

2 Detectives Dismissed in Gun Death

Police Shooting
of Newspaperman
Ruled Manslaughter

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Two Long Beach detec-

tives were dismissed from the force. Monday shortly after a coroner's inquest returned a verdict of involuntary manslaughter in the shooting of newsman William B. Hunter in a police station press room.

Both Creighton Wiggins Jr., 29, whose gun fired the fatal shot, and Errol F. Greenleaf, 32, were found responsible for the accidental shooting April 23.

Wiggins earlier in the day wrote his resignation, expressing regret the incident had caused other officers to be "chastised by certain political powers and local news media." He did not elaborate.

Jury Notes 'Playing'

The jury of five men and two women noted that both detectives were "playing with guns."

Chief Dep. Dist. Atty. Manley Bowler said he will examine the evidence in the case today before deciding whether to file criminal charges against the officers.

Hunter, 35, Long Beach Independent reporter, was shot through the heart during a game of "cops and robbers" between the detectives.

The inquest was called because of discrepancies in the detectives' stories of the accident. They originally left out any mention of being engaged in "horseplay," but later admitted it.

More than a dozen witnesses were called by Inquest Dep. Charles G. Langhauser.

Wiggins broke down, his voice cracked and tears streamed down his face as he told the jury of his friendship with Hunter.

After composing himself, Wiggins said he inaccurately recounted the shooting at first because: "I was in fear of my job and because I was scared."

Says Gun Slipped

When he followed Greenleaf into the pressroom, Wiggins said, he pulled his gun and "must have cocked it," his customary practice.

He said his hand was wet and the gun slipped and fired.

Earlier, Greenleaf testified he changed his story of the shooting because "I didn't want my own carelessness with guns known."

Greenleaf added he and Wiggins had engaged in this kind of horseplay before.

The dramatic testimony was given in the Long Beach County Courthouse before the wives of the two detectives and Hunter's widow, Leela, mother of three.

Mrs. Hunter, in dark glasses, sat clutching the hand of her sister, Mrs. Betty Caraway, who flew here from Houston, Tex., to be with her.