

COPS PROBE HATE WRITING FOUND IN SMITH'S CAR

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Investigators sifting through mounting evidence in the probe of alleged spree killer Benjamin Smith are focusing on his recent white-power writings as they try to determine what led Smith to allegedly embark on last weekend's murderous rampage, law enforcement officers said Friday.

Among the writings is a two-page handwritten note found in Smith's abandoned Ford Taurus, although police have not conclusively determined that Smith is the author.

The note, written in a spiral notebook reads in part: "Anyone who knows the history of this plague upon humanity who call themselves Jews, will know why I have acted . . . We must stop their control of our media, legislatures, & schools from instilling white guilt in our youths. . ."

Also contained in the note, a copy of which was obtained by the Tribune, is a reference to the 4th of July holiday and its importance to the struggle for white supremacy.

"Unlike the revolution we celebrate on the 4th, we are not fighting only for freedom but for white survival," the note reads.

The two-state shootings, which killed two and injured nine, targeted African-Americans, Orthodox Jews and Asians.

Investigators previously had disclosed that they found a notebook filled with white supremacy writings in Smith's apartment in Downstate Morton.

FBI agents and police detectives also are examining a computer discovered late Wednesday in a storage locker rented by Smith's friend and fellow white supremacist, Matthew Hale, leader of the East Peoria-based World Church of the Creator. Both Smith and Hale are believed to have had access to the computer, law enforcement officials said Friday.

Meanwhile, the parents of a 15-year-old North Side boy, who was shot during the spree, filed a civil lawsuit seeking monetary damages in Cook County Circuit Court Friday.

The suit names as defendants: Hale and Hale's World Church; Donald Fiessinger, the unlicensed Pekin gun dealer who told authorities he sold two guns to Smith; and Smith's parents, Kenneth and Beverly Smith of Northfield.

Ephraim Wolfe, who was shot in the right leg July 2 as he and a friend, Nosson Cohen, walked through West Rogers Park, charges Smith acted as an "agent" for Hale. The lawsuit claims Smith entered the neighborhood and "attempted to murder any Jew he could find."

"The evidence will show that (Smith) was behaving on behalf of Hale when he went into a neighborhood to try to kill people at a time he knew they would be going to the synagogue," said Michael Ian Bender, an attorney for the Wolfes and Cohens, also plaintiffs in the case.

Hale, who left Illinois for weekend meetings with World Church members, could not be reached for comment. The Smiths also could not be reached. Fiessinger declined comment on the lawsuit.

A predecessor of the World Church, called the Church of the Creator, has been sued at least once before.

The family of an African-American sailor, murdered by a World Church minister in 1991 in Neptune Beach, Fla., successfully sued the church with the help of the Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights organization based in Montgomery, Ala. A federal jury awarded the sailor's family a \$1 million judgment.

The group had few assets, but the family expects to collect \$85,000 from some property the group was forced to sell in North Carolina, said Mark Potok, of the law center.

In other developments related to the investigation, Skokie police released more details of Smith's finances. Records from Harris Bank in Wilmette show Smith cashed certificates of deposit as early as April 16 for \$6,795 and again on May 17 for \$10,275.

Authorities have had difficulty tracking Smith's movements in the days leading up to the shootings, including whether Smith recently visited with friends or family, a law enforcement official said. His movements are key to the investigation because authorities want to determine if anyone aided Smith or provoked him to allegedly commit the shootings, federal sources have said.

During the holiday weekend shooting spree, investigators believe Smith may have lived out of his car, munching on Doritos and drinking canned soda and bottled juices, the remnants of which were found in the auto. Authorities also found cigarettes and about \$300 in cash scattered about the car, a law enforcement officer said.

No evidence of drugs or alcohol was found in the car, authorities said.

About \$1,700 and assorted ammunition was found in the van he hijacked the night he died, investigators said.

The Illinois State Police crime laboratory has determined the .22-caliber shell casings from the Chicago shootings and the slaying of former Northwestern University basketball coach Ricky Byrdson match the .22-caliber handgun recovered from Smith when he was stopped in Downstate Salem, said Skokie police Sgt. Michael Ruth.

The bullets taken from the bodies of Byrdson and Smith, who authorities say committed suicide by shooting himself three times, also have been matched to the gun taken from the car, Ruth said.

Ballistics tests are pending from other shooting scenes in Illinois and Indiana, including from a .380 semi-automatic handgun also found near Smith.

The Illinois attorney general's office also is considering a lawsuit against Hale's World Church because it is not registered as a charity in Illinois.

Since the organization has solicited donations for its publications and other materials, the law requires such registration, said Floyd Perkins, chief of the office's charitable trust bureau.

Illinois Department of Revenue officials said that on Aug. 1, 1995, Hale applied for a sales-tax exemption for purchases made on behalf of his church.

"Our religion, Creativity, is a white racial religion dedicated to the survival, expansion and advancement of the white race," Hale wrote in the tax-exemption application.

A week later, revenue officials denied the application.

"We said this does not constitute a religion," said revenue spokesman Mike Klemens.

Klemens also said agency officials examined Tazewell County records and determined Hale did not get a church property-tax exemption for the East Peoria home he shares with his father.

In McHenry County, religious leaders and politicians gathered outside the McHenry County Government Center about 1 p.m. Friday for a prayer vigil and protest of racial violence.

"There is a sickness in our nation which we have to acknowledge," said Patrick Murfin, president of the Interfaith Council for Social Justice. "We have to reach out to the lonely, isolated and alienated youth. . . . Let us show love and defeat hate."

Caption: PHOTO

PHOTO: Police are examining hate writing found in Benjamin Smith's car.

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