

THE MICHIGAN CITIZEN

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Serial Killer Kops?

"We teach our officers to shoot to kill."

Acting Detroit Police Chief Benny Napoleon, in testimony before Detroit's City Council.

By Diane Bukowski

Is a Detroit police officer - who has killed three people since he joined the force in 1993 - a logical result of the policy cited by Benny Napoleon, above? Are there others like him?

With grim determination, Arnetta Grable and Herman Vallery have spent the last three and a half years uncovering the truth about Brown's record.

Their son, Lamar Grable, was killed by Officer Brown in 1996, Despite the "wall of silence" police administrators erected in the case. Grable and Vallery have finally succeeded in identifying two other young men who lost their lives at Brown's hands, and made contact with their families.

They have also uncovered records of other lawsuits and complaints against Brown. These include a suit brought by a fellow police officer, Loronzo Jones, who says that during a traffic stop, Brown dragged him out of his car, hit him on the head with his gun, and pepper sprayed him without cause. A process server filed a complaint against Brown because he threatened her when she served Officer Jones' lawsuit on him.

In a deposition given in 1998, Brown admitted to having fired his gun in five separate incidents since 1993. He has fired it at least twice more, in January 1999 and January 2000. Police Commander Sidney Bogan recently confirmed that the Departments is investigating the last incident, in which Brown discharged his

gun at alleged shoplifters outside the Toys R Us at the Tel-Twelve Mall while off duty.

In all the "shots fired" cases, Brown's partners did not use their guns. In one case, his partner apprehended a fleeing suspect by hand after Brown had shot at him.

Brown, who is African-American and 33 years old, was born and raised on the east side of Detroit near Mack and Van Dyke. After graduating from Kettering High School in 1985, he spent six years in the Marine Corp. He entered the Police Academy in May of 1993. Brown worked in the 10th Precinct, then was assigned to Mayor Dennis Archer's personal security force for six months in 1994. He was later assigned to the Harbormaster Unit at Belle Isle.

After the shooting of Lamar Grable in September 1996, he worked again in the 10th precinct, and then in Eastern Precinct Support. In May of 1998, he took his current assignment in the city-wide Tactical Services Section.

Brown has recently acted as a spokesperson for the Detroit Police Department, once during media coverage of the schoolgirl rapes, and again on March 10, when he commented on TV about a police raid at a "chop shop," where stolen vehicles were allegedly stripped for parts.

Detroit Police Chief Benny Napoleon was asked in February whether the record of three killings by Eugene Brown in less than seven years is normal. He responded that it was unusual, but said, "What would you do if these individuals came at you with a gun?"

However, even Police Department records in two of the three killings do not claim that the victims had guns.

Rodrick Carrington

According to his family, all 30-year-old Rodrick B. Carrington had in his possession at the time

of his death on February 9, 1995 was a Bible. "He was the last person in the world to carry a knife," says his brother Roosevelt Carrington Jr.

Carrington, the youngest of five children of Roosevelt, Sr. and Mattie Carrington, was born in Birmingham, Alabama. He was a football star at East Catholic High School and an aspiring boxer. He served in the U.S. Navy and obtained a degree in mechanical engineering.

On February 9, 1995, at about 2 a.m., Carrington was at the corner of W. Grand Boulevard and Grand River. Roosevelt Carrington Jr. says a witness in the case, Sharon Easley, saw him at the Amoco station trying to use the pay phone which did not work. He went inside to get change, then drove to the Mobil station across the street.

He was on the pay phone there when Officer Eugene Brown and his partner Craig Stewart drove up. In his statement, Brown says that he had observed Carrington's gray station wagon going in and out of the gas stations and noted that it had no license plate or temporary sticker. When he questioned him, Brown says Carrington got out of the car and began advancing on him.

According to a written affidavit in court files, Sharon Easley said that Carrington was retreating, with no gestures or acts that appeared to be threatening, when he was shot three times by Officer Brown.

