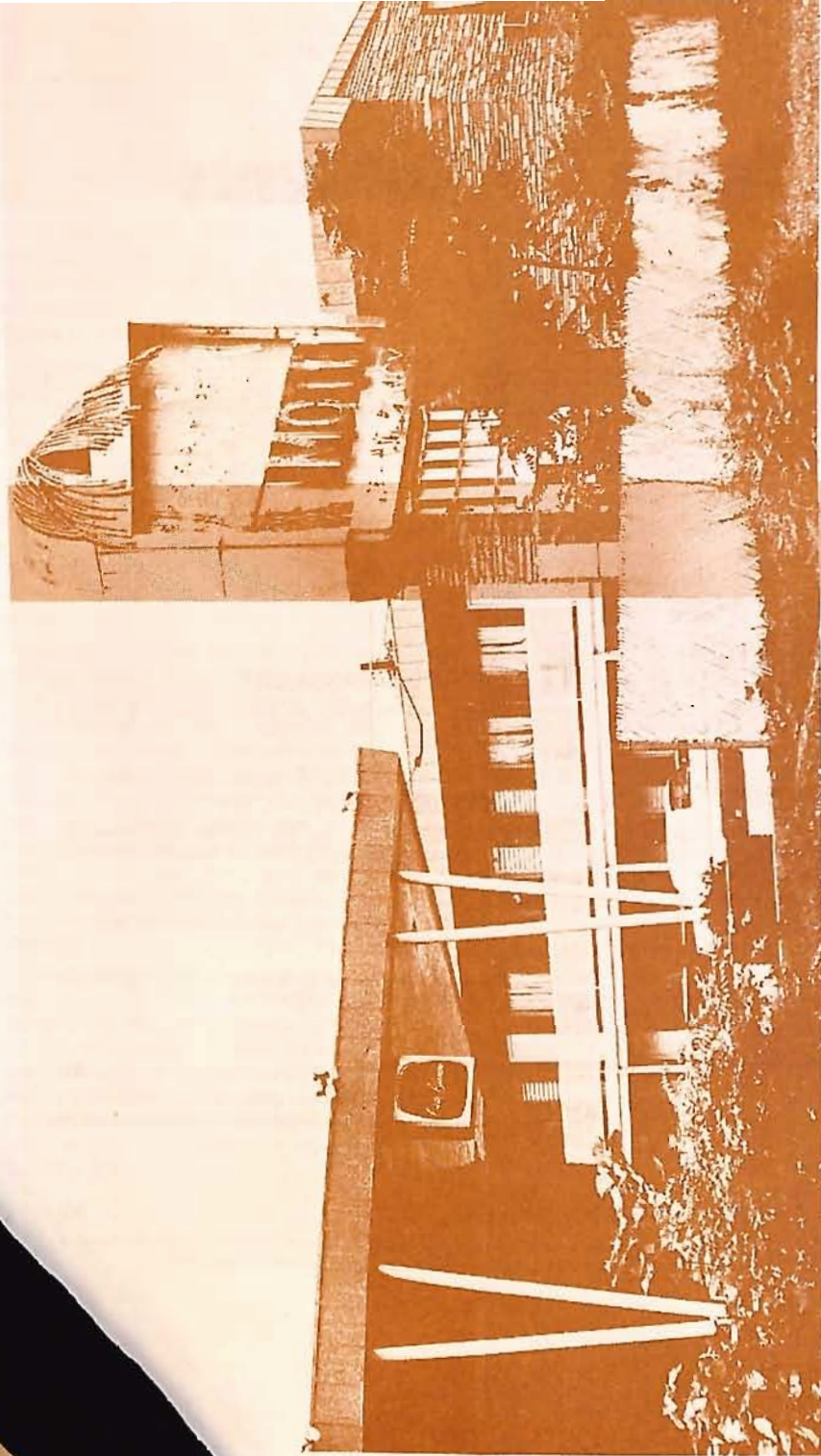




# Detroit Under STRESS



**75¢**



The Desert Inn formerly the Algiers Motel.

## Chapter 1

# Bloody Beginnings

The history of Detroit mirrors the history of urban America. To understand STRESS one must understand the turbulent racial tensions that mark our past and mar our present.

During the last half century Detroiters have witnessed, participated in or been victims of major racial outbursts. Detroit was shaken by a race war in 1943. Forty three persons lost their lives in the 1967 Detroit rebellion, and countless others will live with the scars of that experience for years to come.

