

Here's History of Police-Citizen Deaths In Washington Since January of 1967

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Elijah Bennett, the 22-year-old Negro whose fatal shooting by a white policeman touched off a disturbance on 14th Street nw. last week, was the 17th citizen to be shot to death by policemen in Washington since Jan. 1, 1967.

In the same period, four policemen have been killed by bullets in the line of duty.

The number of citizens wounded but not killed is difficult to ascertain. Such persons are taken to the closest hospital; police records on these cases are scattered in various files in the precincts. Department records do not in-

dicate readily how many policemen have been injured or wounded in conflicts with citizens during that period.

A compilation of all the fatal shootings shows that of the 17 citizen deaths 13 were Negro and four were white. The records also show that all but two of the policemen who fired fatal bullets were white.

No white citizen has been shot by a Negro policeman.

No policemen have been indicted for homicide. In one case, a coroner's jury returned a verdict of willful homicide by a policeman, but a coroner's jury verdict is advisory and is not legally binding.

Of four policemen who have been killed over the same time span, two were white and two were Negro. All the persons accused in these shootings were Negro. One case was ruled accidental, a murder conviction resulted from one, and trials are pending in the other two cases.

Some citizens—Negroes and whites—charge that the predominance of white policemen shooting Negro citizens is evidence that the community—which is nearly 70 per cent Negro—has no control over its policemen—a Police Department nearly 80 per cent white.

But an equally vocal segment of the citizenry points out that this is inevitable,

since the overwhelming majority of criminal suspects in Washington are Negro.

They say the police encounters are not random, that the police are just doing their more-than-difficult job of trying to apprehend lawbreakers to maintain the public safety.

Here are the fatal police-citizen incidents:

Feb. 4, 1967

Pvt. Joseph A. Eberhard, who is white, shot a 17-year-old Negro boy in the back. He said the youth was fleeing a motor vehicle accident at 6th Street and Massachusetts Avenue nw. Eberhard and his partner said the car was stolen — and that as far they knew, this was a fleeing felon.

Eberhard said he chased the running person (later identified as Robert J. Durham) on foot until he saw he was being "outdistanced." He fired once.

Durham died three months later. A coroner's jury found the shooting justifiable homicide. The case was not considered by a grand jury.

Feb. 24, 1964

Tactical Force Pvt. Robert J. McKinley, 32, was patrolling in plainclothes. In the 1300 block of Wallach Place nw. (one block from the volatile 14th and U Street intersection), he and his partner, both white, stopped three men for

questioning. Their report later said that one of the three ignored two warnings to take his hand from under his coat. The policemen said he suddenly pulled out a jack handle. McKinley fired one shot, hitting the man, who was white, in the stomach. The man, Thomas B. Jefferson, 46, of Alexandria, died two weeks later.

A coroner's jury ruled the shooting justifiable homicide. The case was not considered by a grand jury.

April 22, 1967

An off-duty detective, Peter Monaco, was working on his house in Southwest Washington, when a neighbor came to tell him somebody was breaking into a nearby house. Monaco went to question the man and was stabbed. The man ran away.

Later that night, Pvt. Delbert Clark, who is white, approached a white man crouched in bushes in front of a house on Nichols Avenue sw. and saw that the man matched the description of the man who had stabbed Monaco earlier, according to his report. The man, the report said, was wearing a black sweatshirt, black trousers, crepe-soled shoes and surgical gloves.

Clark's report said that he tried to question the man but

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SHOOT, From D1

the man ignored him and, after a struggle, ran away. Clark then shot him, his report said.

The dead man was later identified as Richard G. Shrubbs, 22, a patient at St. Elizabeths Hospital. Monaco recovered from his stab wounds.

A coroner's jury ruled the shooting justifiable homicide. The case was not presented to a grand jury.

May 1, 1967

Clarence J. Brooker, 19, of 662 Kenilworth ter. ne., was shot by Pvt. William L. Rull.

The shooting occurred on a parking lot in the 3900 block of Minnesota Avenue ne.

Police said Rull was attempting to arrest Brooker on a charge of disorderly conduct after a grocery clerk had complained that Brooker and other youths were causing a disturbance in his store.

The police said that Rull caught up with Brooker several times and each time Brooker hit him and broke free. Rull, they said, lost his tie, hat, handcuffs and nightstick, and his shirt was torn. Finally, police said, Rull pulled his gun; the two men wrestled, each fighting for control of the weapon. As Rull tried to pull it away, it went off twice, the report said.

Brooker then broke free again. He did not bleed, the police said. He died later of massive internal hemorrhaging. Brooker was Negro, Rull is white.

