

MEMO TO FILE

RE: MITCH WHIDDEN

DATE: OCTOBER 2, 1997

STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH MITCH WHIDDEN

Mitch and Ronnie were both in the chaplain's office which consisted of about eleven branch offices around the base. Mitch was in one office and Ronnie in another. Ronnie visited all the offices because he delivered office supplies. Mitch and Ronnie were friends. Ronnie told Mitch he was part of the investigation of Patricia's death. Ronnie told Mitch he felt it was unfair for the investigators to turn his coworkers and friends against him.

Mitch left the Marine Corps in approximately July of 1996. Before he left he told Ronnie he was going to try to enroll in Liberty University to become a pastor. Presumably Mitch knew Ronnie's dad went to Liberty U. and that Ronnie had met Dr. Falwell.

It is unlikely that Mitch had formed any idea that Ronnie killed Trish or he would have either notified his commanding officer right before he left the service or the civil authorities right afterward.

If Mitch feared Ronnie at the time he left the Marine Corps, he could have kept Ronnie from having any idea he relocated.

If Mitch feared Ronnie in January of 1997, he would have told Ronnie that he could not possibly put him and Kim up at his small apartment because he had two small children.

When Ronnie called Mitch in January of 1997, Mitch welcomed him and told him he did not have to spend money on a motel room while he was in Lynchburg.

Ronnie and Kim's trip to Lynchburg was in connection with Ronnie going to Portsmouth, Virginia, to have his sleep disorder evaluated. The Marine Corps required Ronnie to make the trip and agreed to pay Kim's expenses so that Ronnie would not have to drive the whole way. Ronnie had to be back on duty Sunday so it

was impossible for him and Kim to attend Sunday services at Thomas Road Baptist, even though they would have liked to hear Dr. Falwell preach.

Kim had a credit card and she and Ronnie could have easily rented a motel room if Mitch could not put them up.

Ronnie and Kim arrived in Lynchburg at close to 10:00 p.m. and called Mitch from a pay phone on the Liberty campus. Mitch drove his car and led them back to his house. Neither Kim nor Ronnie had ever met Mitch's wife.

They went to bed shortly after getting there. Ronnie took a shower because he had to wash off the glue from the electrodes in the sleep test.

The next day Ronnie and Kim went to classes in the morning with Mitch. Kim and Ronnie had lunch by themselves. In the afternoon they went to meet Dr. Falwell. They got back to Mitch's house at 5:00 or 5:30. Kim invited the Whiddens and their two children out to dinner to repay them for letting them sleep there. They went out to eat with the kids and then went shopping. Both families bought office chairs at a closeout sale.

They put Kim's and Ronnie's in their car and Ronnie and Mitch assembled the Whidden's chair. After that it was close to 10:00 p.m. Ronnie and Mitch went upstairs for devotionals. They were upstairs approximately 15 minutes. Ronnie told Mitch that the investigation of Trish's death was hard on him because his friends in the Marine Corps thought he was involved. Ronnie told Mitch that he had a recurring dream in which Trish, Ted, Ronnie and another unidentified person were all in a strange house that was unfamiliar to Ronnie. The dream would end with a loud explosion.

Ronnie told Mitch that because he slept so much he dreamed a lot and this dream came up again and again. Ronnie told Mitch he wondered what the dream meant. Who was the unidentified person and who caused the big bang at the end of the dream. Ronnie would always wake up when he heard the bang.

Mitch said they should pray for inspiration and guidance. Mitch said God never gives us an ordeal we can't endure.

Ronnie's eyes may have filled with tears of frustration but he was not crying.

When Ronnie and Mitch came back downstairs Kim did not think that Ronnie had been crying. Kim noticed nothing unusual. Mitch's wife was never alone with Ronnie and Ronnie never discussed Patricia's death or anything else with Mitch's wife.

While Mitch and Ronnie were upstairs Kim and Mitch's wife talked girl talk. Later Mitch's wife literally passed out and Mitch and Ronnie had to carry her upstairs.

A couple of weeks later Ronnie got a call from Mitch at the chaplain's office (451-5646) at 11:00 a.m. or shortly thereafter.

Mitch said he was in the area and wanted to see Ronnie. This surprised Ronnie because (Ronnie??) did not have any money. Mitch said a friend of theirs on the base had a baby and he and his wife came down to see the baby.

Mitch's wife (Donna) got on the phone. She said she was sorry she had "passed out" on them. She said it was good having them up to Virginia.

One hour Mitch showed up alone. Ronnie was vacuuming the chapel. Ronnie asked Mitch to wait a few minutes for him to

finish and they could go get some lunch.

Mitch said he had talked to an attorney about the things Ronnie had told him. Ronnie said he didn't know why Mitch would have to talk to an attorney about a private conversation. Mitch asked Ronnie why he did not just ask Ted for the money. Wouldn't that clear up whether it had all been a dream. Ronnie told Mitch he did not know what he was talking about.

Panosh flatly denied that Whidden had been in on any attempt to tape record this conversation. It would appear that this meeting was set up by Church and Pendergrass to get a confession out of Ronnie. The whole scheme fell flat.

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AND CASH
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