CHARLES JOSEPH WHITMAN, 24 YEAR OLD ARCHITECTURAL STUDENT FROM LAKE WORTH, FLORIDA, BEGAN HIS PLOT THE NIGHT BEFORE WHEN HE MURDERED BOTH HIS WIFE AND MOTHER. IT ENDED WHEN OFFICER RAMIRIO MARTINEZ FIRED ALL SIX SHOTS FROM HIS SERVICE REVOLVER ON THE OBSERVATION DECK OF THE TOWER.

WHITMAN, A FORMER MARINE, PLANNED WELL; AFTER MURDERING HIS WIFE AND HIS MOTHER DURING THE PRIOR NIGHT, HE PURCHASED ADDITIONAL AMMUNITION AND ASSEMBLED SUPPLIES NEEDED FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME ON THE FORTRESS-LIKE OBSERVATION DECK OF THE TOWER. THESE INCLUDED SEVERAL WEAPONS, FOOD, WATER, AND EXTRA CLOTHING.

WITH SUPPLIES PACKED IN A TRUNK, HE DROVE TO THE TOWER, UNLOADED HIS EQUIPMENT, SECURED A HAND TRUCK AND ROLLED HIS TRUNK DOWN THE HALLWAYS TO THE TOWER ELEVATORS. HE WAS SEEN BY MANY PEOPLE DURING THE TIME HE WAS TRANSPORTING THE TRUNK FROM THE STREET TO THE ELEVATOR, BUT MOST GAVE HIM NO MORE THAN A CASUAL GLANCE SINCE IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR DELIVERY MEN TO FOLLOW THE SAME ROUTE.

ON ARRIVAL AT THE 27TH FLOOR, WHICH IS AS HIGH AS THE ELEVATOR WILL GO, WHITMAN REMOVED HIS TRUNK FROM THE ELEVATOR, CARRIED IT UP THE NARROW STAIRWAY TO THE OBSERVATION DECK.

SOMETIME DURING THIS PERIOD HE FATALLY WOUNDED THE RECEPTIONIST ON DUTY AND SHOT FOUR VISITORS WHO WERE APPROACHING THE OBSERVATION DECK FROM THE STAIRS.

HE THEN BARRICADED THE STAIRWAY ENTRANCE WITH THE RECEPTIONIST'S HEAVY DESK, TIED ONE RIFLE TO THE SOUTH PARAPET AND AT APPROXIMATELY 11:50AM, BEGAN FIRING ON THE HUMAN TARGETS ON THE BROAD PLAZA BELOW.

BEFORE WHITMAN WAS FATALLY WOUNDED BY OFFICERS MARTINEZ AND MCCOY, HE HAD KILLED 16 PERSONS AND WOUNDED 31 MORE.

FINALLY AT 1:24PM, NINETY-TWO MINUTES FROM THE TIME THE ORIGINAL CALL CAME IN, THE FOLLOWING RADIO TRANSMISSION WAS RECEIVED.

"UNIT 34 TO HEADQUARTERS. WE HAVE GOT THAT MAN. MARTINEZ GOT HIM."

EXCEPT FOR THE HEROIC WORK OF THE PUBLIC, MEMBERS OF LOCAL BUSINESS FIRMS, AND OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT GROUPS IN THE AREA, THE SITUATION COULD HAVE LASTED MUCH LONGER WITH EVEN MORE CASUALTIES.

THERE WERE MANY HEROES, AND LIKE MOST REAL HEROES, THEY DID NOT WAIT AROUND TO GIVE NAMES AND DESCRIBE WHAT THEIR ACTIONS WERE. MANY OF THESE WERE STUDENTS, SOME WERE AMBULANCE DRIVERS. FOR NINETY-TWO MINUTES THEY ALL HAD ONE THING IN COMMON; THEY WERE CAUGHT IN A HAIL OF GUNFIRE AND ALL AROUND THEM LAY BLEEDING VICTIMS WHO NEEDED HELP. MANY ATTEMPTED TO HELP ONLY TO BE STRUCK DOWN BY THE GUNMAN WHO CHOSE HIS VICTIMS AS IF BY LOTTERY. TO THESE UNKNOWN AND UNREWARDED HEROES, THE VICTIMS, THE CITY, AND THE AUSTIN POLICE DEPARTMENT WILL BE FOREVER INDEBTED.

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