In 1925, Dr. Ossian Sweet and his family sought to integrate an all-white neighborhood at Charlevoix and Garland. The Sweet family was harassed and subjected to extreme racist pressure for days. As an unruly white mob was stoning his home, a shot fired from within the house killed one of the assailants in the mob. All 11 occupants of the house were held in jail for months without bail, on a charge of murder. Clarence Darrow successfully defended the Sweet family. The police had offered Dr. Sweet

and his family no protection from the harassment of the mob.

In 1972, nearly half a century later, the George Vaughn family sought to integrate an all-white neighborhood in northeast Detroit. Their house was firebombed, their daughter shot at, their son beaten, and the family was harassed by hate mail and false fire alarms. The Vaughn family received only abuse from the police as well, instead of protection or assistance.

In 1954 the United States Supreme Court said schools could not be legally segregated. In 1972 a Detroit Federal Court had no choice but to find Detroit's schools as segregated as those in the South.

In 1965 the Detroit Police Department established a Citizens Complaint Bureau. A study of cases charging brutality shows that such complaints doubled in each of the first three years the Bureau was in operation. Out of 186 such complaints, only nine were sustained in the investigations the police department con-

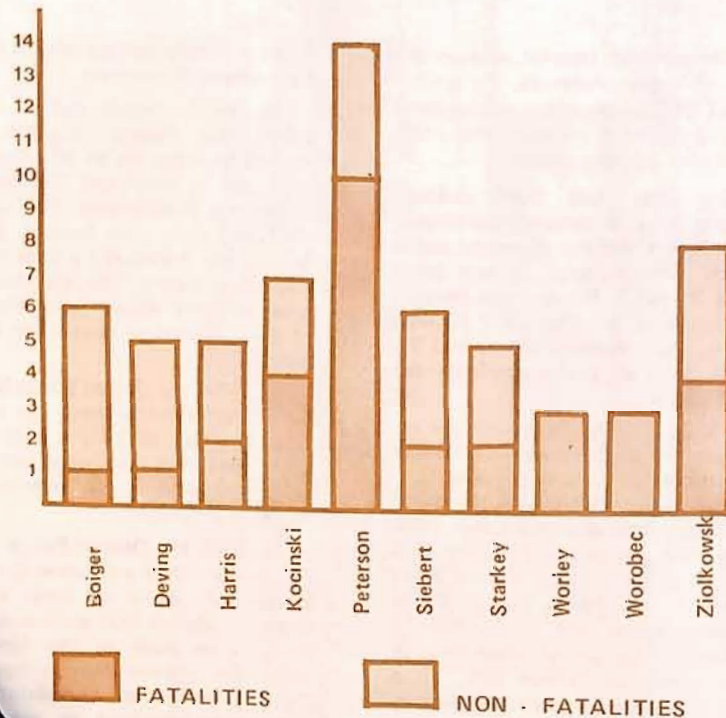
ducted of its own members. In 1968 New Detroit, Inc., evaluated the CCB and concluded that the Bureau is, for all practical purposes, worthless. The fact that more than 90% of the complaints brought to it are thrown out by the police is a significant factor in the conclusion that New Detroit reached.

One of the most brutal of the assault cases studied by New Detroit took place at the Algiers Motel during the height of the 1967 rebellion. The deaths of Carl Cooper, Auburey Pollard and Fred Temple and the nightmare of terrorism and brutality experienced by their six friends in the motel that night at the hands of three Detroit police officers appears merely

as a statistic on the records of the CCB. John Hersey, in his book *Algiers Motel Incident*, assessed the episode in its true dimensions:

"(it) contained all the themes of racial strife in the United States: the arm of the law taking the law into its own hands; the subtle poison of racist thinking by 'decent' men who deny that they are racist; the societal limbo into which so many young black men have been driven in our country; ambiguous justice in the courts."

The three officers who participated in the Algiers Motel incident have since been acquitted of any wrongdoing. The "trial" was held in Mason, Michigan.



FATALITIES
  NON - FATALITIES



" Let's not get involved - he might be a STRESS officer going about his job. "



Into this atmosphere of permissiveness of police misconduct and brutality, STRESS was born. The date was January 13, 1971. The initials stand for Stop The Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets. STRESS was the brainchild of Inspectors James Bannon and Gordon Smith. It was not until three months later, on April 5, 1971, that STRESS operations were revealed to the general public.

Officers in the Precinct Support Unit were transferred to STRESS without any screening whatsoever. Thus Raymond Peterson, who had 21 citizen injury contacts lodged against him already, and Michael Ziolkowski, who was at that time under trial board investigation for charges arising from alleged mistreatment of a black prisoner, automatically became members of this most elite of police undercover assault squads.