Civilian witnesses to that incident said that Rull was not struggling with the youth when the gun went off.

Brooker had pulled free, they said, and Rull shot him in the back when he ignored a warning shot.

A coroner's jury ruled justifiable homicide, but the case was later presented to a grand jury. After three days of testimony, in which 20 witnesses appeared, the racially mixed grand jury refused to indict Rull.

June 4, 1967

Two U. S. Park Policemen approached a man they suspected of tampering with an automobile. He attempted to escape, they said, striking one of them as he fled.

The policemen, both white, said they chased the man for seven miles at high speeds along the Anacostia Freeway

and Kenilworth Avenue. The driver, a Negro, stopped his car at Kenilworth and Deane Avenues ne., jumped out, vaulted a railing and tried to escape on foot. The policemen shot him. He was later identified as Wilbert Lee Joyner, 28, of 1110 Park pl. ne.

The ruling by the coroner's jury in the case was that Pvt. Richard T. Chittick and Stephen J. Livesay were justified in killing Joyner because he was a suspected felon. This was the only case in the past two years involving Park Policemen. The case did not go to a grand jury.

SEPT. 1, 1967

Pvt. George J. Kochis was cruising the area around 9th and E Streets nw., accompanied by a robbery victim, searching for a suspect.

The victim pointed out a man walking along the street as the one who had robbed him. The police report says that when the suspect, who was white, was ordered to stop and take his hands from his pockets, he pulled a gun.

Kochis, also white, shot him. The dead man was identified as William J. Cawley, 22, of 2601 Rochelle ave., District Heights. A justifiable homicide verdict was returned by a coroner's jury, and no indictment was sought.

SEPT. 23, 1967

Pvt. Frederick L. Matteson, 37, a 12-year veteran of the force, responded in a one-man scout car to an accident call at 18th Street and Kilbourne Place nw. about 4:40 p.m.

The police said a passenger in one of the cars began to argue with the policeman and struck him. The man, a Negro, was pushed to the ground, police said, but then drew a knife from his trousers and challenged Matteson, who is white, to take him.

A crowd gathered. The two men circled, each daring the other to make a move. Matteson lunged and fired, his revolver twice, hitting the man in the chest and abdomen. He died six months later.

The dead man was identified as John J. Edwards, 41, of 759 Morton st. nw.

A coroner's jury found the shooting to be justifiable homicide. The case did not go to a grand jury.

OCT. 25, 1967

A woman passenger alighting from a bus near St. Elizabeths Hospital complained to

11th Precinct Pvt. Charles Lancaster, 23, that a man who had gotten off at the stop before had "molested" her on the bus.

They walked to the other stop, where another woman said that the man had just suddenly embraced her, uttered obscenities and walked off.

The man was still in sight when Lancaster, a Negro, approached him. His report said the man, also a Negro, lunged at him, and Lancaster fired his revolver.

The man later was identified as 31-year-old Earl Atkin-

son, a voluntary patient at St. Elizabeths, who had been out on leave looking for a job.

A coroner's jury returned a justifiable-homicide verdict, and no indictment was sought.

Feb. 23, 1968

Leon Thornton, 18, of 1844 Central pl. ne., was dead on arrival at D.C. General Hospital, with two bullet wounds.

Pvt. Matthew R. Schuster, 29, of the Ninth Precinct, and two other policemen, were investigating a complaint in the 1900 block of New York Avenue ne. when, they said, they heard the sound of broken glass coming from the Parkway Liquor Store.

Schuster, who is white, went to check. He found the glass broken in a side door, and heard movement inside. When he entered, he said, a man swung at him with a gallon bottle, hurled himself through the front window and fled.

He ignored police warnings to halt, the three policemen said later, and Schuster fired at him. The body of Thornton, a Negro, was found several blocks away.

The inquest produced a finding of justifiable homicide. No indictment was sought.

The next two incidents occurred on the same day, during the height of the riot that followed the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Ernest McIntyre, 20, a Negro custodian at the Naval Research Laboratory, was shot fatally about 9:15 p.m. by Pvt. Albert Lorraine, a white policeman assigned to the 11th Precinct.

Lorraine was assigned to prevent looting.

Lorraine heard the sound of breaking glass and ran toward

Al's Liquor Store, 4009 South Capitol st. There, police said, he saw a Negro man backing out through a hole in the store's plate glass window. His report said he yelled "Halt" three times. He said that the man then whirled toward him with something held "menacingly" in his hand.

Lorraine said he then fired at McIntyre and kept firing as the man ran away. One bullet struck the fleeing man.

