

Brian McWILLIAMS

# S\*PAM Kings

The Real Story

Behind the  
High-Rolling Hucksters

PUSHING

PORN,

PILLS, and

@\*#?%

Enlargements



# chapter \*one\*

## Birth of a Spam King

*People are stupid*, Davis Wolfgang Hawke thought as he stared at the nearly empty box of swastika pendants on his desk. It was April 22, 1999, two days after the one-hundredth anniversary of Adolph Hitler's birth. Dozens of orders for the red-and-black necklaces had been pouring into his Knights of Freedom (KOF) Nationalist Party web site every week since he built it nine months ago. The demand nearly outstripped what his supplier could provide, but Hawke wasn't celebrating his e-commerce success. As he stuffed the remaining pendants into padded envelopes and addressed them, Hawke gazed out the window of his mobile home at the hazy South Carolina sky and thought: *This is the ultimate hypocrisy. If even half of these people actually joined the party, I would have a major political movement. Instead, all they want is a pretty, shiny pendant.*

And if a snoopy reporter for the local paper hadn't recently blown his cover, Hawke might not have been spending all of the web site's income on rent, telephone, and electricity bills for the double-wide just off Highway 221 in Chesnee. But Hawke was forced to move into the trailer in March, after secretly operating KOF.net for six months from the dorm room his parents paid for at Wofford College in nearby Spartanburg. Hawke had always been an anomaly at the pricey Methodist school, with his penchant for dressing all in black, wearing his

dark hair in a ponytail, and sporting a push-broom mustache. But the 20-year-old junior had managed to hold down a 3.8 grade point average as a double major in German and history without anyone knowing he was also the founder and chief executive director of the Knights of Freedom. His room in Shipp Hall had been festooned with Nazi flags, Hitler videos, and a collection of knives, but Hawke did no proselytizing on campus. In fact, he had little social contact with other students.

Although his ultimate goal was one day to be elected the nation's first white-power president, Hawke knew he had to lay some groundwork before his philosophy would become mainstream. That task would make him a target for leftists and the media. To shield himself, even with party comrades and web site visitors, Hawke used the pseudonym "Bo Decker" and listed a post office box in Walpole, Massachusetts as the Knights of Freedom mailing address.

Over a thousand people signed up for his monthly email newsletter, the *White Pride News Service*. Some 200 people joined as dues-paying members, paying five dollars a month for a membership card, a KOF armband, a videotape of speeches by Decker, and a subscription to the newsletter. Not bad for a movement that had been unheard of a year earlier. In fact, the Anti-Defamation League had recently said that KOF was the fastest-growing neo-Nazi group in the United States. Using the alias Bo Decker, Hawke had introduced the world to the Knights of Freedom in an August 1998 posting to several online discussion groups: "We must band together in unity to defend our Race. Either we stand together and battle for the right to racial existence or we will be wiped out by international Jewry and their nigger police."

As Hawke saw it, the Knights of Freedom had two major things going for it: its web site and his brains. The KOF.net site, dressed all in black like its owner, was the best white-power site on the Internet. Besides the merchandise section, there was a chat room, press release section, message board, and automated sign-up forms—all the bells

and whistles. At one point, Hawke even posted a note on the site's home page offering to provide web design and hosting to other white-power groups. Hawke and his lieutenants also knew how to use the Internet for promotion. They worked newsgroups and discussion lists, talking up the Knights of Freedom and its web site. Hawke had put an automatic hit counter on the front page of KOF.net, and he got a kick out of checking the traffic statistics every day. It intrigued him that you could publish a message in a newsgroup or send out the newsletter emails and then a few hours later watch the bar graphs on the stats page suddenly shoot up.

As for Hawke's mind, it was quantitative, analytical. It made him a top student in high school and a formidable chess player, and it made his college studies a snap. He could think several moves ahead of his opponents.

However, in a moment of hubris, Hawke posted a large photograph of himself on the front page of KOF.net. It showed the lanky Hawke dressed in a Nazi uniform, with his arm outstretched in a "Heil Hitler" salute. When a Wofford student was out web surfing one evening in early February and happened to run across the site, Hawke was undone.

Soon a front-page exposé appeared in the Spartanburg *Herald-Journal* that fingered Hawke as the head of KOF. It said that he used the site for recruiting and to stoke racist fervor among party members, who addressed him as "Commander." According to the article, the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that monitors hate groups, had been tracking him since he was in high school in Westwood, Massachusetts.

But what hit Hawke like a punch to the gut was a matter-of-fact statement in the article attributed to Mark Potok, the head of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Potok told the paper that Hawke was a Jew who, to hide his heritage, had changed his name from Andrew Britt Greenbaum upon graduating from high school in 1996.

The article buried what would become Hawke's standard rebuttal to the charges: that his father, Hyman Andrew Greenbaum, was only one-quarter Jewish. And it omitted altogether that Hawke believed his true biological father was a German immigrant named Dekker with whom his mother had had an affair. Either way, Hawke knew he wouldn't have been considered Jewish even under Hitler's classification. As Hawke wrote in his application for a change of identity: "I have always responded to a different name and I wish to formalize my name prior to attending college in the fall as to avoid confusion."<sup>1</sup>

The article couldn't have come at a worse time. For the past few months, the Knights of Freedom had begun to attract attacks from other white-power groups. Some, jealous of Hawke's Internet skills, had taken to calling him the "Net Nazi" and were claiming that the KOF was a virtual movement with no real world presence. Others, suspicious of the KOF's quick rise into the limelight, posted mocking replies to his messages in online newsgroups. To Hawke's detractors, the falsehoods about his Jewish ancestry would provide delicious irony and damaging ammunition.

