

Probe Clears Fire Dept. of "Laxity" in Death Blaze

Inside This Week

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On Pressure In
Mayor of Paradise
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(and Others)

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COMMUNITY DEMANDS PROBE OF BOB MITCHELL BEATING



ROBERT MITCHELL faces the camera during Saturday conference with his attorneys following release on writ.

TWO VERSIONS REVIEWED

"I Don't Know How It Happened to Me"

By ROY W. STEPHENS

Bruised, beaten and bloody, Robert (Bob) Mitchell, owner of a Westside cocktail lounge, sat in a comfortable chair Saturday in the third-floor offices of his attorneys, gazed thoughtfully from a window and pondered "how this ever happened to me."

Hours earlier, the 32-year-old businessman asserted he had been approached and stopped by two beat patrolmen, searched, abused and slugged before being arrested and rushed to Receiving hospital where 10 stitches were required to close a gash in his head.

Explaining the circumstances which led to the altercation with the two patrolmen, Mitchell told the Chronicle he left home about 9 p.m. Friday enroute to his place of business, The Fireman Lounge, 7322 Tireman.

Stopped by the Gilbert Bus Terminal (5600 Wabash) to get a supply of change for my bar," Mitchell said. "While there, I met a friend, a DSR driver, who wanted a lift to West Warren and Williams."

Mitchell said he parked at the intersection, dropped his companion off and prepared to drive to his bar, when he was

stopped by two patrolmen walking a beat.

(The officers have been identified as Patrolmen Robert Lessau and James Davis of Vernor precinct.)

"They yanked both of my car doors open and one checked my credentials and the other rummaged through the car and found \$43 in coin which I had picked up from the terminal."

"Although I tried to explain I owned a bar and needed extra change on weekends, the officers became abusive and accused me of operating a 'floating crap game.'"

Mitchell said he again explained the source and presence of the rolls of coins but the two police officers ordered him from his car.

"They treated me like a known hoodlum," Mitchell con-

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WHAT IS "NECESSARY FORCE?"

A Lag In Practice

(An Editorial)

The savage beating of Robert F. Mitchell, Jr., by two Detroit policemen points up clearly the fact that there is a wide gap between the pronouncements of the Police Commissioner's office and the actual process of law enforcement by policemen in the street.

There can be no question that Police Commissioner Edward Piggins will investigate fully this latest instance of brutality and will more than likely officially deplore the actions of the police in this instance.

However we are forced to submit that this does very little good either for Mr. Mitchell, his family or the community inasmuch as he has sustained a horrible beating, with very little assurance that the act will not be repeated with some other citizen in the future.

Views of the News

By BILL MATNEY

BOB MITCHELL is a round, pleasant young man with an engaging personality and an easy ability to make friends.

While working as a public relations representative for the Pfeiffer Brewing Co., Bob met people throughout the community and impressed them with his capabilities, his sound business sense and his ability to follow through.

These qualities, to say the least, are seldom found in men hardly out of their twenties.

It is understandable, then, why the entire community is up in arms over the tragic incident that befell Mitchell Friday evening. Because so many people know Mitchell intimately, they hesitate to believe police statements that Bob assaulted two police officers and in turn, was sent to Receiving hospital with multiple injuries.

MITCHELL was stopped by two foot patrolmen because his automobile had one defective headlight. Mitchell says he resembled being questioned as a "hoodlum, a crap shooter and a smart n....."

He says the officers refused to believe him when he explained he was a bar owner and the rolls of silver in his possession represented change for his business.

The rest is well known. The Bob Mitchell case is being discussed this week because it graphically illustrates a continuing problem. It has happened in the past to the factory worker, the common laborer, the ordinary citizen.

Now people realize, all too well, that it can happen to ANYONE.

The point is this. Bob Mitchell, a businessman, law school graduate and prominent citizen, possesses no greater or lesser degree of

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One Perishes, Two Seriously Burned In Flash Fire

One youth was fatally burned and two other persons are in a serious condition in Receiving Hospital following a flash fire Sunday at 3889 Torrey.

Fatally burned was 16-year-old Cranford Crowell, of the Torrey address.

Mrs. Janie Crowell, 36, suffered burns and lacerations of the body and right arm. Her condition is temporary serious.

In critical condition is 14-year-old Eddie Lee Crowell,

Jackie Hits \$10,000 Homer



JACKIE ROBINSON hits \$10,000 average against race bias. The former Brooklyn Dodgers star second baseman presents a \$10,000 check to Arthur B. Spingarn, president of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., in behalf of his new employer William Black, president of the

Check Fall O' Nuts Coffee Company and restaurant chain. The contribution is to aid the organization in its legal work in the field of civil rights. The company recently appointed Jackie as vice president in charge of its large personnel staff.

AS PART OF FREEDOM FUND DRIVE

Jackie In Detroit Today

Jackie Robinson, national chairman of the NAACP's 1957 Fight for Freedom Fund, who will speak at Ebenezer AME church Wednesday, this week emphasized that the work of the NAACP "benefits not only Negro citizens but the entire nation."

"In the present world crisis," Robinson told news men, "the colored peoples of the world have their eyes on America to see how Negroes are treated here."

"We are expending huge sums in giving assistance to some of these people abroad but their real attitude will be determined in large measure

by their reaction to the way in which the race problem is handled here at home. We need the support of these people," Robinson said.

Request Report

State Senator George Edwards and Rep. George H. Edwards said Tuesday they had wired Commissioner Piggins for full details of the Bob Mitchell incident. If the report is unsatisfactory, the senators said, they would request an immediate legislative investigation.

