

...Silver Spring, Md., said that contrary to some news reports, Mr. Houteff never was a minister in the church. But he and his followers

"The only missionary work they do is to try to proselytize from other Seventh-day Adventist congregations," said Dr. William H. Shea, an

After Mr. Houteff's death in 1955, the group bought the property about 10 miles east of Waco and named it Mount Carmel after the

1987 shootout between two rival leaders, Mr. Howell and George Roden. Afterward, Mr. Howell was acquitted of charges and gained con-

nection.

"Like the Jim Jones thing, we don't blame the organization that they came out of," Mr. Miller said.

ed sect leader is Lamb of God

"His strength over people, I think, is that he was offering very simple answers: He convinced his followers that the world was going to end and that the key to their salvation was to do what he said — just believe in these things, and you'll be fine."

— Marc Hennig, considered joining Branch Davidian

expected him to amount to anything.

Mr. Howell's stepfather, Roy Haldeman of Chandler, Texas, said his stepson was "kind of weird" while growing up in a rural area between Sachse and Wylie.

A religious youth, Mr. Howell loved to play the guitar and participate in sports. He was a tight end on the Garland High School football team before dropping out after the ninth grade, Mr. Haldeman said.

Mr. Howell's mother, Bonnie Haldeman, was at work late Sunday and could not be reached for comment, Mr. Haldeman said.

"He was weird," Mr. Haldeman

"I said that 2,000 years ago."

Referring to the Bible, he said, "My father is the one who wrote that book. It says about me that he loves me more than any of you. But I love you. I came to reveal the love that can set you free."

"The last apostle I spake with was John," he said, referring to the writer of the book of Revelation.

"I am the anointed one," he said at another point.

Asked if he was above the law, he raised his voice for the only time in the 1½-hour interview. "I am the law," he thundered.

Asked if he was the Lamb referred to in Revelation, he said, "I was the Lamb." He spoke in the past tense, he said, because he believed he was dying.

"These blankets are soaked (with blood)," he said.

Mr. Howell also repeatedly spoke of his mission: loosening the Seven Seals to reveal God's truth to the world.

"All I've ever done is to try to teach the world the Seven Seals," he said.

"The next thing, the sun and the stars will be darkened," he said, "that is the Sixth Seal." According to his theology, that means that only the opening of the Seventh Seal stands between mankind and God's final judgment. "We're pretty close," he said.

"All I do is open up the book and make it plain," he said. And later: "The only way I let people worship

A LOOK AT VERNON HOWELL

■ Vernon Howell, 33, is the leader of the Branch Davidian, which says it is a sect of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The church has disavowed any link to the sect.

■ Mr. Howell is a ninth-grade dropout who has worked as an auto mechanic and rock guitarist. He claims to be Christ and has led the sect since the mid-1980s.

■ He changed his name legally about two years ago to David Koresh, which some say he did to enhance his career as a musician. Authorities still refer to him as Vernon Howell.

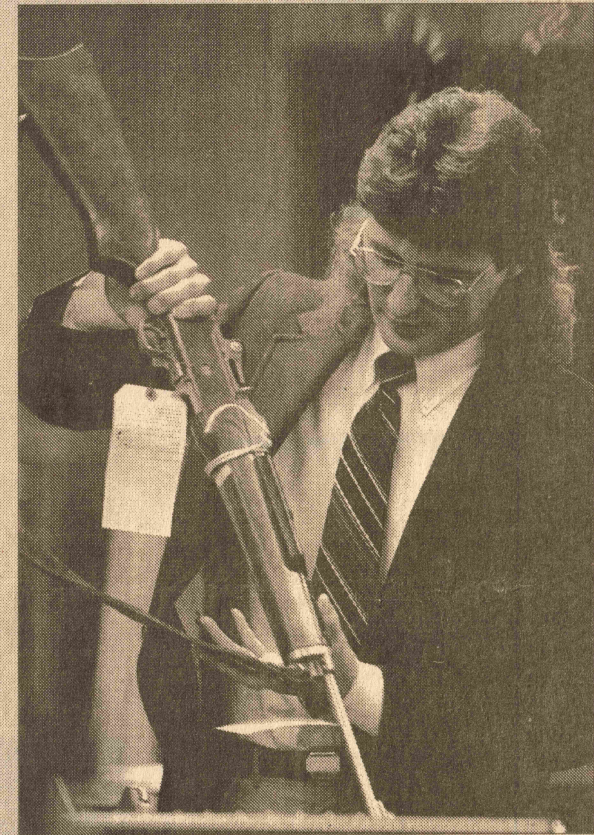
■ In 1984, Mr. Howell, then 24, married 14-year-old Rachel Jones. She is the daughter of Perry Jones, a high-ranking Branch Davidian member.

■ In 1985, a rivalry between Mr. Howell and George Roden for leadership of the group culminated in Mr. Howell's group being forced off the compound at gunpoint.

■ In 1987, Mr. Howell and seven men engaged in what police described as a gunbattle at the property, known as Mount Carmel, with Mr. Roden.

■ Mr. Howell and the others allegedly involved in the shootout were charged with attempted murder in November 1987. In 1988, the seven men were acquitted. Mr. Howell's trial ended in a mistrial, and charges were later dismissed.

SOURCE: Associated Press



Vernon Howell appears in court in 1988 on charges of attempted murder. The charges were later dropped.

The Dallas Morning News

"Your world is not going to be the same. When this boy is gone, my mother in heaven will be angry."

— Vernon Howell, Branch Davidian leader

Marc Hennig in Vancouver, British Columbia, said he considered

"He was a very charismatic speaker, no doubt about it. He had what would seem to be a very, very sharp mind, but oddly sharp — almost schizophrenic and dissociative.

"The words would all be there, the syntax would be correct, but when you put it together, it didn't make logical sense. He would wrap what he was saying in this air of mystery."

Mr. Howell, he said, brooked no dissent or discussion of his teaching.

"You didn't dare to question

"People were lying dead in here, babies and everything."

— Steve Schneider, Branch Davidian member

musical career. But authorities refer to him as Vernon Howell.

Once established as a rock star, "He (Mr. Howell) was going to go to Israel and show the ancient rabbis