Indeed, the insults about him being a "Kosher Nazi" had already begun. Tom Metzger, head of the White Aryan Resistance—the same Tom Metzger whose name Hawke had placed in the hidden "MetaTag" code at KOF.net to bring in traffic from search engines—was quoted in the *Herald-Journal* article as saying, "If he is a Jew, he will have no stature left. People he is involved with will have nothing to do with him."

When the article appeared, part of Hawke was mortified that everything he had built was about to collapse. But he tried to stay cool-headed. He contemplated his damage-control options. He wouldn't say anything about the article to people in the Knights of Freedom unless they asked. And if they did, he'd remind them that the whole matter was a creation of the Jewish-controlled media or an effort by the Zionist Occupied Government, as he liked to refer to

the controlling powers in the U.S., designed to undermine proud Aryan people. Bottom line, any publicity is good publicity, Hawke would tell his followers.

Fortunately for Hawke, people at Wofford were focused more on Hawke's message than on the revelations about him as a messenger. To his relief, he inspired fear, not laughter. Wofford professors abandoned their syllabi that day and instead devoted their classes to discussing the Knights of Freedom web site and the group's leader. Then, in the evening, around 300 Wofford students—nearly a third of the student body—gathered in the college's auditorium to hold a candlelight vigil to show their opposition to racism and bigotry.

While Wofford's dedication to principles of free speech prevented administrators from expelling Hawke, they were eager to relax the college rules and allow him to move off campus. In early March, he signed a lease for the cramped trailer in the woods, fifteen miles from the college. Hawke knew he was finished with Wofford; he'd complete the semester, but that would probably be the end of his college career. Bigger things awaited him. The publicity train started by the local paper was chugging along. The *Boston Globe* published a story about him in late February that put the Knights of Freedom on a national stage. Even *Rolling Stone* wanted to send a reporter to interview him.

There was a silver lining to Hawke's move off campus. A woman he had met in an online chat room offered to move to South Carolina and serve as party secretary. Her name was Patricia Lingenfelter. She was a beautiful Aryan, smart and tough—a green belt in karate—and ten years older than Hawke. Once he was out of the dorms, Hawke invited her to stay with him in Chesnee. To keep up appearances, he insisted that she still refer to him as "Commander" around other party comrades, but everyone knew Hawke and Patricia were lovers.

In late March, Hawke decided it was time to host an assembly of comrades in Chesnee. He wanted the First Party Congress to happen on the one hundredth anniversary of Hitler's birthday, but April 20 didn't coincide with Wofford's spring break. So he scheduled the meeting the week before the Fuhrer's 100<sup>th</sup>. While fewer than a dozen party members showed up, the atmosphere was charged by the presence of a camera crew from ABC News's *Hard Copy* program, which broadcast a snippet of Hawke's rousing speech, along with footage of party members marching around outside his trailer in their Nazi regalia.

Meanwhile, out in Colorado two kids at Columbine High School celebrated Hitler's birthday by going on a shooting rampage, killing twelve people, including themselves. Suddenly, TV news producers were grabbing for their Rolodexes, and Hawke's name, after his strong performance on *Hard Copy*, was coming out on top. A crew from the *Fox Files* television news program showed up at the trailer the next day to interview Hawke about the Knights of Freedom and his insights into the killings.

*The media likes to buy and sell fear*, Hawke thought as he and Patricia watched the Fox report on the TV in his trailer that evening on April 22. The program was trying to spin the Columbine massacre as a racially motivated hate crime, but Hawke wouldn't play along. At one point in the program, the Fox interviewer asked Hawke, who was wearing his Nazi uniform, if he ever hugged his father.

Hawke said no, and added that he didn't hug his mother either.

"Why not?"

"I never felt the need for physical contact of that sort," said Hawke.

"Did you feel the need for human affection?"

"Human affection is not something that I value at the moment, or then, or ever."

"Do you believe in love?"

“Sure, I believe in love, but I don’t believe that I can ever have time for that. That’s a human emotion,” replied Hawke.

“Do you think that people would see that as sad or unfortunate, that here’s a young man that says that he never felt any love for anyone growing up, or never hugged his mom or dad?”

“I don’t really care what they have to say,” Hawke answered.

When the program was over, Hawke switched off the TV. Patricia said she was going to head into town for a quick food run and to gas up the car. Hawke turned on the computer on his desk and was waiting for it to boot up when the phone rang. It was his mother. He hadn’t spoken to her for several months.

“Are you happy now?” she yelled at him.

“What do you mean?” he replied.

Peggy Greenbaum said she had seen the *Fox Files* segment. “How do you know your web site didn’t cause those boys to go crazy in Columbine? It makes me sick to think that you might have spurred them on,” she said.