It is significant to note the involvement of these two officers in the 22 killings and 14 non-fatal shootings. Peterson was a member of STRESS crews involved in 10 of the 22 killings. He fired the fatal shot in six of these 10 fatalities. Ziolkowski was a member of a STRESS crew involved in four of the 22 killings. Both officers were implicated in five of the 14 non-fatal shooting cases.

In the first year and a half of its existence, STRESS operated in two different ways: through decoy operations (called "stressing" by police officers) and through surveillance. Surveillance required that STRESS officers act and dress in a manner that allowed them to blend in with the neighborhood, though it is questionable how well white police officers can blend into the black neighborhoods in which STRESS operates almost exclusively.

The "decoy technique" involved one person acting as a potential victim of crime by dressing in street clothes, walking alone and appearing drunk or somehow defenseless. His three part-

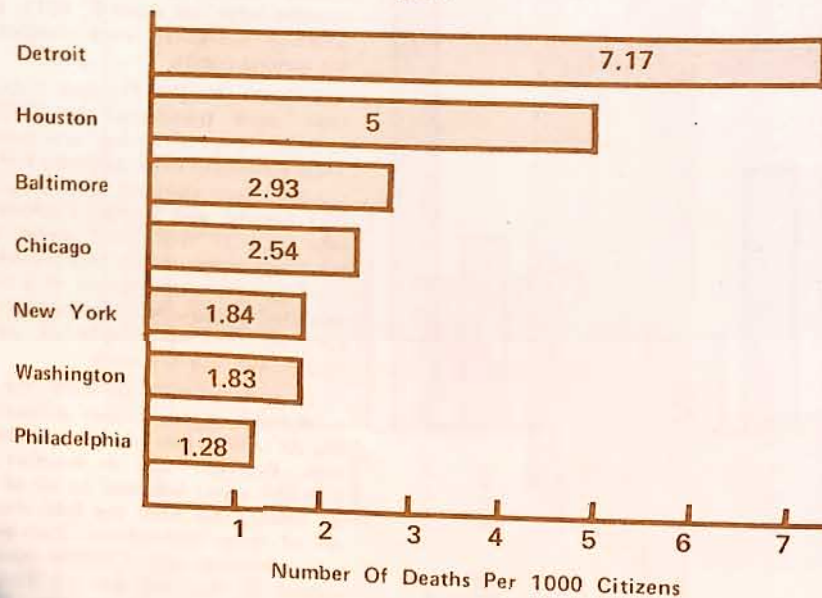
ners hovered nearby to help in effecting the arrest of anyone who set upon the "decoy" — often with no purpose other than to ask for some change.

In an interview granted to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission in late 1971, Inspector Bannon noted that "when the cover officers hear the decoy yell, 'Halt, Police!' and start to fire, they will more than likely respond with gunfire."

After one year's operation, police statistics revealed that the decoy method was utilized in 20% of the activities of STRESS. While it accounted for only 3% of the total

arrests made, it was responsible for 91% of the killings.

Civilian Killings By Police  
1971



The total size of the Detroit Police Department exceeds 5,500. The actual number of STRESS officers is considered classified information, but statistics available from Inspector Bannon suggest that the total is between 40 and 100, or approximately 1% of the total force.

In 1971, the first complete year of the STRESS operation, the Detroit Police Department had the highest per capita number of civilian killings by any urban police department in the nation. 39% of these police homicides were committed by as few as 1% of the police force, because they were committed by STRESS.

STRESS units, during the first year and a half of their operation, were responsible for more police-perpetrated civilian deaths than were accounted for by the entire Detroit Police Department in every year since 1960, with the possible exception of the year of the rebellion, 1967.