The coroner's jury brought in a finding of willful homicide, shocking the Department and bringing the immediate announcement from the U.S. attorney's office that the case would go to the grand jury.

On May 29, a grand jury refused to indict Lorraine.

The second incident on that day involved the youngest of all the victims, Thomas S. Williams. He was eight days short of his 16th birthday and a student at Woodson Junior High School.

The Negro youth left his home at 4221 Brooks st. ne. at 4 p.m. to play basketball.

Later that day, a group of young looters was fleeing from the Young Men's Shop, 3942 Minnesota ave. ne. when three policemen, two of them white, arrived on the scene. One of the white policemen was Pvt. David Tompkins, 27, of the 14th Precinct.

The Homicide Squad's report of the incident says that Tompkins stopped one suspect and was holding him at gunpoint. Williams, the report says, raced by and bumped the policeman's outstretched hand. The weapon discharged, killing the youth, according to the report.

Rufus (Catfish) Mayfield, former head of Pride, Inc., was among the witnesses who later disputed the police version of the incident. He said Tompkins had not drawn his gun when the youth bumped him, and that when Tompkins was bumped, he pulled his gun and shot Williams. Some other witnesses disputed this, saying it had happened just as Pvt. Tompkins said it did.

The coroner's jury returned a finding of accidental death. The case was not presented to a grand jury.

June 20, 1968

Anthony J. Segaria, 32, an off-duty policeman, was sitting in a parked car near Scott Circle nw., waiting for a friend.

Segaria said he was listen-

ing to the car radio when four men approached. One opened the car door on the driver's side, pointed a gun at him and told him to move over. As he did so, his report says, another man got in the other side.

At the same time, the report says, two other armed men started climbing into the rear seat.

Segaria pushed the man on his right out into the street and piled out after him. He pulled his service revolver and started shooting when all four came after him, he said. His bullets hit two of the men, killing John T. Pell, 26, of Jackson, Mich., a white man.

A coroner's jury ruled the shooting justifiable homicide. The case was not presented to a grand jury.

JULY 14, 1968

It was 8:45 a.m. on a Sunday morning, near 14th and U Streets nw.

Two policemen, Pvts. Coy Walton, 32, and Ralph D. Fiorenza, 23, both white officers assigned to the 13th Precinct, were investigating possible burglary from Safeway Store just south of U Street.

Police and civilian witnesses agree that a Negro man came forward and identified himself as the owner of a car whose occupants and contents had

flee. Some civilian witnesses said he was driving away with the consent of the policemen.

The policemen fired their guns, the police report said, when they saw Lawson drive off quickly, about to run over a policeman standing in the street.

The death of Lawson resulted in a four-day coroner's inquest where some 20 witnesses testified. After deliberating 6½ hours, the jury returned a verdict of justifiable homicide.

U.S. Attorney David G. Bress has said the case would

be presented to a grand jury. It is still pending.

Aug. 2, 1968

Armed with search warrants, police staked out a car in front of 3421 21 st. se., the home of Reginald D. Whitfield, 23. They had a tip that the car would be used by two men wanted in connection with a robbery and shooting that had occurred July 22.

The police were heavily armed, as the suspects they were seeking had threatened to kill two policemen in the

Manual Gives Gun Rules

Here are the D.C. Police Manual's instructions to officers on the use of their guns:

Members of the force shall not use their revolver except to defend themselves from death or serious injury; to defend another person unlawfully attacked from death or serious injury; to effect the arrest or to prevent the escape when every other means for effecting the arrest has been exhausted, of a convicted felon or of a person who has committed a felony in the policeman's presence, or whose guilt is clear; or when a felony has been committed and the policeman has reasonable ground to believe the person he is attempting to apprehend committed the felony; to kill a dangerous animal or to kill an animal so badly injured that humanity requires its removal from further suffering.

aroused the suspicion of the policemen.

The police questioned the man, later identified as Theodore Robert Lawson, 44, of Palmer Park.

What happened next is in dispute. Police say Lawson suddenly took off in his car at high speed, as if trying to

July 22 robbery.

At 10:45 p.m., two Negro men came out of the house and drove off in the car. Police stopped the car a block away, in the 1900 block of Savannah Street se.

The policemen who stopped the car were Pvt. Albert E. Graves and Det. Irving Rhone. Both are Negroes.

As it turned out, Whitfield

and his driving partner, Lawrence Davis Jr., were the wrong men—the suspects the police were after were in Whitfield's apartment.

But as the police were questioning Whitfield and Davis, their report says, Graves' shotgun accidentally discharged as Graves was searching Whitfield. The blast killed Whitfield, and seriously wounded Graves' partner, Det. Rhone.

