

LETTERS

Greekfest excesses not fault of police

To the Editor:

As a lawyer who has gone to bat in court many, many times for blacks who were the objects of police brutality and/or race discrimination, I would like to address the charges of "police brutality" and "discrimination" at the Greekfest festivities.

By the time the Virginia Beach and other police had restored civilization to Atlantic Avenue, 100 or so small businesses had been vandalized or looted, two people had been shot in the chest, one had mysteriously "fallen" from the fourth floor of a hotel, and an ambulance took an hour or so to crawl up Atlantic Avenue because it was intentionally

blocked. No one claims these excesses were caused by the police.

Under the circumstances, police displayed not only impressive discipline and restraint but also real personal courage. With or without helmets and horses, marching through an avalanche of cascading bottles and bricks into a seething, completely unpredictable mob without ever firing a shot in fear or panic took real courage and real professionalism.

As for brutality and discrimination, pictures don't lie. This wasn't Kent State, where rioting police killed a bunch of kids for marching in protest of a war. It also wasn't Selma or Meridian, where

civil-rights workers were beaten and jailed for peacefully protesting segregation. The pictures tell who was breaking the law and who was restoring the law. They show there were no George Wallaces or Bull Connors on the police side, and certainly no James Merediths or Martin Luther Kings on the other side.

It's true that there is still some racism left in our society, and it's certainly true that Virginia Beach was not overly enthusiastic about the return of Greekfest this year, but the one does not explain the other.

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Virginia Beach, Sept. 6, 1989