In his written report given that day, and in the deposition he gave later in the case, Brown said that Carrington pulled a "steak knife" and advanced at him with the knife over his head. In his deposition given in the Lamar Grable case in November 1998, Brown said that Carrington pulled two steak knives, the second one after he was shot the first time.

Police Officer Harrison Jenkins, called to the scene after the incident, said in his report that he saw what "appeared to be a knife" next to

Carrington, then wrote in capital letters that Carrington "DIED" after being transported to Henry Ford Hospital.

Carrington was shot three times by Brown. The first shot lodged in the Bible he was carrying, over the left side of his abdomen. The second shot hit him in the right side of the abdomen and the third shot in the shoulder.

Roosevelt Sr. says that although he knows the family of Benny Napoleon, who was second in command at the time, he received no help from the Police Department when he inquired into his youngest child's death. Roosevelt Jr. says he contacted Wayne County Prosecutor John O'Hair last summer but has yet to hear back from him.

Attorney Ernest Jarrett filed suit in Wayne County Circuit Court on behalf of the Carrington family. The lawsuit was dismissed by Judge Isidore Torres in February 1998. Roosevelt Jr. says the lawsuit failed because Sharon Easley was unwilling to testify and Officer Craig Stewart never showed up for his scheduled deposition.

Lamar Grable

Says Arnetta Grable of her first-born child, "Lamar wrote poetry and stories, and played violin and Keyboards. He was quiet and shy, he expressed himself on paper. He was an activist, but preferred a background position. He recruited for the NAACP. And he started YES, Young Entrepreneur System. His videographic business was one of the businesses started out of that.

"Two weeks before he was killed, he spoke at a 'Save the Children' conference where he introduced the issue of police brutality against Black youth. Lamar would advise his brother how to behave if he was ever stopped by the police - not to make any false moves, not to reach into his pocket, not to get smart with

them.”

Ms. Grable says that on the day of his death, her son was in a "happy and satisfied" frame of mind because he had just started a new job and spent the morning at orientation. "His disposition that day was far from one where he would have been going out shooting a cop. Lamar had no police record of any kind.”

Lamar's father Herman Vallery said his son left his home on Canton the night of September 21, 1996, fifteen minutes before neighbors came running to let him know that Lamar had been shot. Lamar's cousin Reginald Hudgens, who lived on Field, said in a police report that he and Lamar had walked to a neighborhood church where a party was in progress.

When they were turned away because the party was almost over, he says they split up. He went to get his hair done at a neighbor's house on Field and saw Lamar walking across a vacant lot at St. Paul and Field. Only moments later, he says, he saw a police car going up a nearby alley and heard eight gunshots. When he and his mother ran to the scene, they saw Lamar on the ground.

Police cordoned off the neighborhood and moved the angry crowd away from the scene. By the time Lamar's father and mother got there, Lamar had been transported to Detroit Receiving Hospital by EMS.

Officer Brown says in his report that he and his partner Vicki Yost observed a man at the intersection of E. Grand Boulevard and St. Paul. He says that he saw the man "remove and conceal" an object which he thought to be a weapon, although in his deposition he says the man was openly carrying a gun in his left hand when he first spotted him.

Brown claims that the man ran when they got out of the car and told him to stop. Brown says he pursued him on foot through an alley between E. Grand Boulevard and Field while

Yost pursued him in the scout car. Brown admits that he lost sight of the person he was pursuing for a time while he was in the alley.

When he came out of the alley, says Brown, he saw Lamar in a vacant lot next to 1764 Field and claims Lamar fired at him and he returned fire. He says he and Lamar then collided and Lamar fired two more shots, hitting him in his bullet-proof vest. He then fired several more times into Lamar's chest at close range.

The autopsy report from the Wayne County Morgue shows that Lamar was shot twice in the back, not at close range, with one wound penetrating his heart and lungs. He sustained six other gunshot wounds to his chest and arms, three in the chest at close range. Herman Vallery says he believes the two bullets in the back were the first shots.

"He was already what you would consider 'stopped' - there was no necessity to shoot him anymore. All the other six shots were murder - plain, senseless slaughter and murder which you would not even do to an animal."

