

# Rookies and guns

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● Officer Purcel Snyder, 24, shot himself in the chest April 17 in his home while putting on his uniform before going to work.

● Later in April, Officer Lester Julian, 27, shot himself in the right foot while playing pool. He told officers he was trying to take his gun out of his waistband when it went off.

● Officer Robert McDowell, 21, was picking up his gun in his apartment on May 5 when it went off and the slug tore through the floor into the bedroom of the lower flat. No one was hurt.

● Officer Johnny Johnson, 25, explained to police he shot himself in the left finger May 9 while attempting to uncock his gun.

**PENDING ACTION** in the fatal shooting case, Officer Henry remains on duty, but inside his precinct station and not on the street.

In the case of Officer Robinson, because the man she shot survived, she has been returned to normal duties pending possible charges or disciplinary action.

The other officers listed above are still on the force and on regular duty. Depending on the circumstances, an officer who fires his weapon accidentally or carelessly may be retrained in weapons, reprimanded or fired.

Police records also show many other incidents in which last summer's graduates used their weapons properly.

Officer Charles Beasley, for example, used his head coolly and his gun heroically. He and his partner, James Yates, will be given the department's Medal of Valor at the annual police field day later this summer.

**ON BEASLEY'S** first day on patrol Sept. 14, the officers responded to a disturbance call on the city's northeast side. As they arrived and started up the walk, two men walked down the steps.

Police said one of the men pulled a pistol from his belt and fired at the policemen. Slugs hit Yates in the arm and chest. He went down.

Beasley returned the fire, killing the gunman. The second man grabbed for his friend's gun. Beasley and the wounded Yates both fired, fatally wounding the second man.

While the department prepares honors for one rookie, trial boards and the prosecutor must decide what action, if any, will be taken against Officers Henry and Robinson. Both cases were investigated by the Homicide Section's special assignment squad under Sgt. Gilbert Hill.

Henry, 26, and Williams, 27, failed to follow routine procedure June 11 when they pulled over a car which had run a stop sign on Monica at Chippewa.

**NEITHER OFFICER** got out of the patrol car as the driver, Snowden, walked back to them, police investigators said. Snowden did not have a driver's license, but one of his passengers, Willie Smith, produced a license which he said was Snowden's.

The officers took the license and asked Snowden questions about it. When his answers didn't satisfy them, they told him he was going to jail.

At that, police said, Snowden took off running down Monica and Henry jumped from the scout car to chase him on foot. Henry reportedly pulled his gun and yelled at the man to stop. Snowden, police said, didn't stop.

Snowden scrambled over a fence, police said. They said that when Henry got to the fence, he put his right hand with the gun on top of the fence and was trying to unlock a gate with his left hand. At this point, investigators said, Snowden lunged at Henry from the other side of the fence and the gun went off.

**SNOWDEN WAS** fatally wounded.

Investigators said scientific evidence and autopsy results support the officer's version of the shooting.

Executive Chief James D. Bannon said the "two critical areas" the board of review must examine are whether the officers violated department procedures by not getting out of the scout car when they stopped Snowden, and whether Henry acted improperly in chasing Snowden with his gun in his hand.

Normally, one officer deals with the stopped driver outside the car while his partner takes up a position from which he can support and protect the first officer in case of attack, or can cut off the offender should he try to escape.

Snowden's passengers did not run away. Even if Snowden had escaped, they presumably could have identified him for arrest later.

**WHY WERE** two rookies (Williams has 11 months' experience, Henry eight) assigned to patrol together? Bannon said, "We avoid that situation whenever we can, but with 1,000 new men it is impossible to avoid it sometimes."

In the off-duty shooting involving Officer Robinson, the officer said she identified herself as a policewoman and tried to prevent her friend's estranged husband from leaving with the child.

She said that during an altercation the husband grabbed the purse in which she carried her gun. She wrestled the purse from him, and when he came at her she shot him in the chest, she told investigators.

The critical factors for the Board of Review and the prosecutor to decide in her case, investigators say, is whether the policewoman and her friend went to the home to force a confrontation, and whether a shooting could have been avoided by calling other police to the scene.

The investigation indicates that Officer Robinson knew there were two outstanding criminal warrants against the husband at the time, and that a police pickup order for his arrest was in effect.

**BUT POLICE** regulations prohibit off-duty officers from taking police action in their neighborhoods, except in cases where lives are in danger, or if they witness a felony taking place.

The car wash shooting last fall took place a couple of blocks from the 10th (Livernois) Precinct station. Officer Shaw told investigators he argued with the old man about who was next in line in the car wash and that the old man pulled a gun on him. Shaw then drove four blocks to the 10th Precinct station where he rushed in and told Lt. Robert Sewell, who was manning the desk, that a man had pulled a gun on him in the car wash.

"You're a cop, why didn't you arrest him?" Lt. Sewell asked. Sewell told the officer he would send a scout car to the car wash, but before he could move Shaw wheeled about and ran to his car and took off, tires screeching, for the car wash. Fearful of what the excited rookie might do, Lt. Sewell pursued him, but he heard two shots as he arrived at the car wash.

Sewell found Calvin wounded.

Shaw told him he went back to the car wash to arrest Calvin, but the elderly man was across the street talking with friends. Shaw said he identified himself, pulled out his badge and gun, and told Calvin he was under arrest.

Shaw said Calvin reached for his coat pocket and at that point the officer fired two shots, one hitting Calvin in the side.

Investigators did not find a gun on the wounded man. But the investigation was closed after a pistol was found in a trash can later in the car wash.