

Reporter Faces No Retribution, Says Klan Faction Head

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Bill Wilkinson, head of the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan, said yesterday that a *Tennessean* reporter who infiltrated his group faces no physical punishment from the Klan for his actions.

And Don Black, leader of the Knights of the KKK, said Thompson wasted his time when he spent more than a year infiltrating the Knights faction.

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"IT IS SOMETHING we can't take to court, and that would be the only retribution," Wilkinson said about Thompson's infiltration, while attending a rally here yesterday. "If you're talking about physical, corporal-type retribution, there will be none."

Wilkinson said he knows informants have been in his group for years after obtaining a copy of his FBI file.

"We don't fear informants," he added. "The only thing we fear are

provocateurs."

Thompson spent 16 months as a member of the rival Klan groups headed by Wilkinson and Black in order to determine first-hand how the secret racist organizations operate.

THOMPSON, who posed as "J.W. Thompson," a divorced former Army sergeant who worked as a cabinet maker, went to Birmingham in July 1979 and worked in Black's unsuccessful mayoral campaign.

"He called our mayoral office and said he had heard me on a radio talk show and said he wanted to join," said Black. "After a few weeks of interviewing him, we decided to accept him as a member."

"Initially, we thought he was a little suspicious because we couldn't really check his background. But that didn't bother us

because we don't have a paranoid mentality."

BLACK CALLED Thompson's first story of his 16 months in the Klan "highly sensationalized," but added: "It demonstrates that we haven't done anything illegal. He didn't find anything more than any other reporter who had not pretended to be a spy. It was no great threat to us and we are not particularly concerned about it."

"We hate *The Tennessean*," Black added. "They are a vicious newspaper. They wrote a series of smears that were designed to get me to lose my job. They wrote a story that wasn't true and they know it wasn't true."

"But we appreciate Thompson's contributions and we are honored that *The Tennessean* would spend so much money and time covering our group."

THOMPSON, a 20-year veteran with *The Tennessean*, also joined

the Louisiana-based Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan, headed by Wilkinson. He held memberships in both groups during the past two months, and Black said yesterday he knew Thompson was a member of both groups.

"I had heard he had gone to some of Wilkinson's marches and I didn't pay any attention," he said. "I guess he had a dual membership but never told anybody. With our group, he was quite active. He even called last night and asked me if we had any activities coming up."

Black disputed Thompson's report that said the Knights of the KKK is losing membership.

"I don't know how he could say that because he did not have a way to get our membership records," Black said. "He says in the story that we have 1,500 members, which is wild. We have a lot more than that."