Officer Vicki Yost refused to give a deposition in the case, pleading her Fifth Amendment right against incriminating herself.

Brown was given an award for wearing his bullet-proof vest in the incident by Mayor Dennis Archer. Says Arnetta Grable, "The Mayor said Lamar was just a hoodlum on the street who shot one of his boys, and this was an example to the city - if anyone messed with 'his boys,' they'd bring him down.'"

She and Herman Vallery say that Lamar did not own a gun and that the Department has no physical evidence connecting him to the gun Brown claims he was carrying. Police files given to Grable's attorney do not indicate that an ownership trace was ever performed on the gun.

The Detroit Police Board of Review declared

Lamar's death a "justifiable homicide" in November 1996. The civil lawsuit, filed by attorneys Sheldon Miller and O'Neal Wright, is scheduled to go to trial in front of Judge Isidore Torres on the county side of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center on April 24, 2000

Darren Miller

Edith Miller says the death of her 34-year-old son Darren Miller has devastated her large, close-knit family. She has two daughters and four other sons, one of whom still cannot talk about Darren without bursting out into tears. "We can't put a closure to it because we don't know what happened. Why did the policeman think he had to shoot?"

Miller and her daughter Carol say Darren was brought up to respect authority and the police in particular. They and Ed Klee of the Free Wheelers Motorcycle Club, to which he belonged for ten years, say that Darren was not aggressive.

"Not only would he not fight, he would run from a fight if he had to, ever since he was a little child," says his mother.

"I've never even seen him angry," says Klee. "It just wasn't his nature." They say that Darren, who was known as "Krunch" to Free-Wheelers members, had no criminal record.

Miller served in the Army and worked for the last ten years of his life as a machinist at Motor City Bending on Detroit's east side.

On the night of January 22, 1999, he and his wife Sandra were getting ready to go home from the Free Wheelers club, which is located on Lynch Road West of Van Dyke, next door to the offices of UAW Local 961. Klee and Miller's family say that a scout car occupied by Eugene Brown and his partner Jason Tonti drove up and Brown asked them what was going on.

Klee says officers at the Ninth Precinct told him that in the 30 years the club has been at that location, there has never been a complaint against the club. He says members are middle-aged, employed and respectable.

When Miller and his wife told Brown that they were going home, the scout car left, but then returned. According to Klee and Miller's family, police claim that Miller and his wife were fighting and that when Brown approached Miller in the vestibule of the club, Miller swung a sledgehammer at him and Brown fired in self-defense.

A lawsuit filed December 30 on behalf of Miller's wife Sandra by Attorney Juan Mateo says that Miller went into the club and the followed. While they were standing and talking arm in arm inside the tiny vestibule, Miller was shot twice in the head by Brown.

The lawsuit says that "miraculously" the bullets missed Sandra Miller, but that "the impact of the bullets caused Mr. Miller's head to explode with blood, spurting and covering Sandra Miller."

Ed Klee says Brown fired through the open-weave metal grate in the upper half of the locked inner door.

Police officers called to the scene broke down the door, says Klee. Sandra Miller was arrested for carrying a concealed weapon, allegedly in her purse. She was not released until early the next morning, when charges were dropped.

In the spring of 1999, several hundred members of motorcycle clubs from around the state of Michigan protested Miller's death at Police Department headquarters at 1300 Beaubien. Although the press was contacted, the only coverage they received was an article in a motorcycle club publication.

One of the cops stood in the doorway holding his hand out like a pistol, firing off shots as the

marchers walked by, Klee said.

Miller's family members and friends say the Police Department and the office of the prosecutor have stone-walled them in their attempts to find out the details surrounding "Krunch's" death.

Last month, they met with a representative of State Attorney General Jennifer Granholm's office. The representative also met with members of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, including Herman Vallery. Granholm's aide did not inform members of either meeting that he was already looking in to another killing by police officer Eugene Brown.

OTHER KILLER KOPS?

Arnetta Grable and Herman Vallery say that they want Brown fired from the police force and charged with murder by the Wayne County prosecutor's office. They say, however, that the large numbers of killings by Detroit police officers in recent years indicate that Brown is not alone in his actions.

