

Nazi Admirer Also Wounds 5 in Wild Attack Followed by a Siege at Moving Company

By ROBERT D. McFADDEN

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By ROBERT D. McFADDEN

A suspended worker who collected Nazi paraphernalia and idolized Adolf Hitler killed five people and wounded five others in a shooting spree with a semi-automatic rifle yesterday morning at his employer's moving company in New Rochelle, N. Y. Then, after a long siege with encircling policemen, he shot and killed himself.

Slung with bandoliers of ammunition and armed also with four pistols, the rifleman, 33-year-old Frederick W. Cowan, invaded the office-warehouse complex of the Neptune Worldwide Moving Company shortly before 8 A.M.

He shot and killed four co-workers and wounded two others inside, then turned his fire on arriving police officers from a window. One policeman was killed and three others were wounded.

"He just started shooting and everybody started running all over the place," said one employee who fled. "He walked in, and everybody started screaming and running. It was just mayhem."

The New Rochelle Police Commissioner, William Hagerty, said that Mr. Cowan had been suspended as a furniture mover two weeks ago for being rude to customers and had returned vowing to "get even" with a supervisor who had disciplined him. The supervisor said the suspension had been for refusing an order to move a refrigerator.

A twice court-martialed Army veteran who lifted weights, appeared as a model in body-building magazines and lived with his parents in New Rochelle, Mr. Cowan was known to acquaintances as a gun collector with a fascination for the Nazi period.

He made no secret of his admiration of Hitler or of his hatred of blacks and Jews; his arms were tattooed with iron crosses, knives, skulls and a swastika, and his room was festooned with Nazi flags, uniforms and other regalia, according to people who knew him.

As scores of heavily armed policemen from New Rochelle, Yonkers, Larchmont and other communities just north of the New York City line surrounded the complex, Mr. Cowan holed up on the second floor of the company's two-story office building and a siege began.

Several employees who had been unable to get out of the building in the confusion of the initial onslaught remained inside through the day, hidden in washrooms. To authorities outside, however, it was unclear whether these employees were being held hostage by the gunman. In the deadlocked situation, no assault was carried out.

During the morning, reinforcements were added to the police cordon—an

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New Rochelle Gunman Slays 5, Wounds 5, Then Kills Himself During a Police Siege

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armored personnel carrier, sharpshooters and a hostage-negotiating team from the New York City Police Department, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and state policemen. A number of F.B.I. agents and policemen seized the building's first floor.

The gunman's father, mother and other relatives were taken to the scene but failed to persuade him to surrender.

About noon, authorities at a nearby command post made telephone contact with Mr. Cowan, who demanded only some food and offered apologies to be conveyed to Mayor Vincent Rippa for "causing the city so much trouble."

No shots were fired after the initial attack by the gunman until midafternoon. Then, at about 2:40 P.M., one shot rang out from inside, apparently the shot with which the gunman killed himself.

Several hours later, police teams cautiously moved onto the second floor and found Mr. Cowan dead of a single head wound. The police said he had been holding no hostages. He was clad in a military field jacket and green pants, armed with a German-made, semi-automatic, 308-caliber assault rifle and four handguns, including a .45-caliber pistol, and he had bandoliers of ammunition around his waist and over his shoulders. He apparently used the pistol to kill himself, the police said.

Authorities did not immediately remove Mr. Cowan's body from the scene because of the possibility that hand grenades he had said he possessed might explode. However, no hand grenades were found, and the body was taken away at 8 P.M.

Scheduled to Resume Work

Mr. Cowan, the son of a retired postal worker, lived at 40 Woodbury Avenue with his parents, William and Dorothy Cowan, and two brothers. He had been scheduled to resume his regular work yesterday at the expiration of his suspension by a supervisor, Norman Bing. It was shortly before 8 A.M. when he arrived at Neptune's office and warehouse complex at 55 Weyman Avenue in a largely commercial and working-class residential section on the southern edge of New Rochelle. Warehouses, a lumber yard and gasoline stations dot the area, which is criss-crossed by Interstate 95, the tracks of Conrail's New Haven division and a number of streets.

The Neptune complex, where upwards of 300 people are employed, consists of a two-story, tinted-glass office building at the front, and a block-long garage and warehouse at the rear, where dozens of tractor trailer trucks are nosed up in long rows, appearing from overhead like the legs of a giant centipede.

Mr. Cowan drove up at 7:45 A.M., according to some witnesses, and took several weapons out of the trunk of his car, which he left in the parking lot. He then walked into the ground-floor vestibule of the office section, making no effort to hide his weapons.

He shot two fellow employees dead in the vestibule, each with a bullet in the chest. "He got them point blank," said Clynt Wynent, who was punching a time-clock. "They weren't moving. They looked dead."

