

# Northwest Rape Terror Case Closed?

## Police Ponder Weird Puzzle

By BRIAN FLANIGAN

A man who has left a wake of sexual assaults and robberies throughout northwest Detroit during the past year could well be still at — large, according to a Detroit police official.

"I don't think the incident involving Officer Cedric Ector should allow people to take a false sense of security," said Inspector Robert Hialop, "because we're not saying that he's the man responsible for the incidents in northwest Detroit.

"Because the simple fact of the matter is that we haven't yet been able to establish whether or not he was," he said.

For the past few months, residents of the 13th (Palmer Park) and 16th (Northwest) Precincts have been edgier than usual because it has become apparent that the rapist-robber has been operating rather effectively in the area.

According to a police circular, the suspect is believed responsible for 13 rapes, two shootings and a string of robberies since August 8, 1977.

Late last week, many Detroiters thought the "Northwest Rapist's" crime spree had come to an end.

At about 2 a.m. Thursday, according to police reports, a man approached two women at a bus stop near Schaefer and Fenkel, pulled a gun and ordered them into a nearby alley.

The two women were able to escape and, about two hours later, one of them noticed her attacker walk by her home and get into a nearby car. She quickly jotted down the license plate number and notified police.

After checking the license and determining the car was owned by the mother of Detroit Police Officer Cedric Ector, 31, Lt. John Scott and Inspector James Ruby drove to the mother's home.

As they arrived at the home, Ector drove up in the car. Seeing Ruby and Scott, Ector pulled a .357 magnum and shot himself in the head.

At 12:45 p.m. Friday, doctors at Mt. Carmel Mercy hospital turned off a life-support machine and Ector was officially declared dead.

Ector's death touched off a furor, but Police Chief William Hart, during a press conference, was quick to point out that the dead officer may not have been the "Northwest Rapist."

"We feel very strongly that he is the person who committed the crime this morning," said Hart. "We're not so sure he's the Northwest rapist."

Hart's statement has since been echoed by Hialop.

"There's still an awful lot of things that have to be done," he

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said, "and we haven't connected him to any of the incidents in northwest Detroit.

"He may have been involved, but that's pure conjecture," he said. "There's absolutely no way we can say he's our man because that hasn't been established in any way."

Hislop discounted some media reports which suggested that, since investigators were checking into Ector's background, it indicated they believed he was the "Northwest Rapist."

"If we catch anybody trying to sexually assault a person, we immediately do background checking," he said. "That's a standard procedure."

In fact, what seems to be developing as far as Ector is concerned is that he may, in truth, have tried to assault the two women last Thursday morning, but he was essentially a tragic figure.

An 11 year police veteran who was a respected member of his church, Ector had gone through a troubled marriage and then been forced to live with the knowledge that another woman he'd loved had committed suicide when she was two months pregnant.

While those who knew him well may silently admit he may have become emotionally unbalanced which ended when he took his own life, not one will agree that he may have been the "Northwest Rapist."

"And there's just no way we can say he was either," said Hislop, who urged northwest Detroit residents to be alert to compromising situations on the street and in their homes.

A funeral service for Ector was held Monday at 11 a.m. at Greater Southern Missionary Baptist church, where he was a member. Following the service, Ector was interred at Detroit Memorial cemetery.