The organization which they helped form, the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, has publicized the names of other police officers who have killed citizens under questionable circumstances, and says it is demanding justice for those victims as well.

These include even current Chief of Police Benny Napoleon, who led the operation that killed Jimmi Ruth Ratliff in her apartment on E. Lafayette in 1997. Officer Thomas E. Phillips killed 21-year-old Rahaab White in December 1995, and Officer Marlon Benson Killed 26-year-old Damian Solomon with three bullets to the chest in February 1998.

Arnetta Grable says that since the Coalition started tracking these killings, media reports have eliminated the names of those killed as well as the police officers involved. She says the

Coalition suspects that many more have been killed. She says she was contacted two weeks ago by a mother whose son had just been killed.

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Brown trial: 'Grable walked into line of fire'

August 16, 2003

By Diane Bukowski

DETROIT - Lamar Grable inadvertently walked into the line of fire during a wild west-style police chase nearly seven years ago, according to testimony from a key eyewitness.

Reginald Hudgens, who was with Grable until moments before his death, testified August 4 that he last saw Grable crossing Kercheval, at the corner of Field Street, headed toward the vacant lot where he was shot to death by Detroit Police Officer Eugene Brown Sept. 21, 1996.

"I heard seven or eight gunshots," said Hudgens, a cousin of Grable's, who testified during an ongoing civil trial. "Just before the shots, a police car rode down Kercheval, cut up Field and then through the alley, and stopped at the vacant lot."

The car was driven by Brown's partner, officer Vicki Yost. According to her earlier testimony, Yost, who is now a lieutenant, had just radioed Brown that she saw a man they were chasing going into the lot. Brown was running down another alley in pursuit of the man, whom the two had just seen at East Grand Boulevard and St. Paul Street, one block south of Kercheval Street and one block east of Field Street.

The two testified that the man appeared to be carrying a gun, which they said was later used to shoot Brown twice in his bullet-proof vest. Both said, however, that they lost sight of the man for several moments during the chase.

Hudgens testified that he, his 14-year-old sister

and Grable had just left a Police Athletic League (P.A.L.) party where they had been searched for weapons, and that Grable had no gun.

Brown ran across Field Street into the vacant lot, where Grable was shot eight times seconds later. Graphic blown-up photos of Grable's wounds, including three close contact shots in his chest, which tore into his heart and a major artery and vein, and two long-range shots in his back, were shown to jurors who heard testimony from Dr. Werner Spitz, a world-renowned forensic pathologist.

"This is not an infrequent method of execution, which this is," Spitz said, in response to a question by attorney Melissa El, who with attorney David Robinson represents Grable's mother, Arnetta Grable, in the civil trial.

Spitz said that abrasions on both of Grable's shins were sustained in a forward fall to the ground. He said this was inconsistent with Brown's testimony that Grable fell backwards after a sustained hand-to-hand struggle in which Grable twice shot Brown and Brown pumped bullets into Grable's chest.

Police officer Eric Kimble, whose car was first on the scene following the shooting, said that when he arrived, Grable was lying face down, not on his back.

Brown and Yost testified at length July 30 and 31, giving remarkably consistent versions of the incident, in which they both said that they were positive Grable was the man they originally spotted. But Brown testified that Grable was wearing a "blue jean" outfit, whereas Spitz, who examined Grable's clothing, said Grable wore a brown jacket.

The two were repeatedly questioned about why they had not radioed the chase and a description of the man to police dispatch prior to the shooting. They responded that no emergency existed until the man they were pursuing drew his pistol and fired at Brown.

"I've been involved in hundreds of such incidents," testified Yost, who said she had been shot in the leg during one such incident in Decembe 2001. She received a citation for valor, and the shooter received a sentence of 40 years in prison. The lieutenant also said she had received awards for catching a serial rapist and stopping a jumper on the Belle Isle Bridge.

Yost, who pleaded her Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination during her first deposition on the case, later gave two depositions that substantially filled in details missing from her first written report of the incident, dated the day afterwards.

