

NEW ORLEANS STATES-ITEM

Cops Quiz 15 in Probe Of N.O. Multi-Killings

Fifteen persons have been questioned and subsequently released as St. Bernard homicide investigators pursue leads in the multiple killings which have mystified the area.

All were given lie detector tests.

Walter E. Poole Jr., 22, became the fifth victim in the slaying series last Friday.

Fire--

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engine, who received back injuries.

Edward Oustalet, 37, a firefighter, who had a minor gash on his face.

Capt. Valentine Reith, whose hand was injured.

Meanwhile, firemen fought to control the fire which broke out on the second floor of a vacant apartment house. The building, called Hastings Row, was destroyed by fire Jan. 31, 1958, and rebuilt the following year.

The fire this morning caused damage of about \$25,000, Fire Supt. Arthur Heyd said.

The first alarm for the fire was called at 8:06 a. m., followed by three additional alarms, as firemen summoned more help.

The fire was out by 9 a. m.

Poole's bullet-pierced body was found on the St. Bernard hwy. by a school bus driver. His death followed those of two taxicab drivers, a teenager and a Harvey Negro.

THE LATEST development in the case came Saturday night when local police investigated a case of vandalism. They were called to Apt. 3 at 4545 MacArthur st., which is the residence of the father of Donald Humble, who is jail at Point-a-la-Hache in connection with the slaying of Ronald Rodrigue, 19.

A window had been broken in the Humble home.

The series of events began on May 9 when Poole and Rodrigue were arrested at Poole's Metairie apartment for the knifepoint robbery of an Arabi oil station.

Rodrigue was released on \$10,000 bond on June 12, and

16 days later Stephen Young, a Harvey Negro, was killed by a bullet fired from a passing car in the 1400 block of Estalotte, Harvey.

THEN ON AUG. 27 the bodies of two New Orleans cab drivers, Ernest Marchese and Arthur Grey, were found in their cabs six miles apart in Plaquemines Parish.

On Sept. 13 Poole was released from jail on \$10,000 bond on the robbery charge. That night the body of Rodrigue was found in Plaquemines Parish

near the spot where Marchese was slain.

Humble was seized the next day and charged with murdering Rodrigue, Marchese and Grey and with complicity in the murder of Young. Thomas Joseph Gautreaux and William Modis Martin Jr. also were arrested and charged with the murder of Young.

Police said Young, Marchese and Grey were killed by bullets from the same .22-caliber pistol, and blamed the slayings on a gang of Algiers toughs.

Editorial

'Thrills' or 'Gangland'?

In less than two months there have been five vicious slayings, apparently connected, within the metropolitan community. Two of the victims were taxi drivers who worked for the same company based in New Orleans.

The first of the five victims, a Negro man, was shot to death by someone in a passing car. The two other victims were Ronald Rodrigue, 19, of Algiers, and Walter E. Poole Jr., 22, of Metairie, who was found shot, his body apparently rolled over by a car, in St. Bernard Parish last Friday.

All of the victims had been shot with a .22-caliber pistol, police said.

Law enforcement officers have voiced belief the slayings are connected. New Orleans police have called them teenage "thrill killings." But Sheriff Jack Rowley of St. Bernard Parish disagrees.

"This is not just a bunch of teenagers killing for a thrill. There is something sinister behind it," Sheriff Rowley said last Friday after Poole's body had been found. The sheriff said he saw some other "pattern" to the slayings.

But what is that pattern? And what is behind it? Also, what does Sheriff Rowley mean by sinister?

The fact that the three earlier suspects were still behind bars when Poole's body was found does not lend credence to the thrill-kill theory. St. Bernard investigators described the slaying of Poole as "gangland style." This seems to imply deliberate execution by mobsters.

Investigators in the three parishes concerned are not, we trust, pursuing their own pet theories to the neglect of other plausible ones.

We trust that lawmen in the three parishes are in full cooperation in an effort to apprehend those responsible for these heinous and disconcerting crimes.