Hawke considered her question. To him, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris were probably just disgruntled teens taking revenge against a school system that was force-feeding them the same old liberal nonsense day after day, year after year. But before he had a chance to explain this to his mother, she interrupted.

“I hope you’re happy now,” she hissed again, and hung up on him.

Hawke sat down at his desk. His parents had been paying his tuition and living expenses, but it was obvious he could no longer rely on them for anything. Yet he knew that if he was going to realize his dream of building the Knights of Freedom into a major political movement and creating an Aryan homeland out west, he’d need a lot of money. Hawke’s personal savings—acquired through generous holiday gifts from his parents and other relatives—would carry him for a while. He was pretty certain that his grandparents on both sides of the family would someday will him a small fortune, maybe



close to a million dollars. But in the meantime, there were bills to pay.

Hawke started up the web browser on his computer and typed in the address of the eBay auction site. He occasionally visited the site to check out auctions of Nazi paraphernalia—he'd picked up one of his SS uniforms that way. But this time he wasn't going to the site to shop. Instead, he surfed to the section of the site for creating a new account, and began rapidly filling out the form.

Hawke paused when he got to the section asking him to specify a username. After some thought he typed in "antiqueamerica"—a sturdy name that wouldn't provoke any suspicion. Then he launched himself machinelike into the repetitive task of setting up auctions for the knives, buckles, pendants, uniforms, and other Nazi gear he'd been selling at KOF.net.

When Patricia returned to the trailer an hour or so later, the change in Hawke wasn't visible. But he had begun his transformation from neo-Nazi organizer to Internet spammer.

## The Education of an Anti-Spammer

Susan Gunn's first personal computer seemed preloaded with an endless supply of junk email. Almost from the moment she first signed on to America Online, even before she had given her newly minted email address to friends and relatives, Gunn began receiving electronic messages from total strangers who wanted to sell her all manner of products she didn't want, including pornography, body-part enlargement, and software that would enable her to enter the exciting and rewarding business of junk email.

*Who are these people and how did they get my address?* wondered Gunn, a resident of Stanton, California, a small, palm-tree-studded city built on land originally intended as a sewage farm for neighboring Anaheim. Gunn had bought the PC ostensibly to computerize some of her work as the property manager of a condominium complex owned by her father. But for Gunn, divorced and in her

mid-forties, the computer was also a link from her sometimes too-quiet home office in the gated community to the brave new world known as the Internet.

It was late 1998. AOL had recently acquired its rivals Netscape and CompuServe and boasted around 15 million members. The dot-com bubble was still inflating rapidly, as new users such as Gunn swarmed online and began making purchases. But e-commerce wasn't only being conducted by high-profile dot-coms such as eBay, Amazon, and Yahoo!. Entrepreneurs of all types were trying to cash in on the information superhighway, including, apparently, the anonymous folks who had somehow gotten her email address, which they felt entitled them to barge through her virtual front door whenever they wanted.

At first Gunn blamed AOL for the messages. She assumed the online service had sold her name as soon as she signed up. But when she phoned the company to complain, a customer support representative assured her that was not the case. The rep said to forward any unwanted messages to a special email address, and AOL would investigate. For a few weeks, Gunn dutifully obliged, but the junk email kept on coming. In some cases the incoming spam stated that if she wanted to be removed from the sender's list, she needed to visit a special web page and type in her email address. But that had no effect. And whenever she hit the "reply" button and told the spammers to knock it off, her replies went unanswered or were returned as undeliverable. Either the return address on the original message didn't exist, or the mailbox on the other end was crammed to capacity.

Gunn's previous computer experience had consisted of plugging numbers into spreadsheets during a stint in an accounting firm. So she had no way of knowing that her mysterious spam problem was likely a consequence of having wandered into AOL's online chat rooms while they were being harvested by spammers. Using special "spambot" programs, junk emailers were able to pluck thousands of

AOL addresses out of the service's chat rooms in minutes. Similar harvesting programs were designed to automatically scour web pages and online bulletin boards looking for telltale "@" symbols and add the addresses to a database.

Then again, Gunn might have been the target of a dictionary attack, a technique used by junk emailers to guess their way into Internet users' in-boxes. Most spam mailing programs could blast out millions of messages to automatically generated addresses. By compiling various combinations of common names and numbers, followed by the domain of a big Internet service provider, such as "@aol.com," spam software could generate a small percentage of actual working addresses.

Little did Gunn know that by replying to junk emails that arrived in her in-box, she was actually making the problem worse by confirming to the senders that they had found a live body, thus becoming what is known to junk emailers as a "verified" email address. Because she had responded, it was likely that her address had been added to mailing lists marketed to other spammers. She even received a junk email advertising a CD-ROM claiming to contain 91 million verified email addresses (almost one third the population of the United States). Spammers, it seemed, had no use for target marketing.

Gunn wondered if there was some official agency charged with dealing with spam complaints, such as a Better Business Bureau for spammers. She asked about it in an AOL chat room where PC users could get real-time help for their computer problems from more sophisticated users. No one there had heard of such an agency, although someone provided her with an email address at the Federal Trade Commission to which she could forward copies of spam.

"Frankly, I just delete the stuff. It's not worth the trouble to report it," he told her.