Several police supporters were present during her testimony, including Deputy Chief Pamela Evans. Evans, who oversees the department's compliance with recent federal consent decrees, later left the courtroom with Yost.

Brown, who remained impassive, polite and soft-spoken throughout his testimony, has had no supporters in the courtroom. Testimony regarding his killings of two other men, and numerous other brutality incidents, was barred from the proceedings by Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Isidore Torres. Torres also barred testimony from witnesses other than those placed on record three years ago by Grable's former attorneys, including testimony from people who were present in the neighborhood at the time of the shooting.

"He drew his weapon out of his right-hand side coat pocket, extended his right arm and fired at me, and I returned fire from the sidewalk," Brown testified regarding his first encounter with Grable.

He said Grable missed him and continued running with his right arm extended to the side, pointing the gun, until the two "collided" behind a mound in the vacant lot, where a struggle ensued and the final shootings took place. Brown repeatedly referred to Grable's use of his right arm during the

confrontation.

During her testimony, however, Grable's mother, Arnetta Grable, said her son was left-handed.

She and Grable's father, Herman Vallery, with whom Grable lived for the last six years of his life, testified that their son, who was 20 when he was killed, was a dutiful and loving child who did not use drugs, alcohol or cigarettes, and was "very happy" about his life.

"Every chance he got, he was shooting videos," said Vallery. Grable ran his own video business, filming weddings and other events, and founded the Young Entrepreneur System (Y.E.S.), a program to teach young people how to run businesses. His parents said he was devoted to his daughter, Brittany, a one-year-old baby at the time of her father's death.

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THE MICHIGAN CITIZEN

VICTORY! Jury sides with Grable

August 23, 2003

By Diane Bukowski

DETROIT - After a grueling seven-year battle, the family of Lamar Grable emerged victorious Aug. 6, winning a \$4 million jury verdict for Grable's execution-style slaying by Detroit police officer Eugene Brown.

"I kept my promise to my son, that I would vindicate his name," said Arnetta Grable following the verdict. "Lamar Grable's creator will be Eugene Brown's final judge. The Detroit Police Department and the badge that he wears will not protect him on judgment day."

The night of Grable's slaying on Sept. 21, 1996, then-Mayor Dennis Archer told the media that Grable was a criminal who had tried to kill a police officer.

Brown, who had served on Archer's personal security staff, was given a commendation by police officials for his actions. Brown had already killed another man, Rodrick Carrington, in 1995, and would go on to kill Darren Miller in 1999.

Grable's father, Herman Vallery, thanked supporters, especially those from the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality and two people who did not live to see the verdict, Lamar's grandmother, Bernice Freeman, and Vallery's fiancée, Jenesia Jennings.

"We're very grateful that the jury did their job and listened to the evidence," said David Robinson, the plaintiff's attorney. "The bullet holes in Brown's shirt and the bullet holes in Lamar's body contradicted the sworn testimony of Brown and his partner, Vicki Yost."

"I'm glad the conspiracy of silence, between

Brown, Yost and the other officers who winked at their behavior, has been broken by the community in the form of the jury," said Robinson's co-counsel, Melissa El. "Given time, the truth will always prevail."

In published reports, Brown said he was glad "closure" had been achieved and cited a "one-sided" trial as responsible for the verdict.

The trial was far from one-sided, however, with numerous Detroit police officers backing Brown and Yost's version of events from the stand, and excusing their failure to call in the chase, which ended with Grable's death, to police dispatch.

"Each officer from the stand did the same thing they did on the night of Sept. 21, 1996," Robinson said during closing arguments. "They responded to an 'officer in trouble' run. They joined in lockstep and came to Brown's assistance."

Robinson and El faced an uphill battle. Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Isidore Torres barred the introduction of any witnesses beyond those cited by attorneys Sheldon Miller and Victor Bowman. Grable fired Miller and Bowman in 2001 after they tried to have her removed as personal representative of her son's estate, because she would not agree to a settlement.

