, pulled to the right side of the SBI car. He didn't recognize the three men inside.

Sturgill was driving the SBI car. Gentry was in the passenger seat. Later, Gentry would remember telling Dennis that they had a serious felony suspect. Three murders. A black Blazer. He would remember Sturgill saying, "Have you got a vest? Better get it on."

Dennis would remember both men talking but hearing only about felony warrants and a black Blazer, nothing about murders or a bullet-proof vest.

"Wait a minute, and I'll let you know which way he's coming," he would recall Gentry saying. "He's coming our way. Be careful."

Dennis always wore a bullet-proof vest. His wife Sandy made him. Two weeks earlier, he had traded in an old vest for a new one designed to stop bigger and faster bullets.

Dennis was a by-the-book officer who loved his work. He had been on the force 13 years. In that time, he'd helped capture a stray bear, been seriously injured in a motorcycle wreck and received a commendation for saving the life of a wreck victim.

"Can you give me any idea what he's got?" LeClear asked the dispatcher after Travis' call to "rush it up."

LeClear said he'd have to run with lights and siren to get there.

"990, can you advise its nature?" the dispatcher asked.

"Just have him keep coming this way," Travis said. Patrol Capt. Charles Allen came onto the radio.

"What do they have out there?" he asked.

"I'm unable to advise," the dispatcher said. "990 will not say."

"If it's urgent enough for us to get there," Allen said, "respond 10-39." Run emergency.

The Blazer was about to leave the Friendly Hills complex at its Friendly Avenue entrance. Driving the command car, Travis turned in front of the Blazer at an angle. Ed Hunt held up his badge. The other officers tried to wave Fritz to a stop.

Fritz looked surprised but not frightened. He pulled onto the curb and went around the car and turned east onto Friendly. The command car stalled momentarily.

"There's the truck!" Travis radioed excitedly at 2:49. "I want him stopped. Get him! He's considered —"

He never finished the sentence.

"990, give a description," the dispatcher said. She got no answer.

"441 and 303, we have a truck that 990 wants stopped. I have no description."

Dennis had pulled ahead of and around the SBI car at the intersection and was heading west on Friendly. He saw the Blazer coming toward him.

Two other cars were behind the Blazer, the second one a burgundy Camaro. Dennis flicked on his blue light and began to make a U-turn to get behind the Blazer and attempt a standard felony stop. He hoped to stop the Blazer before it got to Francis King Street, a side street about 100 yards from the intersection.

Debbie Blanton was headed east on Friendly Avenue, on her way back to work after lunch in her 1970 red Mustang, when she saw the police car driving past her. In her rearview mirror, she saw it begin a U-turn.

"Oh no," she thought. "What have I done?" She slowed for the traffic light ahead, just up a slight rise.

Dennis was in the middle of his U-turn when he heard Travis' command to stop the truck. Before he could finish the turn, the burgundy Camaro pulled out from behind the civilian car it was following and began to pass. The Camaro, driven by Fetter, had come out of the apartment entrance behind Fritz.

Dennis didn't know the car contained officers. He had to swerve to avoid hitting it. The Camaro pulled directly across Fritz's path at Francis King Street. Fritz pulled into the left lane and went around it.

Debbie Blanton had stopped at the light in the center lane of Friendly. In the left-turn lane, beside and to the back of her, was a gray car driven by a woman with a young child. The gray car had stopped short of the light. Its front bumper was beside Blanton's rear wheel.

The SBI car driven by Sturgill and the blue Mustang driven by Spainhour followed Dennis onto Friendly. Both also made U-turns.

Suddenly the Mustang pulled out to overtake Fritz, causing Dennis to evade again, sending him into a skid. Dennis realized he was skidding at an angle right into the left side of the Blazer, his windshield facing Fritz's door. He saw Fritz with his left arm propped in the open window.

The next moments passed in slow motion for Dennis.

