

'Shock, Disappointment', Community Reaction as Board Frees Patrolmen

Suspect Surrenders in Slaying of Rival, Faces Murder Charge

Bennie Butler, 42, of 2628 E. Forest, surrendered Thursday in the fatal shooting of his sweetheart's estranged husband.

He had been sought since Feb. 23 following the slaying of Jack Wolfolk, 38, of 7358 Melrose, in the home of his wife, Daisy, 32, of 1367 Brady.

The Wolfolk's had been separated for more than two years.

Mrs. Wolfolk told homicide

detectives she had been seeing her husband periodically, but had also been dating Butler.

She said an argument developed between Butler and her husband when Wolfolk found Butler in his wife's home during a visit.

Mrs. Wolfolk said Wolfolk cut Butler and since that time, she had lived with Butler.

A short time later, police said, Wolfolk, armed with a knife, returned to his wife's home and forced his way inside.

After a short but violent exchange of words, Wolfolk was shot down as he advanced toward Butler.

Butler is held for investigation of murder.

GETS KEY POST

L. B. Collins New Prexy of League

Mrs. Laurentine B. Collins, a member of the Board of Education, has been elected president of the Detroit Urban League.



MRS. L. B. COLLINS

The announcement was made during the annual meeting of the League Thursday by John C. Dancy, executive

IN MISSISSIPPI

Telegrams Deny Race Killings

WASHINGTON—Sharp and strongly worded denials poured into a Senate subcommittee conducting hearings on civil rights following testimony that Negroes are being murdered "in wholesale lots" in Mississippi.

The flood of telegrams came as a result of charges by Gus Courts, a Negro store owner who was wounded in a shooting fray in Belzoni, Miss., some time ago, who said bodies of Negroes were often found in rivers and lakes while others have been shot in broad daylight.

Citizenry Deplores Decision

Prosecutor's Office Assailed in 13-Page Ruling by Piggins

The decision of the Detroit Police Trial Board which found police officer Robert Lessnau and James Davis not guilty of conduct unbecoming officers in the beating of Robert F. Mitchell, 32, of 2081 Virginia Park on January 18, was greeted with shock, disappointment and concern by Detroit's Negro citizens this week.

Ernest Shell, chairman of the 75-member Citizens Committee deplored the decision and said: "We had earnestly hoped the Trial Board would recognize the broad community significance of this unfortunate occurrence and would make at least an effort to show its disapproval of brutality by police officers.

"However, it appears that despite the obvious public reaction to the beating given Mitchell, the police feel it is more important to protect its members than to correct a major sore spot in police-community relations.

"It is extremely unfortunate for future relations this case has ended in this way so far as the police are concerned."

The Rev. Horace A. White, on the decision, declared that "regardless of the circumstances, police-community relations had been set back by the decision.

"Although this may not be
(Continued on Page 4)

Inksterite Held

Community Voices Disapproval of Board Action

(Continued from Page 1)

the case in light of the actual testimony at the hearing, many people are going to be inclined to think this matter has been white-washed," the Rev. Mr. White said.

"This whole affair is very unfortunate."

Arthur L. Johnson, Executive Secretary of the Detroit Branch of the NAACP issued the following statement on behalf of the branch:

"Whether the Police Department has acted justly on the facts and testimony made available to it in the hearings of the complaint of Robert F. Mitchell, 2081 Virginia Park, is a question to be raised and considered by all thoughtful citizens.

"Many Negro citizens, no doubt, because of their experience will not be persuaded that the truth was allowed to prevail.

"It is our considered judgment that Negro citizens generally are not safe from abuse by police officers primarily because of their race and color.

"Inescapably the Mitchell case symbolizes what the whole community has to be concerned about, recogniz-

ing as it must, that our race relations are in trouble so long as any serious question can be raised about the integrity and fairness of the chief law enforcement agency in this area."

William Patrick, chairman of the Steering Committee of the Citizens Committee for the Bob Mitchell case made the following statement:

"Many of us in recent years have been actively engaged in the project of improvement of relations between the police department and the community, by attacking the traditional hostilities and suspicions that are grounded in fact and fancy.

"The Mitchell case before the police trial board was a pivotal area of concern, for there the department did have an opportunity to demonstrate its oft-publicized assurances of fairness to all citizens.

"If we should assume as true all of the facts with reference to provocation as related by officers Lesnau and Davis, and as reported in the press, the mute evidence of the injuries to Mitchell's head, face, eyes, arm and body stand as a startling indictment of the violence in which the officers must have engaged.

"The Commissioner indicated as much to our delegation that waited upon him immediately following the incident.

"There is nothing that the officers allege that Mitchell could have done that would justify such injuries, even if he had punched or pushed one of the officers first.

"I fear that as a result of the trial board's action that great damage has been done to the progress in understanding between the police and the community.

"We shall continue to work with the department and the community for the improvement of relations, notwithstanding our earnest difference on this score, for such is necessary for the fullest realization of the great potentials for democratic living in our town."

The Trial Board which had been looking into the circumstances involved in the beating of Mitchell rendered its decision on Monday.

In a 13 page document, Police Commissioner Piggins said: "The Board has listened

carefully to all the testimony offered by all interested parties. Every available witness has been procured and has testified. The Board has thoroughly reviewed all of the testimony and has examined all of the exhibits.

"With the exception of admitting he was driving with a defective headlight for which he expected to receive only a violation notice, Mr. Robert F. Mitchell contends there was absolutely no provocation for the police action. He denies that he offered the slightest resistance to the search, the beating, or the arrest.

"It is significant for this Board to note in this opinion that although Mr. Mitchell claimed to have been suffering from extremely serious and extensive injuries, which if true would have naturally made medical aid his first concern.

"He continually and repeatedly, both in the precinct station and in the hospital, requested the services of a photographer before he would submit to medical treatment.

"With regard to the testimony of Nancy Carol Alexander and Barbara Marie Jernigan, both 13, the opinion said, "It is unfair to ask this Board or any honest observer to rely on this type of evidence.

"The Police Department in the past three years has conscientiously endeavored to build good public relations among all segments of our community to extend fair treatment to everyone.

"This Board has acted fairly and honestly and has arrived at its conclusions free from any other influence except the influence of the facts presented at the hearing . . ."

The document said further that it appreciated the fact that Mitchell resented being searched on the street, because he was not a criminal and had not committed a crime.

"The officers however did not know this at the moment and had no cause to believe otherwise," the opinion said.

The Board said it was "humiliating to be searched on the street," but said this is sometimes necessary and added, "Some officers have been killed by their failure to do so."

Serving on the Trial Board with Commissioner Piggins were Superintendent Jack Harvill and Chief of Detectives Marvin G. Lane.

Mitchell's attorneys said they still plan to institute civil suit for \$25,000 damages against Mitchell's assailants.

Florida



Bundrant, Mrs. Dotty Baum of New Conn., and the Rev. C. L. Franklin sit.—Adamfoto.

Promoted



Gov. Freeman

(Continued from Page 1)

Freeman hailed Williams as

bring the Drive