But Gunn wasn't able to ignore her junk email problem. The type who went ballistic over people who litter, she would chase down

and give a tongue lashing to anyone who tossed a crumpled up McDonalds bag on her property. To her, spamming was the same kind of anti-social, selfish act. In their efforts to reach a handful of interested customers, bulk emailers were blithely leaving their trash all over her part of the Internet. But the cowards, with their fake return addresses, left Gunn no way to run them down and share a few choice words.

One self-proclaimed computer expert on AOL suggested that Gunn get advice from an Internet bulletin board frequented by Internet system administrators and other sophisticated computer users united in their hatred of spam. The group was known as Nanae (pronounced NAH-nay), short for “news admin net-abuse email,” and was one of the thousands of topics available from a free Internet discussion service called Usenet. Using a program called a newsreader, which was also built into the AOL software, Usenet participants around the world were able to read and contribute to online discussion newsgroups dedicated to everything from raising ferrets to practicing Far Eastern religions.

“But watch your step. There can be some real kooks in Nanae,” he warned, noting that angry spammers sometimes dropped in on the newsgroup too.

By early 1999, the ratio of junk to legitimate email had made Gunn’s AOL mailbox practically unusable. Fed up, she decided to pay Nanae a visit and seek advice. At the start, she treaded cautiously, reading but not joining the discussion. (One of the first messages she read warned that Nanae denizens did not suffer fools easily: “Wear your flame-proof underwear...never go Nanae-ing without ‘em!”) Unlike some hobby-related Usenet newsgroups she had frequented in the past, Nanae was very busy, often receiving hundreds of new postings every day. Some of the participants used their real names, but many posted under aliases such as “Dark Jedi,” “Sapient Fridge,” “Morely Dotes,” and “Tsu Do Nimh.” Most of the Nanae folk seemed to be men, although there were apparently a

handful of women who frequented it as well. Few seemed to be fellow AOL users and instead posted their messages from obscure Internet service providers (ISPs) she had never heard of.

It wasn't clear to Gunn what exactly these people did for a living. From the technical jargon they slung around, she assumed most were either computer programmers or longtime Internet users. A few seemed to be fighting spam in an official capacity as system administrators: an anonymous user who went by the online alias Afterburner, for example, ended all of his postings with a signature line, or sig, that stated he handled spam complaints for Erols, a mid-sized ISP in the Washington, D.C. area. Later, she learned that Afterburner was one of the chosen few Nanae regulars who had received a Golden Mallet Award, a tongue-in-cheek honor given to longtime spam fighters for meritorious conduct. A special site known as the Pantheon listed the names of recipients and featured an illustration of a large gilded hammer smashing down on a map of the world.

Nanae had no official charter as far as Gunn could tell. The closest thing she could find to a mission statement was a message posted by Afterburner that summed up Nanae's purpose as "a cathartic release mechanism and a clearinghouse of info." Most of the postings contained businesslike reports of spam sightings or matter-of-fact complaints about ISPs that were slow to deal with spammers using their networks. But some messages were playful, such as one she spotted with the subject line "Confirmed Kill," which gleefully reported on an ISP that had responded to complaints by cutting off service to a junk emailer.

While Gunn easily picked up the Internet lingo used in AOL's chat rooms and instant messaging programs—overused shorthand such as *LOL* for "laughing out loud" or *BRB* for "be right back"—she was unprepared for the jargon in Nanae. The private slang of participants apparently wasn't developed for speed typing so much as to solidify spam fighters as a clique, or at least to add humor or spice to their postings. Several messages discussed the proper way to use a

LART—code for “loser attitude readjustment tool,” which she learned was another name for an email notifying ISPs of customers who were spamming. A LART was also referred to as a “mallet,” since it was sometimes used to clobber delinquent ISPs into action against spammers. (Hence the Golden Mallet awarded to top anti-spammers.)

The newsgroup was also full of talk about *UCE* (unsolicited commercial email) and of spammers who were violating the *TOS* (terms of service) or *AUP* (acceptable use policy) of an Internet service provider. (Almost all ISPs specifically forbade their customers from sending spam.) Other postings discussed the various ways to *munge* one’s email address in Usenet postings—such as by adding the phrase “nospam” next to the “@” sign—to thwart harvesting efforts by spammers.

Especially puzzling were messages whose subject lines were prefixed with the letters C&C. One poked fun at Alaska Senator Frank Murkowski, whom the message referred to as a “Congress critter.” In 1998 Murkowski had proposed legislation governing bulk email, and many Nanae participants were vehemently opposed to the bill, fearing that it might actually legitimize some forms of spam. Weeks later Gunn learned that C&C was Nanae shorthand for “coffee and cats” and was a warning to others that a humorous message followed that might produce sudden laughter and thus the spilling of coffee and upsetting of cats near the reader.

After following Nanae discussions over the course of a few days, Gunn stumbled onto a web site that contained answers to common questions about junk email. The spam FAQ (frequently asked questions), as Internet gurus called it, provided a gold mine of information on how to analyze spam messages to determine the true Internet address of the computer that sent them. There were also tips on how to track down the owners of web site addresses or domains by using a service known as whois, which provided phone numbers and other contact information for the individual who registered the domain.

Gunn also read up on how to file a complaint with an Internet service provider when one of its customers was sending spam.