At the coroner's inquest after the shooting, a lawyer for Whitfield's family protested that Davis had not been there to testify. The coroner and the police said that Davis could not be subpoenaed, since he lives in Maryland, and that they had not been able to find him.

The jury brought in a verdict of accidental death. No indictment was sought.

SEPT. 5, 1968

A 24-year-old Arlington man was shot to death at 15th and Irving Streets nw. when police said he ran into a police roadblock that ended a 100-mile-an-hour chase. He was Stanley R. Robinson, a Negro, who lived at 2000 N. Dinwiddie st.

Canine Corps Pvts. Sidney D. Michelin and James Fallin, both white, fired at him when he attempted to run them down as they stood beside their cruiser with the spotlight turned on, police said. Robinson was killed by a single bullet in the brain.

The chase had begun in Arlington when police there stopped Robinson for a check after a robbery report.

There has not yet been an official disposition of the case.

SEPT. 9, 1968

Pvt. Dean Caldwell, a white

policeman assigned to the Fifth Precinct, and another policeman were chasing a robbery suspect down Potomac Avenue se. when the suspect turned and began shooting at them, their report says.

In the gun battle that followed, Sterling Alfred Perkins, 23, a Negro, was killed by a bullet from Caldwell's gun. The police report says that the proceeds of a robbery of a nearby liquor store were found on the body. A coroner's jury ruled it justifiable homicide and no indictment was sought.

Those were the incidents that preceded the fatal shooting of Bennett last week. That case is still under investigation, and the policeman involved has been suspended under a new Police Department policy announced by the Mayor.

In the same period, there were these cases in which policemen were killed:

NOV. 23, 1967

Det. Gilbert Silvia, who was white, was shot in the stomach while he tried to question two men about a stolen car at 16th and Corcoran Streets nw. He died while under surgery at the Washington Hospital Center.

The police said he was alone when he challenged the two men, after noticing that the car in which they were sitting had a window that appeared to have been forced open.

Lawrence Kearney, a 28-year-old Negro, was convicted by a District Court jury of second-degree murder in the shooting of Det. Silvia.

Last month, Judge Leonard

Walsh sentenced Kearney to jail for from 15 years to life.

JAN. 27, 1968

About 2:30 a.m., Andrew Douglas, 53, a Negro, of Seat Pleasant, was sipping coffee in a carry-out shop at 308 62d st. ne. when he began arguing with another customer, police say.

He left the shop and took a shotgun from his pickup truck parked outside, returned and fired both barrels at the restaurant window from about 20 yards away, according to police.

He then reloaded the gun went back into the shop and forced a half-dozen customers to lie on the floor, the police say. By the time he turned to leave, Pvt. Lawrence Dorsey, 28, a Negro and a five-year veteran of the force, was pulling up in his cruiser. Douglas dropped his gun on orders from Dorsey, but when the policeman moved to pick it up there was a scuffle, the report says. In the course of the fight, the shotgun went off, killing the policeman.

This death was ruled an accident by a coroner's jury.

FEB. 26, 1968

Pvt. Eugene I. Williams, 31, a Negro, of 229 17th st. se., was shot and killed by a driver he had ordered to the curb for questioning, according to the police.

Four shots were fired in an exchange in the 700 block of 12th Street se., before Williams was left dead on the street, next to his scout car, police said.

Thomas Butler, a Negro, of 166 Joliet st. sw., was indicted on a charge of murder in this

case. He is awaiting trial in U.S. District Court.

JULY 2, 1968

Two policemen were shot with their own service revolvers as they tried to arrest a man on an armed robbery complaint, according to the police.

Pvt. Stephen Williams, 23, a white man who had been on the force a year, was killed. Pvt. Frederick L. Matteson—the same policeman who had earlier fatally shot a suspect himself—was wounded seriously.

The police account of the fatal fight, pieced together from interviews with witnesses, said the two policemen were approached in the 1300 block of Columbia Road nw. by a man who said he had been robbed. The alleged victim pointed to a Negro standing across the street and identified him as the robber.

They arrested the man, the report says, but when the handcuffs were clamped on one wrist, he began fighting. As they struggled, another man, identified as the suspect's son, joined the fight, the police say. All four men fell to the pavement, and a woman began attacking the policemen, the report says.

One of the suspects grabbed Williams' gun and fired six shots, killing the policeman instantly, police say.

Johnnie White, 38; his wife Ethel, 38; and their son Dwayne, 19, a patient at St. Elizabeths Hospital, have all been indicted on charges of first-degree murder and felony murder in the case. They are awaiting trial in U.S. District Court. They are Negro.