The First 3 Victims

The first two men killed were Joseph Hicks, 60, of 11 Park Avenue, Mount Vernon, and Frederick Holmes, 55, of 871 East 219th Street, the Bronx. Both were company employees and both were black. James Green, 45, also black, was the next to die. A company mover, he lived at 616 Lincoln Avenue, Mount Vernon.

He was standing a short distance from the time clock, witnesses said, and turned to run when he saw the first two victims fall. Mr. Cowan shot Mr. Green in the back, and he fell dead on a flight of stairs leading to the second floor.

At least two other employees were threatened, according to Police Commissioner Hagerty, who said Mr. Cowan put his rifle to their faces before letting them flee.

Ronald Cowell, 39, was one of them. "I had one foot out the door, and I was staring at the muzzle of the rifle he was carrying," he recalled. "I started saying, 'Please,' and he said: 'Go home and tell my mother not to come down to Neptune.' I didn't look back, I just kept on running."

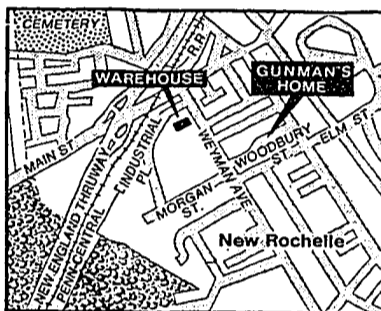
Witnesses said Mr. Cowan shouted for Norman Bing, the supervisor who had suspended him, but Mr. Bing hid for several hours in the building and he was not hurt.

But apparently searching for Mr. Bing, the gunman marched toward the building's ground-floor cafeteria, where workers were having coffee. Edward Miller, one of the workers inside, said Mr. Cowan



Patrolman Raymond Satiro, wounded in siege, is wheeled into hospital.

The New York Times/William E. Sauro



The New York Times/Feb. 15, 1977

man, Joseph Russo, of 137 Beechman Avenue, Mount Vernon, suffered a critical gunshot wound of the abdomen, and Robert Harris sustained an eye wound that did not require hospitalization.

While several employees hid inside, dozens of others escaped before the arrival of the police.

The police cordoned off a two-block section of Weyman Avenue, set up sharpshooters on nearby roofs and a command post in a grocery supply warehouse next door and began summoning reinforcements.

The gunman, a 250-pound, 6-foot man who had worked for about 10 years for Neptune, exchanged gunfire with the police for nearly an hour. His gunshots struck police cars, private automobiles and moving vans, shattered windows in an unoccupied school across the street and other buildings two blocks away and sent policemen dashing for cover, unable to reach the dead and wounded.

Police sharpshooters in flak vests returned the fire, but were frustrated because the gunman could see them through the building's tinted windows but they could not see him moving around inside on the second floor.

Copters Circle Overhead

Four state police helicopters were soon circling overhead, and by 10 A.M., a tank-like armored personnel carrier from New York City's Police Department moved onto the scene. It was used as a shield to retrieve the body of Officer McLeod. The body had been lying in the open, and the police had been unable to get close without exposing themselves to the gunman's telescopic sight.

The gunman, who at various times was inside the office or on its roof, shouted that he had "plenty of grenades and other guns to last me all day," and it was unclear whether he was holding any hostages. During the morning and early afternoon, a number of employees who had hidden inside ran out to safety.

As the siege wore on, a hostage negotiating team from New York City arrived, but was unable to make contact with the gunman.

A loudspeaker on the armored personnel carrier was used to address him, and he was repeatedly given the telephone number of the police command post to call.

At about 11 A.M., his parents and two brothers were brought up to make appeals for his surrender, but the attempt was met with silence.

"Pray for Freddie," his mother told a friend. "He's gone crazy."

Cowan Phones Police

About noon, Mr. Cowan did telephone the police command post. He made no demands, other than for hot chocolate and potato salad and asked that his apologies for the "trouble" be conveyed to the Mayor. No lunch was sent in.

About 300 policemen were involved in the siege. Commissioner Hagerty said that between 20 and 25 employees were believed to have been hiding in the building. Only one, a man hidden in a second-floor bathroom, remained trapped all day.