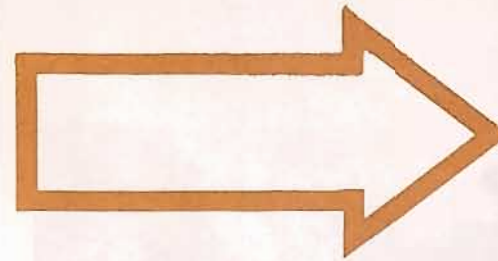
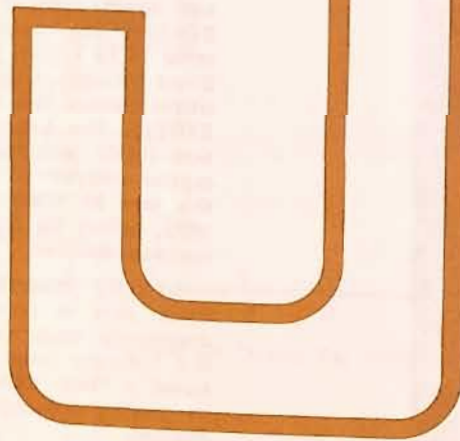
The March 9, 1972 shootout between STRESS officers and Wayne County Sheriff deputies was a significant turning point in the operation of STRESS. The shootout, which has come to be known as the Rochester Street Massacre, triggered widespread citizen outrage over the operation of STRESS. The Labor Defense Coalition (LDC) provided the most perceptive analysis of STRESS during this time by filing a suit in April, 1972, calling for its immediate and complete abolition.

STRESS, however, is still very much alive in spite of continuing community opposition. Though police hierarchy have carefully orchestrated a "new look" for STRESS, its guiding philosophy remains unchanged.

A conscious effort has been made to play down the term "STRESS" and to divorce the STRESS unit and concept from the previous history of high-level dissent and division which it represents in the community. Consequently, the unit is now known as the Felony Prevention Section.

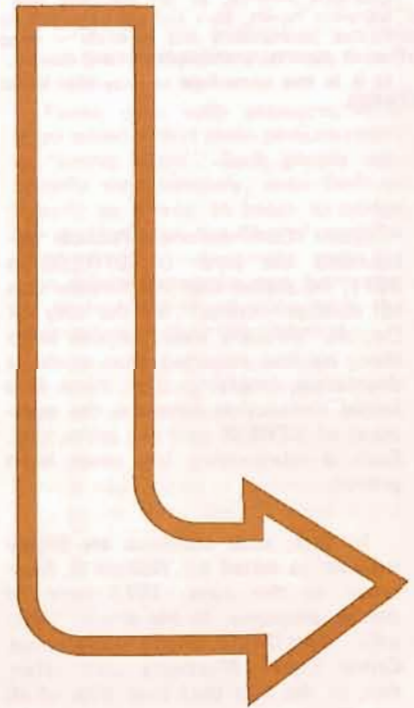
Latest crime statistics provided by the Detroit Police Department indicate that rape cases are on the increase. Information released to the press in the past few months has stated that rape will be another focus of STRESS in the months to come. This focus is consistent with the implicit policy which has always governed STRESS — the policy which makes victims of the poor, the young and the blacks who populate high-crime neighborhoods.

The decoy technique, responsible for so much bloodshed in its first years of operation, has been almost entirely abandoned. The last death to occur from stressing was eight months ago; yet, since that time, STRESS officers have participated in four incidents resulting in fatalities, the latest as recently as June 15, 1973. The end of stressing does not, however, make STRESS an acceptable form of law enforcement. It made little difference to the victims of these latest killings that the assailant officers were not on a decoy operation.



Superficial changes have occurred and may continue to occur, but the guiding philosophy of STRESS remains unchanged. STRESS does not represent a traditional theory of law enforcement which responds to committed crimes. Rather, it typifies a philosophy of law enforcement which allows individualistic and aggressive "green-beret" style units to make on-the-spot assessments of possible crime situations, and to support their judgment by the use of lethal force, with little fear of prosecution for their actions.

Responsible anti-STRESS efforts by citizens of Detroit cannot cease until the basic concept of STRESS has been dealt with and our law enforcement officers become responsive to the community they serve. A police commissioner can end a special unit and reassign its men without necessarily abandoning the concept for which that unit stands.





Charlotte Avenue, at the southern end of the Cass Corridor, is a dreary, soot-dirty block of transient hotels, bars and centuries-old homes. It is an area populated with a large number of alcoholics, panhandlers and derelicts — people who are guilty only of the institutionally created crimes of poverty, unemployment and disease.

It is in this immediate vicinity that seven people have been killed and five more wounded by STRESS.

When Commissioner Nichols announced the birth of STRESS in 1971, he stated that its purpose was to combat "crime" in the city of Detroit. Virtually every month since then, he has reported that crime is decreasing, implying that there is a causal connection between the operation of STRESS and the crime rate. Such a relationship has never been proven.

