

Off-Duty Detective Is Killed Trying to Halt Club Holdup

By DAVID BIRD

An off-duty New York City police detective died early yesterday five hours after he was shot repeatedly while trying to stop a robbery in a Queens social club.

The 38-year-old detective, Abraham Walton, was one of the 10 to 15 patrons in the Desire Club, at 125-18 111th Avenue, Richmond Hill, when four gunmen burst in at about 4:15 A.M. and announced a holdup.

The detective did not immediately identify himself, but joined the other patrons in following the gunmen's orders to lie on the floor.

The robbers took a ring, a watch and a wallet containing \$270 from the club's manager, Rocky Foster. When he could not produce a key to the cash register, they beat him on the head with their guns.

At that point Detective Walton, a friend of the manager, got up from the floor, identified himself and drew his gun. The robbers opened fire, hitting him in the head, chest, back, stomach, arm and foot.

A Gunmen May Have Been Hit

Detective Walton is thought to have got off two or three shots before he fell, and the police say that at least one of the robbers may have been wounded. They fled after stripping Detective Walton of his gun, shield and wallet. None of the other patrons were hurt. The police said they had no leads.

Detective Walton was taken to Jamaica Hospital and died on the operating table at 9:30 A.M.

The Police Department said he had gone off duty early Saturday and was due to start again late yesterday. He had been on the force for 12 years and was a member of the citywide anticrime unit. He lived about 15 blocks from the club where

he was shot and had visited it before.

Surviving him are his wife, Ruby; two daughters, Trina, 13, and Patricia, 12, and a son, Brian, 8. He is the seventh policeman — the second while off duty — to be killed in the city this year. Four were members of the city force and three were with the Transit Authority police.

William R. Bracey, the Police Department's chief of patrol, who went to the hospital shortly after the shooting yesterday, said of Detective Walton: a "He was one of the top five police officers I've ever worked with. He was a very quiet man, a man of steel, not afraid of anything but not gung-ho, either."

He said the detective, who had 33 departmental citations, had behaved in a professional manner during the robbery, "not identifying himself right away but doing his thing, waiting for the right moment." He added: "Then they started acting like animals and beating the manager, and he had to act."

Chief Bracey said Mr. Foster's head wounds required 25 to 30 stitches at Jamaica Hospital.

Mayor Koch's Statement

Mayor Koch also went to the hospital when he learned of the shooting and talked with the detective's wife while her husband was still alive. He said she "had made sure that the children were taken care of and asked that we call her place of employment to say she would not be in at 9 A.M."

The Mayor, who gave blood in the effort to save the detective's life, said he left the hospital after he was told that it looked as if the patient would live. When he died, the Mayor said: "It is a terrible

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Detective Abraham Walton

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shock. This morning I spoke with his wife. She is a woman of great composure. I still find it incredible how brave the wives of policemen and firemen are, facing death."

The Desire Club, in a deteriorating neighborhood, occupies the ground floor of a two-story brick building on a block with abandoned stores.

Well-Heeled Customers

In one of the few remaining shops nearby, the Economy Plumbing and Heating Company, at 127-01 111th Avenue, Henry Latronico, the proprietor, said he used to see customers of the club leaving shortly after he opened his shop in the mornings at 7:30.

"They had big Lincoln Continentals and Cadillacs and beautiful girls," he said.

Like hundreds of other private clubs in the city, the Desire is allowed to remain open past the 4 A.M. closing time for licensed taverns and other night spots where liquor is sold.

In another attack, late Sunday night, the Officer Kenneth Unick was grazed in the leg by a bullet when he was fired upon while responding to a call of a burglary in progress at 57 Corbin Place, in the Coney Island section of Brooklyn.

A 14-year-old boy was arrested and another was being sought, Officer Unick was listed as in not serious condition after being treated at the Lutheran Medical Center.

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