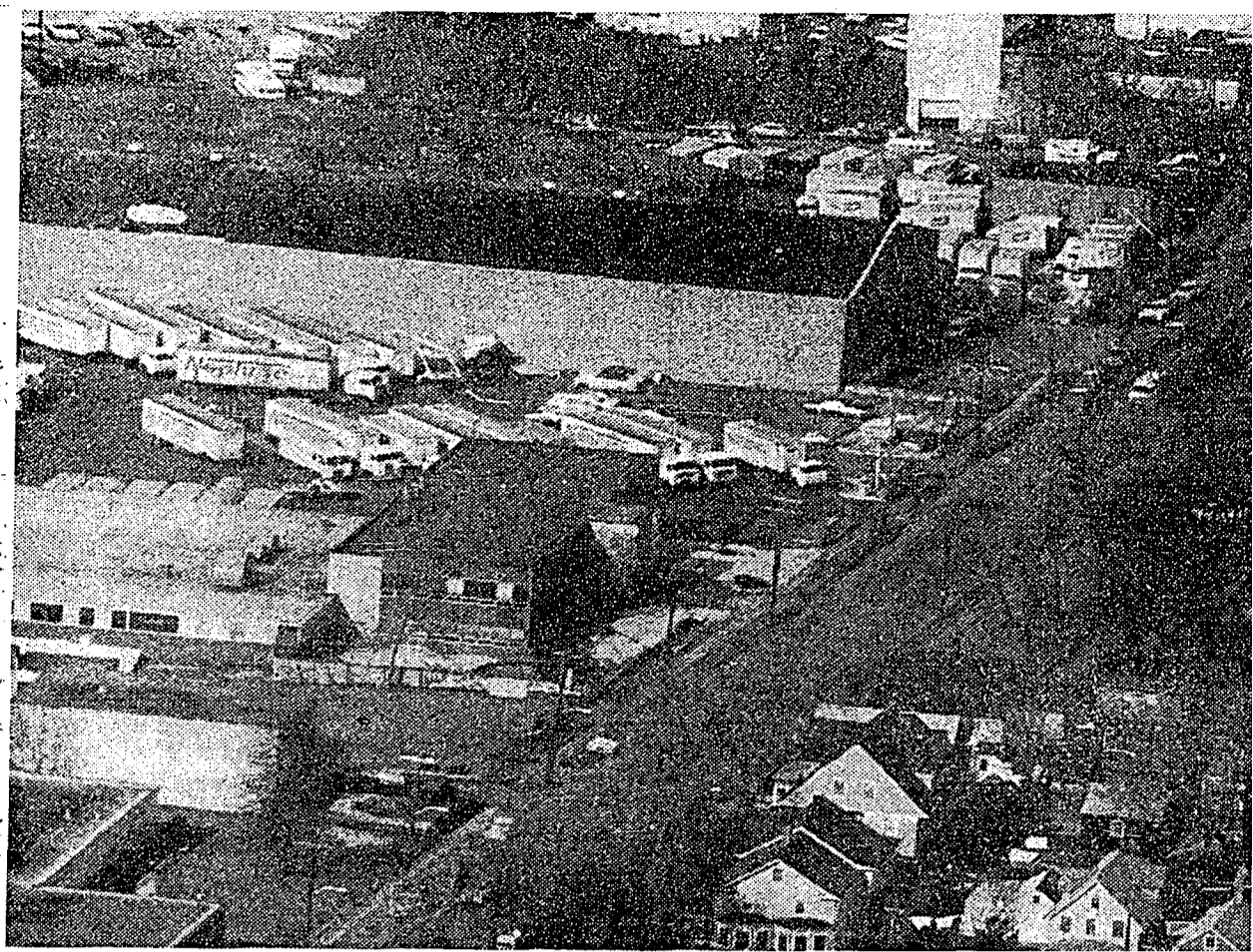
"That's why we haven't rushed the place as yet—because there are people still in there," Mayor Rippa told reporters at the scene.

"We are trying to initiate negotiations," Commissioner Hagerty said. "We have tried telephone communications. We have tried speaking through air-conditioning conduits. We have tried direct personal communications. So far we have been unable to communicate."

By midafternoon, the siege had attracted large crowds to nearby streets and rooftops. Police barricades were set up to keep the crowds back.

Mr. Cowan was holed up in an office on the north side of the building's second floor when he shot himself dead through the right temple. Several hours later, when the police moved onto the second floor with dogs, Mr. Cowan was found face down, a .45-caliber Colt pistol in his right hand and a Browning 9-millimeter pistol on the floor beside him.

On a nearby table, there were two other handguns. The rifle Mr. Cowan had used was leaning against a chair, and 200 rounds of ammunition for it were lying nearby.



The New York Times/Paul Hoesfros

Two-story office building of Neptune Worldwide Moving Company complex, left foreground, that gunman invaded



Associated Press

Policemen taking cover on roof near gunman's position. Federal, state and city authorities helped local police.



The New York Times

The New Rochelle Medical Center is turned into blood donor headquarters as scores of residents respond to call for aid to victims wounded by rifleman.