But perhaps the most important anti-spam weapon she discovered was a specialized Internet search engine called Deja News. Gunn had been using AOL's search service, as well as a site called Google, to find material published on web pages. But Deja News was different; it gave users the ability to search a complete archive dating back to the 1980s of nearly every newsgroup in existence, including old Nanae discussions. For spam trackers, the newsgroup search engine enabled them to sift through old spam sightings and determine, for example, whether a spammer was a repeat offender, or whether an ISP had been warned in the past about chronic spammers. (Deja News was acquired by Google in 2001 and renamed Google Groups.)

But, as Gunn soon discovered, junk email opponents didn't confine themselves to filing complaints with ISPs. Some also resorted to more militant tactics.

## Ho, Ho, Ho, the Nazis Didn't Show

In a matter of days, orders from Davis Hawke's eBay auctions started to roll in. He found that buyers, caught up in the excitement of the auction, were often willing to bid more than double the price he'd charge for the same item at the KOF site. And since eBay was brokering the deal, there was less of a chance of someone ripping him off with a bad check. The new, tax-free cash flow helped allay his fears about having to take a humiliating civilian job that summer, such as flipping burgers at McDonalds or mowing lawns for the ground crew at Wofford.

As classes finally ended in mid-May 1999, Hawke turned his attention to drafting what he called the Millennium Plan—a long-term strategy for turning the Knights of Freedom into a mainstream political party. The first step would be a new name, the American Nationalist Party (ANP), and a new web site, ANParty.com. To

broaden the movement's appeal, Hawke decided he'd drop the Nazi graphics and replace them with American flags, bald eagles, and other patriotic symbols. He'd phase out using the Bo Decker moniker. To cap off the change, that summer ANP members would assemble at the group's to-be-built training camp on some property owned by a comrade in Virginia. They'd spend a weekend setting up a shooting range and an obstacle course. And there would be time for camaraderie with other proud Aryans. Then, by the end of the summer, the ANP would stage a massive rally in Washington, D.C., where he would give a speech in front of the White House.

In preparation for the event, Hawke had been on the phone with city police and the National Park Service about getting a demonstration permit. The bureaucrats seemed confused by the name of Hawke's group; he had to correct them several times when they referred to it as the American Nazi Party or the Nationalist Movement. The city, apparently still jumpy from a Ku Klux Klan march down Constitution Avenue in 1990 that resulted in injuries and arrests, wanted an accurate estimate of how many protestors would assemble and a detailed plan about where they would march and give speeches.

Since the *White Pride News Service* e-letter had over 1,600 subscribers, Hawke figured conservatively that 300 members would be at the rally. That was the estimate he gave D.C. police anyway, but Hawke secretly had his doubts. His top lieutenants—who comprised five people, including Patricia—were gung ho about the event. But Hawke wasn't sure about the rank and file. The party's member rolls had swollen quickly. But he had met only a handful of them face to face. Would these people take an active interest in promoting the interests of the White Race?

The previous November, Hawke had sent email to members announcing a January rally in Andrews, North Carolina, in support of serial bomber Eric Robert Rudolph. Rudolph, whom Hawke referred to in the email as an "Aryan Hero," was a suspect in the



1996 bombings of an abortion clinic and a gay nightclub and was thought to be hiding from federal authorities in the woods surrounding Andrews.

“It’s time to stop talking and start acting!” Hawke had written, asking for an electronic show of hands from those who would attend. “We **MUST** make it known to the citizens of that town and to all the world that they are not alone in their struggle against world Jewry and federal tyranny, that an organization **FINALLY** exists which will not allow these crimes to continue!”

Hawke had been hoping for 200 volunteers to answer the call and make the midwinter trek to Andrews. But when only a few emailed him to say they could come to North Carolina, he quietly told them the rally for Rudolph had been called off.

One day in late May, Hawke was at his desk, musing about the logistics of the March on Washington. What if, despite all his careful planning and propaganda, only a couple dozen people showed up? What if the “Greenbaum development,” as he referred to all the bashing he was taking from other neo-Nazis and the liberal media, had truly undermined his leadership?

Hawke pushed those doubts out of his mind. Instead, he tried to focus on a more manageable matter—a plan for boosting his income online. The eBay auctions had been labor-intensive, and Hawke was curious about running his own Internet shop, without eBay’s constraints and commissions. He typed the address of a domain registration service into his web browser. Once there, he checked whether the name KnifeDepot.com was taken. Besides being something of a fetish for Hawke, knives were the items doing best in his eBay auctions. But the domain was already registered, as were KnifeMarket.com, KnifeShop.com, and nearly every other variation.

Then he tried Knifed.com. It was still available, so Hawke pounced, registering his first domain not connected to the white-power movement. To protect his image as the ANP’s leader, Hawke listed Patricia as Knifed.com’s owner. His plan was to develop it into

an online megastore for all sorts of personal weaponry, including high-margin collectible items.

The American Knife Depot, as he named the site, was little more than a list of items and their prices, with a few pictures he had found in a clip art collection and some he had copied from other sites. Shoppers couldn't order online—they had to send a check to a post office box he had opened in Chesnee. But it was a start.