In fact, such statistics are highly suspect, as noted by William R. Morrissey in the June, 1973 issue of Justice magazine. In his article, "Nixon's Anti-Crime Plan Undermines Crime Stats", Morrissey calls attention to the fact that over 60% of all

major urban police departments are reporting decreases in crime. Many of these decreases are based on doctored statistics and outright lies and are designed to insure continuance of grants from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

Even though the ordinary citizen will never know what the actual statistics on the increase or decrease of street crime really are, it is important to have a clearer understanding of just what this type of crime is that STRESS is supposedly directed to eradicate in the city. No analysis of such crime is possible without reflecting briefly on the people who live in our city, because it is people who commit crime.



Life in Detroit, as elsewhere in the country, means, for most people, food costs that are skyrocketing out of all proportion to income. It means a greater disparity every passing year between the cost of living index and one's take-home pay. It means housing which is either inadequate, unfit to live in, or priced beyond one's ability to pay, particularly because interest rates grow daily more prohibitive. It means poor and inadequate educational opportunities and even poorer and more inadequate health care.

Such economic realities are not the only pressures with which the ordinary citizen has to cope. He is constantly bombarded by advertising in the media and elsewhere with that standard of life which the American culture demands that the "good father" (or mother) provide for his family. One's role as a man or woman, as a provider, as a functioning member of society is defined by dynamics of socialization which are as far beyond the control of the ordinary individual as are the economic means to fulfill that role.

Faced with such pressures, it is small wonder that some persons resort to "street crime." Such people mistakenly view burglary, auto theft or larceny as a way to begin to bridge the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots." Unfortunately, some are even driven to assault, rape or murder by their inability to cope with the frustrations of their life situation.

One cannot speak of "high crime areas" in Detroit. The entire city is such an area, though sections of the center city, riddled with poverty, police complicity in drug traffic, and double high rates of unemployment, are, to be sure, the "highest crime areas."

There are a few, however, who do not share in this burden of life. Metropolitan Detroit is also the home of the families of Henry Clay Ford, Max Fisher, J. L. Hudson and their counterparts. The underlings of such businessmen vie regularly with representatives of the labor force in an attempt to guarantee the largest margin of profit possible for themselves in their quest for more and more of the "good life."

Crime is no stranger to this class of people, as the Watergate fiasco so vividly demonstrates. Massive tax evasion, devastation of the environment and consumer fraud are statistics which do not appear in a monthly crime rate report, but they are crimes which have far greater economic impact on the society than burglary, auto theft or the like.

In recent years it has become increasingly clear that revitalization of the center city is a requirement for Detroit's profitable future. Renaissance Center, to be located on the riverfront in the heart of downtown Detroit, stands as the tangible manifestation of the decision of the affluent to effect that rebirth.

Renaissance Center does not signal a rebirth for the majority of citizens of Detroit. It will be life-giving only for those entrepreneurs whose investments of substantial sums of wealth will reap even greater profits. The burden of life of most Detroiters will continue unaffected.



**Renaissance Center**  
Phase 1: A 70-story,  
1500 room hotel,  
four 39-story office buildings,  
shops, restaurants,  
entertainment facilities  
and parking.

Leasing Information: 594-1000

DETROIT RENAISSANCE 13



Set against this background, the function of STRESS as a tool of those in power becomes clear. The intimidation of the black community, the fostering of racial tension and division, the ostensible effort to "make the streets safe" in the center city, all represent an attempt to perpetuate the existing structure of the society.

Put in this broader context, STRESS is meaningless as a viable model of law enforcement. "Street crime" will continue as long as the society is organized for the profit of the few at the expense of the many. STRESS is not the answer to such a critical sociological and economic situation.

On May 11, 1971, in his apartment at the Neal Hotel, Herbert Childress was killed by STRESS Officer Raymond Peterson who alleged that Childress and his friend, James Henderson, had tried to rob him. Henderson escaped with his life but was charged with intent to murder. The police and prosecutor's office allowed him to plead guilty in Traffic Court to a misdemeanor charge of accosting and soliciting and he received a 30 day sentence rather than the publicity of a trial.

In September, an unidentified STRESS Officer told Henderson, in the presence of a witness, that they were going to "get" him.

On September 9, 1971, James Henderson was murdered. The night clerk at the Neal Hotel, Raleigh McDuffie, saw two white men drag Henderson into the hotel, beat him and finally shoot him in the back. McDuffie himself was beaten by these same men. He regained consciousness in the hospital, charged with armed robbery.

During police interrogations, McDuffie was pressured to confess that he murdered Henderson. McDuffie later plead guilty to disorderly conduct and was given a suspended sentence. Once again, the police and prosecutor's office preferred that their actions covering up police misconduct and murder not be subjected to public scrutiny.