The NAACP, the former National League baseball star said, by helping to improve conditions for Negroes in this country strengthens the prestige of the nation among other countries.

Accordingly, he asserted, "white people need to support the NAACP as strongly as do Negroes because it means as much to them as to colored people. The NAACP is an asset to the nation."

He expressed appreciation

for "the contributions of the Spingarns and other white persons to the NAACP cause."

Robinson said his interest in the NAACP stemmed from his observation of the work of the organization while traveling about the country as a professional baseball player.

Negroes generally, he declared "take great pride in the NAACP and its work in gaining citizenship rights."

Robinson will visit Detroit Wednesday and will be guest speaker at a luncheon meeting for NAACP life members and campaign leaders.

Wednesday night he will address a public membership rally at 7:30 p.m. in the Ebenezer AME church, Brush and Willis.

The public rally will feature special entertainment.

Seek Action From O'Brien, Piggins

Bar Owner Arraigned; Files
FBI Complaint Against Police

By WILLIAM C. MATNEY

(Chronicle Managing Editor)

Following fast upon the arrest and beating of a popular young Detroit businessman in a traffic violation case, an outraged community Monday night held an emergency meeting and formed the Detroit Citizens Committee in an effort to spur a "full and complete" investigation of the incident.

Other significant developments:

● Robert F. Mitchell, Jr., of 2801 Virginia Park, the beating victim, pleaded not guilty on arraignment before Recorder's Judge George Murphy to a charge of resisting an officer in the performance of his duty.

The plea was made through his attorney, Julian Rodgers.

● Police Commissioner Piggins late Tuesday ordered a trial board investigation of the case and authorized Mitchell's attorneys to be present during interrogation proceedings. He indicated the probe would be full and complete.

● Special sub-committees of the Citizens Committee held conferences with Chief Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Ralph Garber and Police Commissioner Edward S. Piggins relative to separate, full-scale probes of the arrest and beating.

● Assistant Prosecutors Kermit Bailor, Jr., and Samuel Brezner were appointed special investigators to conduct the Prosecutor's probe.

● A public statement condemning the "brutal treatment" accorded Mitchell was dispatched to press, radio and city administrative agencies by the Citizens Committee.

Mitchell appeared in court Tuesday morning with his left arm in a sling, a bruised right eye and a gauze covering a laceration of his scalp.

Monday, Mitchell filed a complaint with the Detroit FBI against Patrolmen Robert Lessau and James Davis, the arresting officers.

The complaint was filed under a Federal statute providing \$1,000 fine and/or a year in jail for a law enforcement officer, who deprives a citizen of his rights without due process of law.

(Mitchell was arrested Friday evening when the two foot patrolmen stopped Mitchell as he pulled away from the curb at W. Warren and Williams with only one headlamp operating.)

DEATH BLAZE

Clear Fire Dep't of "Laxity"

A three-pronged probe by officials of the Detroit Fire Department and the Fire Fighters' Association this week absolved the department of charges of laxity in responding to a fire in the downriver community which snuffed out the lives of two children.

The charges had been leveled by witnesses and survivors of the fire which razed a frame residence at 3386 E. Electric, killing Amos McCormick, 23 months, and Bonnie McCormick, 12 months.

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AMMONS PLEADS GUILTY

Hypodermic Needle Trips Saxophonist

CHICAGO—Saxophone player Eugene Ammons, of 6157 Rhodes avenue, Wednesday pleaded guilty to having a hypodermic needle in his possession when he was arrested last Oct. 26 at 63rd and Stony Island.

Jury Court Judge Joseph F.

Jan. 31 hearing if his record is clean. The 31-year-old Ammons

"I Don't Know"

(Continued from Page 1)

tinued, "and, although I didn't like it, I wanted to cooperate."

One of the officers walked to a police call box, quickly returned and gave me back my credentials.

"I started to drive off thinking they were through with me when I noticed one of the patrolmen hanging on the side of the car.

"I didn't even know he was there," Mitchell said.

Mitchell said the patrolmen dragged him from the car, slugged him in the stomach, beat him about the head, body and legs. Two teeth were knocked out, Mitchell said, and several were dislocated.

Mitchell said he had been handcuffed behind his back.

"After they beat me up, they took me to Vernor precinct in a scout car that came by.

The young businessman stressed he was not molested in the precinct but was rushed to Receiving hospital almost immediately for treatment, where "doctors took 10 stitches."

The following morning Mitchell and his attorney appeared before Recorder's Judge Frank G. Schemanske. He was charged with felonious assault with an automobile.

This charge was ultimately dropped and changed to resisting a police officer in the performance of his duty.

Testifying Monday before Judge Schemanske, Patrolmen Lessau and Davis said they halted Mitchell because only one headlamp was operating properly.

Lessau said Mitchell became abusive but handed over the latter's credentials.

They quoted Mitchell as saying, "Why are you picking on me? I'm not a hoodlum and I'm in a hurry to get to my place of business."

The patrolmen said they ordered Mitchell from the car and he refused to either get out or permit them to search the vehicle.

Patrolmen Lessau and Davis said Mitchell suddenly drove off dragging Lessau "about five feet."

Lessau said he was able to seize the auto registration from Mitchell's hand when the latter stopped the car and got out.

The two patrolmen testified a "struggle" ensued during which Mitchell struck Lessau on the arm and ripped Davis' badge from his uniform.

Both officers said it was necessary to subdue Mitchell and Lessau struck him on the head with a night stick.