The witnesses included many who were present in the neighborhood around East Grand Boulevard and Kercheval Street. That is where Grable lived with his father, and where he died in a hail of bullets in a vacant lot on Field Street. There were so many people present in the area at the time of the incident that police feared a rebellion and cordoned it off.

Torres also barred the introduction of the notorious "Shoulders Report," and later denied Robinson's motion to have its author, Assistant Chief Walter Shoulders, testify as a rebuttal witness.

Shoulders' re-investigation of Brown's actions

was ordered in 2000 by then-Police Chief Benny Napoleon after the Michigan Citizen, and later the daily newspapers, exposed Brown's record of killings and brutality incidents.

Robinson said Shoulders dug up the dirt underneath where Grable's body had lain and found bullet fragments, which he said demonstrated that Brown executed Grable by shooting into his chest as he lay on the ground.

Brown testified he shot Grable as the two stood and struggled hand to hand, with Grable shooting Brown twice in his protective vest. Torres, in referring to Shoulders, ruled, "I don't think he can testify to anything that is germane to the theories at this trial."

The jury's verdict, that Brown was responsible for assault and battery and gross negligence, was reached in less than two hours, suggesting the jury unequivocally believed the plaintiff's theory of what happened.

That theory was that Grable's death was a case of mistaken identity. The plaintiff's argument was that Grable, who was unarmed, and who was wearing a beige Dickey jacket and camouflage pants at the time, was not the man wearing blue jeans and a blue-jean jacket whom Brown and Yost first saw at East Grand Boulevard and St. Paul Street, and whom they then chased.

That theory implicates not only Brown, but Yost and the officers and investigators who arrived at the scene afterwards, as well as the entire hierarchy of the police department under both Archer and Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick.

Brown remains on the force despite his record, and current Police Chief Jerry Oliver and Kilpatrick have also refused to release the Shoulders Report, or act on its recommendations that Brown be criminally charged.

Witnesses called by Robinson and El, including

Philadelphia-based expert Dr. John Peters, testified that holes in Brown's shirt and protective vest did not line up and were inconsistent with Brown's hand-to-hand struggle testimony. The implication was that Brown, together with Yost, set up the scene after Grable's killing by firing into the vest and shirt themselves.

Peters said that the gun they claimed Grable had was likely a "throwaway" used by police officers to justify such killings.

Brown's hospital medical records, which arrived at the trial as jury instructions were being read, also contradicted his testimony that he bled profusely and had to have transfusions. Torres was forced to give a jury instruction that the records were "adverse to the defense theory."

If the plaintiff's theory is true, Brown would be guilty of murder, and his partner guilty at least of aiding and abetting and obstruction of justice.

Grable's parents say they still believe it possible that Yost fired some of the shots that killed their son since no bullets were recovered from the scene.

A neighborhood witness interviewed during the trial said that she heard the first four officers who came to the scene searching for Grable's gun in the alley, saying that they were told he had tossed it there. Those officers, one of whom testified at the trial, backing Brown and Yost's version, would also be guilty of crimes involved in a cover-up.

At a meeting Aug. 10, members of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality did not accept Brown's statement that "closure" had been achieved. They said they planned to continue the battle for justice in the Grable case until the guilty parties are charged and jailed.

In the meantime, said Grable's parents, they plan to use the proceeds from the jury verdict

to establish a scholarship fund in their son's name, among other projects.

Arnetta Grable said the annual vigil at the site of her son's death, to be held Sept. 21 on 1764 Field Street, will be turned into a celebration of his life and the victory that has been achieved to date.

Shoulders Report Hearing Postponed to Sept. 9

A hearing on the Michigan Citizen lawsuit demanding public disclosure of the Shoulders Report, scheduled for Aug. 12, has been postponed to Sept. 9, at 9 a.m. in room 1719 of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center.

Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Wendy Baxter, who is hearing the Freedom of Information Act case, told the Citizen's attorney, Jerome Goldberg, that she is delaying the hearing on the city's motion to dismiss the case in order to allow time for her to review the Shoulders Report in its entirety.

Goldberg thanked the many supporters who planned to attend, asking them to be present with renewed determination on Sept. 9.

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