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Witness' accounts of altercation differ

By Michael Reagan
Staff Writer

Statements given by Quester Hannah, Aaron Phillips, and others involved in the fight on February 17 in Orono give differing versions of the incident, but in the words of District Attorney Chris Almy "that's why we go to court."

Quester Hannah stated that he was driving in his car along with Aaron Phillips and Laurel Noddin around 1 a.m. Sunday when he saw a group of ten or 12 men gathering around his car as he stopped at a stop sign.

Hannah said since the men were blocking the path of his car he got out and asked why they threw objects at it. "One of the white men said "We'll do what we want, nigger."

"One of the white men came in front of me and said "I did it, nigger." He then shoved me and came towards me and I hit him in the face," Hannah said.

After they began fighting the man threw

him on the ground and began kicking him in the stomach, and then other white men began assaulting him as well, according to Hannah.

He said as he was held in a headlock and beaten by several men, his car was being damaged by some other men in the group. After they stopped beating him, Hannah said he crawled back toward his car as one of the men kept punching him on the face and head.

Hannah then drove off in his car to get Aaron Phillips, who had fled down the street. When he had picked Phillips up the group of men were approaching the car again, throwing objects at it saying "Niggers, get out of here."

Phillips said he got out of the car when one of the white men directed a racial slur at Hannah. Phillips was assaulted by several of the men and said he was help in a headlock as they beat him.

He broke free of the headlock and began running down the street. He slipped and fell

while running and was kicked in the ribs by one of the men who reportedly said "You niggers, you don't belong here."

Christopher London of East Hartford, Connecticut, who was charged with counts of assault and criminal mischief by the District Attorney's office, said in his statement that he was walking on Crosby St. with a group of men when a car swerved toward them and passed by.

"The next thing I noticed was the first black man leaving the car followed by the other," he said.

According to London, he "began to challenge people" and was angry about something thrown at his car. London said he told the first black man (presumably Hannah) "it was not worth the trouble."

"He insisted on provoking me," London stated, "and when I turned my head he hit me in the jaw."

Mike Smith, who was also charged with assault and criminal mischief, hit Hannah and Mark Drew, who was not charged,

wrestled the second black man (Phillips) to the ground with London, he said.

London stated he "exchanged blows" with Phillips but he onto his arms "in order to control him. I wrestled with him and attempted to stop our end of the conflict."

After trying to restrain Phillips several more times, London said he let him go.

Michael Smith stated Phillips and Hannah began the fight with some of the group.

"When I tried to split the fight I got punched by the black man with the white shirt (Phillips) and then we got in a fight I hit him two or three times and he fought back," Smith wrote in his statement.

After their fight "the black man (Phillips) ran past the car up the street," he stated.

After the fight Phillips and Hannah met two Orono police officers and told them about the incident.

Shortly afterward the group which included London and Smith were stopped by another Orono police officer and brought in for questioning.