He saw the arm in the window lowering, then realized it was holding an Uzi, a 9-mm submachine gun used by the Israeli Army. His training told him not to sit still. He reached for his pistol at the same time he began squirming high in his seat to protect his head. He saw the first flash from the muzzle.

Five bullets hit his car. Three struck its body. Two came through the lower right side of his windshield. The first hit him in the upper right chest, passing through a note pad in his pocket. He felt as if he'd been hit with a sledge hammer. He didn't feel the second shot. It hit in the buckle of his utility belt and deflected into the leather.

Dennis' car stopped before it hit the Blazer. Fritz stopped behind Debbie Blanton's car. The blue Mustang driven by Spainhour slid past the gray civilian car and slammed into Debbie Blanton's door.

Fritz turned the Uzi on the Mustang. A spray of glass went up as eight bullets struck the car.

Debbie Blanton dove into her seat. So did Childers and Nobles, the two Kentucky detectives in Spainhour's Mustang. Both officers had their guns drawn. Spainhour jumped out, pistol in hand, to return fire, leaving the Mustang in gear, pushing against Debbie Blanton's car. She could see Spainhour through her windshield. She thought he was going to kill her.

As Nobles tried to get down in the back seat, a bullet struck the 9-mm Smith and Wesson pistol he was bringing across his chest. The bullet broke in two and both pieces hit Nobles under the pit of his right arm. At first he didn't realize he'd been hit.

Childers' left arm was bleeding where it had been sprayed with broken glass. With his other arm, he broke the rest of window out with his pistol and fired one shot at the Blazer.

In his cruiser, Dennis was trying not to panic. His siren was driving him crazy. He reached to cut it off. He tried to compose his thoughts.

"I've been hurt," he was trying to tell himself, but it came out over the radio, faintly, almost a cry.

"10-9" the dispatcher said, asking him to repeat.

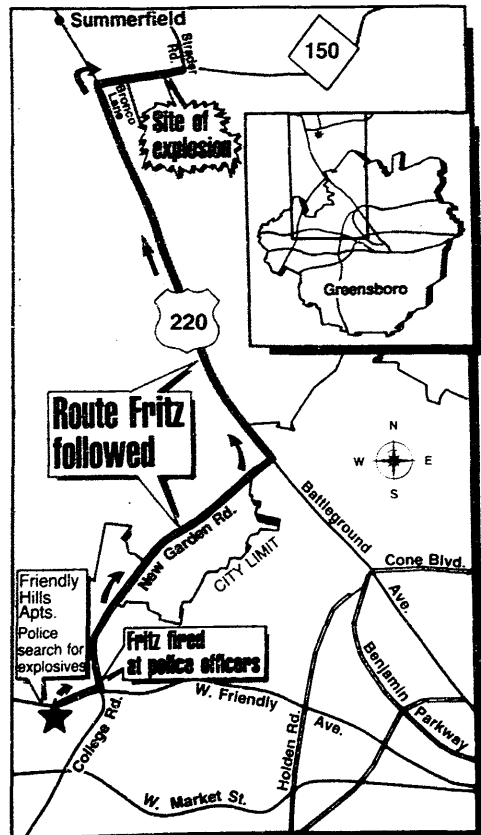
"I've been shot," Dennis said.

"All units, 303 has been shot," the dispatcher said. "241, 260, 261 and 160 assist out in Friendly Hills area."

When the bullets began to fly at the busy intersection, people ducked for cover. A woman pumping gas at the Wilco station crouched behind her car after a bullet hit her windshield. A woman mowing on the Guilford College campus dove off her mower. In the Wachovia bank on the corner, tellers rushed to the door when they heard the shots, but hurried back out of sight when they saw a man standing in the road with a gun.

Fritz was almost in a box. The SBI car stopped close behind him, the command car also was behind him, slightly to the right at an angle. Fritz backed up, ma-

(Continued on A5)



Tim Rickard/News & Record