Next, it was just a matter of letting the world know the knife site was there. Drawing on a technique he had learned from promoting the Knights of Freedom site, Hawke seeded several online discussion groups with messages about the American Knife Depot. The messages—Hawke's first batch of spam—were terse and largely in uppercase, a far cry from the loquacious and colorful junk emails Hawke would broadcast by the millions a few years later. "WE'VE GOT THEM ALL AT THE AMERICAN KNIFE DEPOT! Lowest prices in the industry, quick shipping, top-quality - ABSOLUTELY GUARANTEED," shouted Hawke's nascent spams.

With Patricia's help, Hawke spent the early part of June getting the Knife Depot operational while managing his eBay auctions. Only a few orders came in from the Knifed.com web site, but Hawke's auctions were buzzing. His office in the trailer had become a shipping and receiving center, with his desk buried under cardboard boxes, bubble wrap, and rolls of packing tape.

Despite the distractions, in late June Hawke finally managed to nail down a date for the rally with the D.C. police—Saturday August 7. In just over a month, he would take the full measure of the movement he had built. The prospect both thrilled and terrified him. None of his white-power heroes—Metzger, Richard Butler, or Ben Klassen—had ever attempted such a daringly public display of Aryan pride and unity. Then again, Hawke reminded himself, none of them had harnessed the Internet the way he had. If all went well, the rally might even draw members of other groups, and provide a coalescing point for all American racialists.

In an email announcement, Hawke phrased the March on Washington as a challenge to ANP members: “I’m going to be there whether one person stands by my side or whether one thousand rally behind me. I’m going to be there whether I’m threatened, whether I’m shot at, whether I’m ridiculed, or whether I’m slandered. I’m going to be there—no matter what.”

Hawke’s police-approved plan was to assemble party members in James Monroe Park at three o’clock sharp. The comrades would greet each other with firm handshakes and salutes. There would be drummers or perhaps bagpipes to inspire the gathering. When the assembly reached a critical mass, with Hawke leading the charge they would march the six blocks or so down H Street to Lafayette Park, just across the street from the White House. They’d probably face heckling and even physical attacks along the route, but the police had promised to provide flanking protection the entire way.

At the park, the crowd would pause in front of the statue of President Andrew Jackson, and Hawke would give his speech, using a bullhorn to address the throng. Other party leaders and representatives of other groups would follow. Finally, participants would cross Pennsylvania Avenue and end the march with a picket directly in front of the White House. Hawke had obtained a three-hour demonstration permit, so they would need to disperse by six o’clock.

Word of the ANP’s rally traveled quickly throughout the Internet, and not just among neo-Nazis. Several anti-fascist groups swung into action, putting their members on notice to be ready. Everyone from the NAACP and the American Jewish Committee to the Latino Civil Rights Center was abuzz with plans for counter-demonstrations advocating racial and religious tolerance.

A few days before the big weekend in August, Hawke and Patricia shipped some final orders for jewelry and knives. Hawke did a couple of phone interviews about the upcoming rally, including one with the *Washington Post*. Then he and Patricia packed a suitcase and made the six-hour drive to Fredericksburg, Virginia. There, they

would stay at the home of “Doc” O’Dell, a party officer who had a farm about an hour from downtown Washington. The farm was to become the ANP training compound and would be the layover for demonstrators from out of state. With Patricia at the wheel, Hawke practiced reading his speech aloud several times.

Upon their arrival, Major O’Dell, despite being some thirty years Hawke’s senior, dutifully pulled Hawke’s old suitcase out of the trunk and carried it into the house. As O’Dell was setting the suitcase down in the entry hall, Hawke saw him check the name on the luggage tags—*Greenbaum*.<sup>2</sup> Hawke winced when he realized he had neglected to update the labels, but O’Dell didn’t mention the matter.

Following Hawke’s instructions, O’Dell had set up a camping area in the fields beside his house and had brought in food and drinks and even a rented Porta-Potty for the campers. Two large rental vans stood in the driveway, ready to taxi demonstrators into D.C. Many of the protestors would join them at a designated staging area at the edge of the city, from which the D.C. police would bus them downtown. But on the eve of the march, only three party members had arrived.

Just after two o’clock on the afternoon of August 7, over 2,000 D.C. police officers took their positions, in full riot gear, along Pennsylvania Avenue and around Monroe Park. Over 300 National Park Service police, with the support of Secret Service agents, also patrolled the area. Even D.C. Police Chief Charles Ramsey was on the scene, wearing a helmet and carrying a riot baton, seriously bothered by the million dollars the special police force was costing the city.

More than a thousand counterprotestors surrounded the twenty-block area that had been cordoned off by the police. The demonstrators were chanting and holding anti-Nazi, pro-love signs. Many of them wore bandanas around their necks in anticipation of tear gas. Scores of media people, who had staked out Monroe Park

with their cameras, satellite uplink trucks, and boom microphones, were taking it all in.

When the appointed hour arrived and the ANP still hadn't made its appearance at the park, everyone began to grow restless. Had the neo-Nazis decided to move their rally to another location to avoid counterdemonstrators? Chief Ramsey stepped into the middle of H Street, surrounded by media. He told them his department was ready, but the ANP might not be, and he planned to give them all the time they needed to get to the park and hold their rally.

