

Two Charged With Murder

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testify about the Braun shooting, said Plunkett.

BESIDES CALLING neighbors who watched both shootings as witnesses, Plunkett said he will introduce physical evidence obtained by the state police crime lab.

"It should be made clear that the Farmington Township Police Department itself and other officers in the department should not be considered to be implicated in any way," Plunkett stressed.

"What's involved is two officers who have just as many constitutional rights as any other person. This incident involves the individual actions of individual officers and should not have any effect on other officers of the township department."

Plunkett did tell this newspaper, however, he was "distressed" over the refusal of some township police officers to cooperate with county state

and state police investigators. Plunkett said the accused officers had every right not to talk with investigators. "But there were other officers who were in no danger of being accused of any crime who refused to make statements or talk with us," the prosecutor said.

Plunkett described the refusal of policemen not in danger of self-incrimination to cooperate as "a serious undermining of law enforcement procedures."

The prosecutor said he hoped the township police administrators would check into the behavior of the balking policemen and "would attempt to correct this."

PLUNKETT SAID it is routine for an investigation to be taken for any incident when a police officer shoots someone. "But, to my knowledge, no police officer has ever been charged with criminal homicide in the history of this county," he added.

Plunkett explained his staff had to make a decision about going to court after obtaining statements from eye-witnesses and gathering physical evidence.

The decision narrowed down to choosing between justifiable or excusable homicide and criminal homicide, he continued.

"The evidence, in both cases, that we have been able to gather indicates that it was not justifiable or excusable homicide," he added.

Therefore, the charge had to be criminal homicide, Plunkett concluded.

"We don't enjoy the luxury of walking away from such an incident but must make a decision when someone is killed," said Plunkett.

BRAUN WAS THE husband of Mrs. Grace Braun, heiress to the Vernon ginger ale fortune.

Sonnenberg is the son of William Sonnenberg Sr., a township auxiliary police officer and candidate for constable, and nephew of Township Clerk Floyd Cairns.

Sonnenberg retired from the township police force a week after the Braun shooting. Sonnenberg now owns and operates a party store in Pontiac.

On the evening of July 3, Mrs. Braun had called township police and asked assistance in moving her clothes from the Braun's residence in Independence Commons.

After police and Mrs. Braun arrived, Braun dropped a gun he was carrying and ran into the garage of the home according to state police.

According to state police, Braun picked up a fireplace log, struck an auxiliary officer and threw it at a second officer.

Braun grabbed a second log and advanced on Sonnenberg, state police report, who fired a warning shot into the ground and then shot Braun once in the leg and once above the waist with a .357 magnum pistol.

Investigators report police beat Braun on the head with a blackjack, fracturing his skull, before Sonnenberg fired his shots.

GODWIN AND Warrack

were the two officers answering a call involving family trouble at the Kephart home Aug. 30.

Mrs. Kephart reportedly told police on the scene her husband had fired a shot in the backyard, but a neighbor had the situation under control.

"For some unknown reason," says Plunkett, Warrack fired a warning shot when Kephart walked out of his home with hands in the air. Godwin fired his shotgun, Plunkett says, hitting Kephart in the chest and killing him instantly.

Investigators report Kephart's pistol was found inside under the kitchen table in an "inoperable" condition.

IN THE BRAUN shooting,

resignation from the police force before the Braun shooting July 3 and retired a couple of days afterwards.

Another eye-witness to the Braun shooting was an auxiliary patrolman, Hall explained, and not subject to suspension.

HALL SAID HE felt he could not make the suspensions before Saturday because officers were not eye-witnesses did not know for certain if they would be incriminated or not until the warrants were actually issued.

In making his motion, Oppenheimer explained he had not discussed his motion with other trustees prior to the meeting.

Oppenheimer stressed it was not his purpose to ask for an investigation into facts surrounding the two deaths because the proper investigation authorities were the county prosecutor's office and state police.

"I'm concerned with the fact that, apparently, the police officers involved as witnesses to both affairs have failed to fully cooperate in the investigation that followed by the state police and county prosecutor's office."

AFTER THE events occurred, he continued, all police officers not incriminated but

Township Patrolman John Hedrick and an attorney were immediately on the scene and reportedly advised Sonnenberg and the other patrolmen to say nothing.

Hedrick is president of the Farmington Township Police Officers Association and the attorney at the scene with his assistant for Noel Gage FOPA attorney.

