Shooting renews ’93 case

By Laura Sass
Executive Editor

The shooting that took place on Rider’s campus last week bears striking similarities to the murder that occurred on the campus in March of 1993. Both shootings took place after a dance party. The recent one was hosted by the Intercultural Greek Council (IGC), while the 1993 party was hosted by Phi Beta Sigma, part of the IGC.

One important factor differentiates the two cases, according to Cassie Iacovelli, assistant dean of Campus Life.

“They did not follow procedures,” said Iacovelli. “There was a strong response to Phi Beta Sigma after the event and they were not allowed to have a party for the rest of the year. What makes this shooting different is that the groups [IGC] followed the procedure to the letter.”

Kaia Johnson, a 17-year-old male from Lawrenceville at the time of the incident, was arrested and charged with the 1993 shooting, according to The Times of Trenton. He, along with victim Kenneth McBride and alleged 2003 shooter Tarik J. Reid, did not attend Rider.

Johnson allegedly shot McBride at 2:30 a.m. in front of the Bart Luedeke Center on March 21, 1993, according to The Times, although there were three Rider security guards working at the dance along with two off-duty police officers. A few minutes prior to the shooting, as in the recent incident, there was a fist-fight. According to witnesses’ statements, Johnson went to a car and returned with a gun. McBride, according to his mother, Kathy McBride Thomas, was a 21-year-old engineering student at Delaware State University.

“I would just like to know how a bunch of gangsters could be allowed to come to a college dance with guns,” she said to The Times at the time of the incident. “It’s just unbelievable.”

Immediately after the shooting, changes were made at Rider, according to Vickie Weaver, director of Safety and Security.

“Events used to be advertized off-campus, but after the 1993 incident that was no longer done,” she said. “The guest policy was restricted to two guests for each student. Guests had to be college students from other places. They had to show college ID. There was also a stricter sign-in policy.”

Iacovelli said that the response to the murder was immediate.

“People said, ‘Let’s get rid of the dance party.’ I remember lobbying for a review of the policy by a representative committee of students, administration and faculty,” she said. “The committee met all spring and took a look at the policies and procedures of the dance party. The outcome of the committee was that the policies would have to be reviewed, but we recommended that the dance parties still be allowed on campus.”

Iacovelli said that the school explored the possibility of metal detectors.

“I remember that at the time Security was in favor of them. The committee concluded that schools that had implemented metal detectors,” she said. “Many sort of said not to be too quick to react. It changed the culture of the school and not in a positive way.”

Johnson was acquitted on Nov. 18, 1995, despite positive identifications by witnesses and a two alleged confessions to police, according to The Times.

“When the shooter was acquitted, I think there was some concern,” said Iacovelli. “It came in waves.”

She said that she thinks that the school did an “admirable” job in handling both situations.

“Whatever problems we had, there was a pattern of responsible reactions to them,” she said. “Every time there was a problem, we had a meeting and tried to fix it.”

Security policies at New Jersey colleges

• TCNJ Guest Policy

Between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. all residents and their invited guests must enter and exit the building through the front door of their residence hall. Upon entering the hall, residents are expected to stop at the security desk and show the security staff their room key. The room key number verifies that the possessor is a resident of the building. For security reasons students may not lend their keys to anyone. Residents are welcome to have guests. Resident hosts are responsible for their guests’ behavior and actions during their visit. All guests in the building after 8 p.m. must be registered with the security desk. If a non-resident is in the building prior to 8 p.m., it is the host’s responsibility to register their guests at 8 p.m. when the security desk begins operation. When signing in, a guest must leave a picture ID. All forms of government-issued IDs are acceptable such as, TCNJ ID, current driver’s license, state and military IDs. Passports will not be accepted. If proper ID is not available, the host may use their ID to sign in their guest. One form of ID is permitted for each guest. Guests will be issued a Guest Pass, which they must carry with them at all times. The Guest Pass must be returned in order to reclaim an ID when leaving the building. Guests or hosts may obtain their ID 15 minutes prior to the closing of the Security Desk should they be leaving after it closes (2 or 3 a.m.). There is a $2 charge for lost guest passes. The apartments and townhouses are locked twenty-four hours a day. Overnight guests are permitted for a maximum of three consecutive nights with the written approval of all roommates(s)/suitmates/apartment and floor-mates through the “Overnight Guest Agreement,” according to TCNJ’s website.

• Rutgers Guest Policy

No guest may be under 17 years of age. Drivers license or proof of age required for verification. A weekend guest pass is $3, while a weekend guest pass is $5. No more than three guests per sponsor are allowed on any given weekday or weekend. Guests are not permitted in facilities alone. They must be accompanied by their sponsor. The sponsor is responsible for the behavior of their guest. Any inappropriate action by a guest will terminate that sponsor’s guest privileges for the remainder of the semester/year. In addition, the sponsor will be responsible for making any financial restitution deemed necessary that resulted as a consequence of the guest’s action. All passes expire at closing time for a weekday or Sunday for a weekend pass. If the pass is lost, a new one must be purchased, according to Rutgers’ website.

• Princeton University Policies

Security measures taken on-campus events must be adequate to provide for the maintenance of order and to ensure the safety of those attending or participating. Within the University, the dean of Undergraduate Students, the dean of the Graduate School and the director of the Department of Public Safety are responsible for deciding whether security measures are necessary for a given event and for making appropriate arrangements. In consultation with sponsors of the event, they will make security arrangements which involve minimal interference with the scheduled event and with the privacy and freedom of those attending, according to the Princeton University website.

Prior Restraint

Normal access to facilities of the University and normal activities within the University should not be restricted. Such an action could be viewed as an incursion of disruptive intent, even when this suspicion seems well-founded. Normal access and activities should be restricted only in circumstances that affect the health and well-being of persons, that seriously threaten physical safety, that impair or seriously threaten to impair the ability of the University to carry on its essential operations or that threaten serious damage to University property. Except in circumstances of very grave danger of these kinds, which admit of no delay, restraint will be invoked only by the president or his representative, or by a senior officer of the University authorized by the president.

Guests

Any University organization has the right to restrict attendance at any of its meetings to members and their invited guests; nonmembers have no right of access to such activities. The imposition of a physical search of persons attending a University event as a condition for their entry to the event will be authorized only under the most extreme circumstances. A decision to authorize such a search will be taken only when the following conditions are met:

a) Either the sponsors of the event, the Department of Public Safety or law enforcement authorities judge such a search to be essential to the safety of those attending or attending and request authorization from the president of the university.

b) It is the judgment of the president, in consultation with the University’s legal counsel, that the search is legal as essential to the safety of those participating or attending.

When a search has been authorized, steps will be taken to ensure that those who do not wish to be searched have the opportunity to leave without being searched. Whenever possible, the fact that a search will be conducted will be publicized well in advance of the event. All such searches will be conducted by the Department of Public Safety unless others, similarly accountable to the University or legally authorized, are requested by the president to act on behalf of the University.