But at the parking lot designated as the pick-up spot, city busses idled empty when a lone American Nationalist Party member pulled up in a car just after three p.m. No sign of anyone except a few bored police officers sipping iced coffee outside their vehicles. Dressed in an SS uniform, the ANP member<sup>3</sup> walked up to the policemen and asked whether Davis Hawke and other party members had been transported to the park yet.

The officers looked the neo-Nazi up and down. Then one replied with a smirk, "No sign of your people, but there's plenty of company waiting for you at Monroe."

The policemen watched as the ANP member returned to the car. After a few minutes, the vehicle pulled out of the lot and quickly headed away.

When word that the march had been called off reached Lafayette Square, counterprotestors began to celebrate. In one section, a group of several hundred people joyously chanted, "Ho, ho, ho, the Nazis didn't show," while others banged plastic drums and blew whistles.

By that time, Hawke and Patricia had already been back in Chesnee for hours. They had climbed out the window of their first-floor bedroom in O'Dell's farmhouse at three in the morning, so Hawke wouldn't have to face the humiliation. They drove straight home, stopping only once for a fuel break. As the miles rolled past, Hawke had composed his letter of resignation. He tried to channel

the anger and embarrassment he felt into eloquence. “Whether through laziness, cowardice, or lack of commitment, almost all of you have let down the Party and the white race itself,” he chided the members who didn’t show up for the march.

“The Party has failed to achieve the standards that I set forth one year ago, and as a man of honor I must therefore resign my position as Leader and Party Chairman,” Hawke told them. He closed by saying he would disable the party’s web site and his email account within a few days.

Hawke posted the letter at the ANP site and emailed it to his list that evening. By the time he went to bed, Hawke was already feeling better about the day’s events. It had been an amazing twelve months since he first announced the Knights of Freedom on the Internet. He believed he might someday reemerge on the political stage. But until then, he would step out of the spotlight and turn his full attention to his Internet businesses. Freed from the constraints of being a public persona, Hawke could finally allow his online ingenuity to run wild.

## Spamford Meets Hacker-X

From skimming old Nanae messages, Susan Gunn learned that anti-spammers were flush with power when she found the newsgroup in early 1999. They had rallied to force Sanford Wallace, the Internet’s biggest spammer, into retirement just the year before. Wallace, who was head of Philadelphia-based Cyber Promotions, had emerged as a spam king in 1995 and boasted that his firm generated twenty-five million junk emails per day on behalf of clients ranging from pornography sites to spam-software vendors. By some estimates Cyber-Promo.com was responsible for 80 percent of the spam on the Net.

Unlike most spammers who chose to remain in the shadows, Wallace, a large man in his early twenties, regularly tangled with junk email opponents in Nanae discussions. Wallace argued that he was an entrepreneur and that spamming was his First Amendment

right. Although he disliked being called a spammer—he preferred to say that he was in the bulk email business—Wallace eventually embraced the nickname given him by anti-spammers: Spamford. But while they may have admired his chutzpah, Nanae regulars abhorred Wallace’s business practices, which included falsifying the return address on his spam messages, so that he wouldn’t have to deal with complaints or bounces—the error messages returned by mail systems when they received an undeliverable message.

Anti-spammers cheered in late 1996 and early 1997 when Wallace was hit by successive lawsuits from a dozen ISPs. The litigation sought to establish some legal guidelines in what had previously been uncharted waters. AOL argued that it was not obligated to deliver email solicitations to its members from spammers such as CyberPromo. EarthLink alleged that Wallace had violated state and federal business laws by incessantly spamming its subscribers. EarthLink’s attorney, Pete Wellborn, a former college football star turned high-tech lawyer, said CyberPromo was guilty of electronically trespassing on EarthLink’s mail servers with its spam.

When Wallace hired a team of lawyers and announced he would fight the lawsuits, an anonymous vigilante decided to take matters into his own hands. He hacked into the Cyber Promotions web site and rummaged through the server. The attacker, who came to be known simply as Hacker-X, gathered up a trove of information, including Wallace’s customer list and the administrative password to the machine. Using a stolen account at a university, Hacker-X then posted the information in a March 19, 1997, message to alt.2600, a newsgroup frequented by fans of the hacking magazine *2600*. In confessing to the break-in, Hacker-X wrote that he was tired of the flood of junk email from Cyber Promotions.

“Nobody else was fighting back ... So I decided to kick them and their clients in the balls,” wrote the unidentified intruder. “This won’t end. Ever. Myself and others will continue to expose spam

operations weaknesses. To those who think that spam is a good idea: think again.”

Using the opening created by Hacker-X, over the course of several days in late March, other unidentified hackers repeatedly replaced the regular home page of Cyberpromo.com with ones of their own design. One version of the defaced page featured an image of a can of Hormel SPAM, a hyperlink to a page containing a list of customer accounts, and the words “CYBERPROMO ... NOT JUST BULK EMAIL ... it’s SPAM.”<sup>4</sup>

Wallace was furious. He issued a press release that offered a \$15,000 reward and announced that he had alerted the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) about the intrusion. But Wallace’s response only seemed to add fuel to the conflict. On April 6, Hacker-X struck again. He posted another message to alt.2600, taunting Wallace (“that low-life, degenerate, festering pile of goo”) and offering up more purloined information, including technical datafiles required to provide Internet service to scores of other sites connected to Cyber Promotions.