Hedrick was cleared in Oakland County Circuit Court of assault and battery charges made against him about a year ago.

But a civil suit is still pending in U.S. District Court against Hedrick for allegedly beating Walter Vetowich and

violating Vetowich's civil rights.

Abel Seiburn, attorney for Vetowich, is seeking a court judgement of \$125,000 against Hedrick, Farmington Township and Township Police Chief Irving Yakes, who were originally named as co-defenders in that civil suit but have since been dropped.

Seiburn says the civil suit is now only against Hedrick, and he hopes this case can be brought to trial and not dragged on.

It is expected that Gage will be defense attorney appearing for Friday's preliminary exam. Plunkett will be asking that the accused officers be bound over to circuit court to stand trial.

Witnesses have an obligation to report fully and cooperate fully with law enforcement agencies charged with the investigation of the two deaths.

Oppenheimer said he understood that those officers reluctant to make statements shortly after the Braun shooting were reluctant because of advice given by the attorney for the Farmington Police Officers Association.

"The accused has the right to remain silent but anyone who is not accused and a witness has every obligation as a servant of this community to speak out," said Oppenheimer who added the obligation is clearly spelled out in the township's police manual.

Hall complained that the Detroit newspaper knew about the warrants being issued on Friday and the township was not informed until Saturday when the arrests were made.

Trustee Fred Lichtman wondered why the officers involved were not suspended in July for not talking with the prosecutor's office.

Lichtman then added: "I wonder how long we are going to go on allowing Noel Gage to run our police department."

Gage is attorney representing the FPOA.

Hall commented that the next time Gage or one of his associates appears on the scene of a crime or arrest, the commanding officer present will instruct Gage to leave and if he doesn't "he'll be given a free ride to the township hall."

Earlier in the meeting, Dr. Burton Levy commented from the audience that police officers in the department may be in need of better training.

Levy, a candidate for township trustee, suggested that more training might be necessary if reports were correct that a police report of only four lines was submitted by the reporting officer at the Braun shooting.



HONORED GUEST — Mrs. Clara Wixom, a member of one of Farmington's pioneer families, was guest of honor Sept. 13 at a party in the American Legion Hall marking her 90th birthday. (Evert photo)

Musicales Sale Lists 'Treasures And Trifles'

FARMINGTON In order to continue its program of scholarships for local music students, the Farmington Musicale will hold its annual 18-member "Treasures and Trifles" sale Sept. 26, in First United Methodist Church, 3312 Grand River at Warner, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Proceeds of the sale, which has a history of community support, will go to junior and senior high school students chosen on the basis of auditions to be held in the spring of

1971. The auditions each year are judged by experts in the various fields of musical performance, and are publicized in cooperation with the public schools in Farmington.

"Treasures and Trifles" will present items in the following categories: furniture, apparel, knick-knacks, jewelry, domestics, glassware and dishes, along with a children's corner of books, games and toys. A feature of the sale will be a boutique of hand-made articles offered by the Musicale's Junior Group, the Glenspeils.

St. Francis Council 4401 Knights of Columbus, 21909 Middle Belt, Farmington, has installed officers for the coming year.

They include the Rev. James B. Knight, chaplain; Dale Monette, grand knight; John Kallman, deputy grand knight; Angelo Tata, chancellor; Anthony Balach, advo-

cate; Richard Bloom, warden; Leo Meagher, lecturer; Thomas Kula, financial secretary.

Others are Charles Cunio, treasurer; Lawrence Youngblood, recorder; Alfred Greshover, Hugh Marx and George Jorgensen, trustees; Don Lock Jr., inside guard; Ronald Beaudoin and Jack Farrow.

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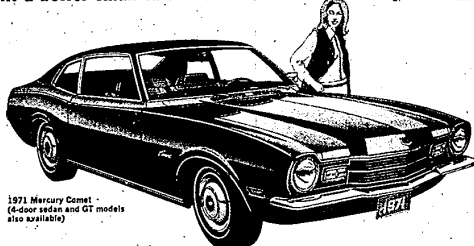
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THIS AMOUNT IS ADDED ACCORDING TO THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 211.59 COMPILED LAWS OF MICHIGAN FOR 1948 TO COVER THE EXPENSE OF SALE ON THOSE TAXES AND DESCRIPTIONS SUBJECT, TO SALE AT THE NEXT MAY TAX SALE.

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