

Nazis stay out

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Staff Writer

IN MID-OCTOBER, 1977, Skokie residents learned, that the U. S. Supreme Court would not hear arguments aimed at preventing a Nazi demonstration in their village.

But it didn't matter anymore.

The conflict ended months earlier, in June, when the Nazi march that was to be simply never materialized:

- When the tiny group of neo-Nazis from Marquette park in Chicago decided that they didn't really want to be in Skokie on June 25 anyway.

- When Nazi leader Frank Collin, a half-Jew, the son of a concentration camp inmate, apparently realized that his small group of marchers might not fare well against the thousands of Holocaust survivors and Jewish Defense League (JDL) members who would be waiting for them.

- When a federal court judge provided Collin a way to save face, overturning a Chicago park district insurance requirement and ordering Chicago park officials to grant permission for a July 9 Nazi march in Marquette Park. A pleased—and no doubt relieved—Collin told the press that all he was agitating for was the right to recruit followers through demonstrations on Chicago's Southwest Side.

"I have no interest in Skokie or any other hostile area," he said, telling reporters he would not hesitate to threaten further marches in Skokie if anyone interfered with his free speech rights in Chicago.

- When the 50,000 counterdemonstrators expected to arrive in Skokie from across the country learned that there would be no Nazi menace in Skokie and concluded that they might just as well stay home and throw a few hot dogs on the grill.

- When the Skokie police breathed a collective sigh of relief and disbanded preparations which were to bring in 300 neighboring patrolmen, large numbers of state troopers and national guardsmen, and seven helicopters.

BY OCTOBER it was all over but the reminiscing. The story that had put Skokie on the map was no longer making headlines.

Harvey Schwartz, Skokie's corporation counsel, was in the forefront of the movement to keep the Nazis out of the village, fighting one legal battle after another against the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which voluntarily undertook the representation of the Nazis.

Looking back on the entire episode, Schwartz said, "I think the community achieved what it wanted—the demonstration was prevented."

The first six months of 1978 saw Skokie overshadowed by the threat of a Nazi demonstration. The Nazis did not come to Skokie in April and no educational activities ever materialized.