A few weeks later, the battle escalated. Someone on Nanae suggested anti-spammers join in a “Cinco de Mayo Cyberpromo Mailbomb Day,” during which participants would coordinate a variety of attacks on Wallace’s web site and email server beginning May 5. Similar calls to electronic arms were published in other newsgroups, including misc.consumers, an online bulletin board for discussing product reviews and other information about consumer issues.

When the so-called cyber-doomsday arrived, Cyberpromo.com—to the surprise of no one—suddenly became unreachable by web surfers. Two days later, Wallace issued another press release, stating that his company’s network was under attack by anti-spam hackers who had also targeted an Internet router operated by Apex Global Information Systems (AGIS), the Michigan ISP used by Cyber Promotions. The announcement said Cyber Promotions was



in the process of tracking the criminals, whom Wallace vowed to report to federal authorities.

Wallace never found the hackers. But in apparent retaliation for the attacks, he registered a new web site, NetScum.net. It contained an online directory with the names, email addresses—and in some cases home street addresses and phone numbers—of hundreds of spam fighters and other Internet users who had complained about Usenet postings and junk email or were otherwise deemed too strident in their requirements that other Internet users practice good online manners, or “netiquette.”

The NetScum directory was actually a reincarnation of a site created by unidentified Internet users in 1996 and briefly hosted on a succession of obscure web pages. Among the entries in the new edition was one on Afterburner, the respected Erols abuse-desk manager whose true name was revealed at the site as Michael A. Hanks. (In one of his first acts at the ISP, Afterburner had convinced Erols to cancel Wallace’s accounts there to protect the company’s reputation.) In an attempt to discredit Afterburner, NetScum’s anonymous editors had dug up and reposted messages from 1996 by Afterburner’s girlfriend to a Usenet newsgroup named alt.sex.bondage. The postings discussed her kinky sexual activities with what she referred to as her “master” Afterburner and invited readers to visit her web site dedicated to “BDSM,” or bondage/domination/sadomasochism. Although Afterburner laughed off his NetScum entry, he became an infrequent contributor to Nanae after the incident.

The computerized attacks on Cyber Promotions and its ISP continued unabated throughout the summer of 1997, leading some Nanae regulars to grow alarmed at the new trend toward electronic violence by anti-spam vigilantes. Bill Mattocks, the recipient of a Golden Mallet Award, argued that the spam wars must be fought ethically, with tactics that kept anti-spammers on the moral high ground. On August 8, 1997, Mattocks, the operator of a computer-consulting firm in Wisconsin, posted a four-page note to Nanae

with the subject line, "HACKERS, WISE UP!" In the message he noted that anti-spam crusaders had successfully built a nonviolent grassroots movement opposed to junk email.

"We're gaining converts who are not technically proficient with computers, but they are on the Internet, and they hate spam, too. They are our allies. We must reach out to them and teach them to teach others," wrote Mattocks. He argued that the spam war was as much a public relations fight as anything and chided Nanae readers who had used the information from Hacker-X to attack Wallace.

"Shame on you," he wrote. "You are going to bring discredit on the rest of the anti-spammers. STOP IT!"

Mattocks's advice went largely ignored. The very next day, an unidentified person hacked into NetScum.net and replaced its usual home page with lewd messages about Wallace and Phil Lawlor, the chief executive officer of AGIS, Wallace's ISP. The site went offline shortly thereafter, returned in its original form a few months later, and then went dark again for good in the middle of October 1997, when AGIS cut off service to Cyber Promotions, citing the constant attacks from anti-spammers. Six months later, after failing to line up a new ISP, and finding himself hamstrung by legal settlements with ISPs that forbade him from ever again spamming their members, Wallace announced his retirement.

In an April 1998 note on Nanae, Wallace apologized for his past actions and said that newsgroup participants, in particular Mattocks and a popular anti-spammer named Jim Nitchals, had earned his respect. "It is now clear to me that most of you \*are really here\* to stop spam - not just for the thrill ride...BOTTOM LINE: You folks are WINNING the war against spam."

With Wallace vanquished, anti-spammers turned their attention to smaller foes, whom they jokingly referred to as chickenboners. Unlike big operators such as Wallace who incorporated their businesses and maintained office space with hired employees and other trappings of legitimacy, chickenboners were imagined by spam

fighters as living in mobile homes with a personal computer on the kitchen table, surrounded by beer cans and buckets of take-out fried chicken.

Veteran spam fighters tended to dismiss the skills of chicken-boners, but Gunn was taking no chances when she finally decided to join the ranks of anti-spammers in early 1999. Her first move was to create a new screen name under her master AOL account, which was based on a permutation of her real name, to protect her true identity. “Shiksa” was her first choice. A few years back, the mother of a Jewish man Gunn had been dating called her that when the woman thought Gunn was out of earshot. It was a derogatory Yiddish term used to describe non-Jewish females, but Gunn liked the name. When she tried to sign up for Shiksa at AOL, however, it was already taken. So she added an extra letter, and “Shiksaa,” her new anti-spam persona, was born.