

Summary of Testimony from Sergeant Wilson
May 28, 1969

Sgt. Wilson had just finished his regular night shift at the Admiral Boulevard Station when he received a call at home to return to the station. He returned, was issued gas masks...equipment and was brought by bus downtown. When he arrived at 12th and Oak, the speeches had already started, although he couldn't hear what was said from where he was standing.

Wilson, a sergeant, walked behind the line of patrolmen extending diagonally from the NW corner of the courthouse to the Red Lion Inn. Wilson was standing about 7-8 people in from the N end of the line. A middle-age Negro woman was pacing up and down the police line, hurling taunts and epithets. According to Wilson, she was a provocateur, "obviously trained to do this sort of thing." Moreover, Wilson reports that this woman seemed to be playing to Lena Rivers Smith who was there with TV camera and sound equipment.

Wilson also remembers seeing the kids on bikes, although he is unsure of the number. There were rocks, cherry bombs, and further taunts thrown by young, black males.

When the formation was first ordered into position by Lt. Hollenbeck, the orders had been not to let anyone go through the line from either side. Later Hollenbeck amended the order to allow people to pass through from west to east if they wanted.

When the speeches had ended and the crowd was dispersing, a portion of them, about 150, came toward the line. The line "braced up", that is, pulled closer together. A bottle was thrown, hit the officer standing to Wilson's left. In accordance with earlier in-service training instructions, the police would bear verbal abuse, but as soon as the police were physically threatened, they should throw gas to disperse the crowd. Wilson saw the bottle land in the police line and gave the order to gas.

After leaving the City Hall area, Wilson walked with 10-20 other police south on Locust, then east on 13th, and then back across the freeway to Truman Road. At that point, he and the others took a bus to 12th and Paseo, then to 12th and Woodland, and then to Euclid. At Euclid, some kids started throwing rocks and a bat at the police. Bruce Watkins and Louneer Pemberton with 4 or 5 others came up in a car. It seems they had been driving around trying to cool things. Watkins talked to the police and then spoke with the crowd and succeeded in quieting them.

A bus came, picked up the police, and took them to the CP [Command Post].