

Fight could be tied to shooting

By Carolyn DeMarco and Bob Sklar staff writers

A fight at Walled Lake Western High School last Thursday had nothing to do with Friday's shooting at a school bus in Farmington Hills, said Carl Pacacha, assistant superintendent for secondary education. Nor was that fight exactly what is being reported in the rumor mills, he said.

"There have been all kinds of rumors," Pacacha said, "but the truth is there were no knives, no weapons of any kind. It was not even a fist fight."

Despite Pacacha's view, police haven't ruled out the possibility the fight provoked the school bus shooting. "We haven't eliminated any possibilities," Farmington Hills detective Darnel Krause said.

Pacacha said a group of eight to 10 students confronted a smaller group at noon Thursday as they were seated in the lunch room. "Words were exchanged and chairs were thrown on both sides," Pacacha said, but the fight was over in seconds.

He said the groups represented different cultures, but declined to identify them. Eight students representing both groups were suspended after due process, he said.

PACACHA SAID earlier in the day the Oakland County Sheriff's Department was called to intervene in an argument between a stepson and stepfather.

Alerted that an unrelated confrontation was planned at lunch time, administrators asked the two responding deputies to go to the lunchroom. The deputies were present when the group altercation started but were not required to assist.

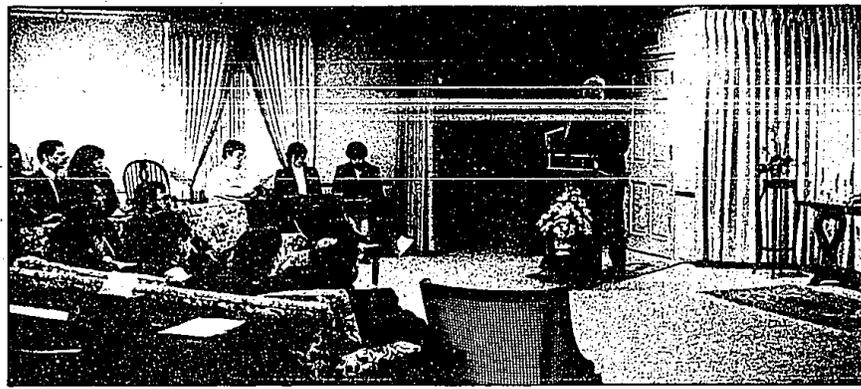
The sheriff's department confirmed that they were not called to the high school to quell the disturbance.

"They were there but they did not take a hand in it," Pacacha said. "It was over in a matter of seconds."

Pacacha said, "I understand parents are calling the media to suggest that weapons were used. That is unfounded and spurious."

"WE HAVEN'T eliminated the possibility the shooting stems from the fight at Walled Lake Western on the 12th," Krause said. "That's not to say the shooting was school related. But we've not eliminated the possibility that it was related to the fight in the cafeteria."

The gunman could've just been an angry motorist. "But generally, there's some kind of motive for this type of thing," Krause said.



The Rev. Timothy Szott (right) of St. Agatha Catholic Church led the memorial service for the murder victims.

RANDY BORST/Staff photographer

Murder victims called 'friendly'

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Charged in the deaths is Holston Martin, 30 of Detroit, who was arrested early Sunday by Detroit police and arraigned Tuesday in Detroit's 36th District Court on four counts of first-degree murder, four counts of felony murder and robbery, Detroit police said. He is the only person involved, police said.

Magistrate Vesta Swenson entered a not guilty plea on behalf of Martin, who is being held without bond in the Wayne County Jail, awaiting a Jan. 27 preliminary examination on the charges.

The robbery of the Darnell family was the motive for the slayings, police said.

THE DARNELLS, who were active at St. Agatha in Redford Township, "just lived a simple life, doing the things they thought Christ would want them to do," Szott said. "Jesus

tells us the reward for being his disciple is great."

Bill Darnell was a vice president with American Business Computer Information Systems in Farmington Hills. Bette was a programmer with Genzlinger Associates in Troy.

Managers at both businesses described the couple as reliable, add-

ing they were concerned when neither showed for work Thursday.

Michael Ball, president of the company Bill Darnell worked for, said the Darnells "were friendly. That was probably the byword. Bill was open; friendly, outgoing. So was Bette. They were the kind of people you wanted to know."

2nd incident studied

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Detectives are interviewing students at Walled Lake Western as well as students aboard Vowles' bus in an effort to determine a motive, Nebus added.

Students on Vowles' bus first noticed the trailing car near Haggerty, 2 1/2 miles west.

After the shots were fired and it was evident no one was hurt, Vowles radioed the bus garage in Walled Lake to report the incident, then completed her high school run.

Elementary on West Maple to West Bloomfield, where she changed buses for her elementary school run. She feared the damaged windows would shatter.

A bus driver for three years, Vowles said she also didn't want "the elementary kids to know what happened."

"When they asked what happened to my bus, I told them we'd talk about it another time. I told them let's just get home and have a nice weekend."

The damaged bus was repaired and back on the road Monday.

VOWLES THEN drove to Maple

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