

# Alioto Aides Probe Police OCT 6 1971 Shooting SFXaminer By Birney Jarvis

Witnesses to yesterday's fatal shooting by police of a 32 year old Hunters Point handyman — termed by a high ranking policeman as "regrettable but apparently accidental" — have been asked to present their account to homicide investigators.

Deputy Chief William Keays said this morning that only one person has so far come forward, although police hope for more because many persons apparently saw the action.

He added that Sylvester Brown and Joe Johnson of the Mayor's office were gathering names and statements from witnesses, and were expected to pass on information to the Police Department.

A dozen black community leaders at a meeting in the South-East Poverty Commission headquarters, 1449 Mendell St., reacted angrily last

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night to the shooting, which took the life of Clarence Johnson.

## Had Alias

Johnson, also known as Clarence Ellis Jr., was killed by a .41 Magnum bullet fired into his head by a young policeman making an arrest in Hunters Point.

Patrolman Richard Lewis — "a damn good cop who has made many fine arrests," according to one police official — was being questioned by his superiors, after the fatal shooting which occurred at 5:24 p.m. yesterday.

"We will try our utmost to see that this police officer (Lewis) is indicted, prosecuted and convicted," was the reaction of Alex L. Pitcher Jr., chairman of the Bayview-Hunters Point Model Cities Commission.

While the black leaders were holding their meeting, police investigators were painstakingly trying to piece together the events leading up to the fatal shooting in the unit block of Reardon Road, in the heart of the Hunters Point area.

## Defense Reflex

Chief of Inspectors Charles Barca said preliminary investigation indicated that Johnson was killed because of a "defensive reflex" by the policeman.

The shooting occurred after police received a report of a burglary in progress at 99 Reardon Rd. — a large apartment building — with a description of the suspect's car, a red station wagon.

## Blocked Street

Several police cars responded, blocked off the street, which is a dead end, and Johnson, who was driving the station wagon, was ordered out along with three younger passengers, according to reports.

Patrolman Lewis said he ordered Johnson to stand spreadeagled, with his hands on the roof of the auto.

Another officer, Sgt. Edward Epting, said Johnson argued and "badmouthed" the policeman but finally obeyed the command.

A report prepared by Homicide Inspector Al Podesta said Johnson refused at first to get out of the auto but "was finally persuaded" by Officer Lewis.

When Johnson was told to put his hands against the auto, the report read, Lewis "used his left hand to move the suspect closer," holding his pistol in his right hand.

## 'Made Motion'

Then, the report continued, Johnson "made a motion as if to take something out of his waistband and in the process of doing so, Lewis' gun discharged."

The three passengers in the car were arrested on burglary charges after police said "conclusive evidence" — including a color television and some clothing — was found either in or near the car.

They are Frank Green, 20; Larry Jones, 19, both living in apartments at 99 Reardon Rd. — where Johnson also lived and in the building where the burglary allegedly occurred — and Robert (Bubba) Caldwell, 21, of 819 Girard St.

## Angry Cynicism

The police version of the shooting was received with angry cynicism by representatives of the Hunters Point community.

"We're sick and tired of this kind of ----- taking place in our community," complained Sylvester Brown, an outspoken black who has worked to "cool" potentially explosive situations in The City.

## Witnesses

The shooting, in daylight, reportedly occurred before dozens of witnesses — including a number of small children playing in the Milton Meyers playground across the street.

The black caucus said it

had statements from "12 to 15" adult witnesses to the shooting.

Some said that Johnson "cursed" Patrolman Lewis "who stepped back and shot him — and he (Johnson) fell back with half his brains shot out."

## Body Uncovered

A major complaint by the black leaders was that Johnson's body was allowed to lie, uncovered, in the street "in front of all those poor little kids" until the ambulance arrived.

Despite reports to the contrary, records at Central Emergency Hospital indicate that an ambulance call was made at 5:25 p.m. — one minute after the shooting — and that the emergency vehicle arrived on the scene in six minutes.