Honor Detective Shot Dead by Thug As He Springs a Hold-Up 'Trap'

Detective James Burke, a member of the Police Honor Legion and holder of eight departmental citations, was shot and killed last night at 6:07 o'clock in a gun battle with one of two young hold-up men in a Bronx liquor store. The thugs escaped, apparently unhurt.

The detective, who was 49 years old and one of the most popular members of the department, was struck in the head by two bullets from an automatic pistol as he came out firing from behind a pile of packing cases in the rear of Ray's Liquor Store at 1439 Webster Avenue, between 171st and 172d Streets.

He had been "planted" in the store an hour before for just such an eventuality as a hold-up. There were no witnesses to the shooting, for the only other occupant of the store, which is about 100 feet in depth and 25 feet in width, was Richard Shaw, 34, son of Ray Miller Shaw, the proprietor, and he was crouched behind a counter.

That the shooting affray was furious was attested to by the fact that the store was pockmarked with bullet holes and that one of Detective Burke's two service revolvers was found with its six bullets spent.

It was apparent, too, that the detective had been killed instantly. Whether the thugs escaped by foot or in an automobile could not be determined immediately. It was believed that neither was wounded in the fusillade, but on the chance that they might have been an alarm was sent to all hospitals.

Because of the absence of witnesses, the police had only the barest description of the men. They were said to be Negroes and young, one carrying an automatic pistol that appeared to be of .45 caliber and of American make.

Police Commissioner Arthur W. Wallander, who arrived at the store with other high police officials, was visibly moved at the detective's death.

"What can I say at a time like this?" he observed sadly. "It's deplorable, deplorable. I knew Jim

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DETECTIVE KILLED ON HOLD-UP VIGIL

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well. His death is a great loss to us. He was an excellent policeman."

District Attorney Mourns

District Attorney Samuel J. Foley of the Bronx, who also went to the scene, said:

"I feel like crying. He was one of the most intelligent men I knew. I counted him among my closest friends."

Deputy Chief Inspector John J. O'Connor, in charge of Bronx detectives, who described the slain policeman as "an outstanding detective in Greater New York City," had given orders earlier in the day which resulted in the assignment of Detective Burke to the store. Other detectives had received similar assignments in the borough as part of a police plan to curb the recent outbreak of liquor store hold-ups.

The detective arrived at the store at 5 P. M. and, after chatting with Mr. Shaw, went to his hiding place behind the packing cases. When the bandits walked in, one of them brandished the automatic and said to the proprietor's son, "This is a stick-up."

Wide Search Begun

The words were hardly out of his mouth when Detective Burke emerged, his pistol blazing, and Mr. Shaw ducked for safety. It was over in a matter of seconds, the thugs escaping without loot and with the detective dead on the floor.

Soon after the shooting was reported thirty-five picked detectives and a police emergency squad were sent to comb the neighborhood for suspects.

Detective Burke, who was unmarried and lived at 440 East 163d Street, joined the department on May 5, 1922. He became a detective on June 5, 1925, and was appointed a first-grade detective on Oct. 1, 1929.

His citations for outstanding police work included five commendations. The record of his awards, made public last night at Manhattan Police Headquarters, follows:

April 3, 1929—Commendation for arresting two burglars.

Sept. 6, 1929—Excellent police duty for arrest of two hold-up men.

Nov. 23, 1933—Commendation for the arrest and disarming of an escaped prisoner from the Bronx County Jail.

April 13, 1936—Commendation for arrest of five men; also excellent police duty for arrest of man charged with kidnaping infant.

April 10, 1939—Commendation for arresting and disarming suspicious person armed with knives.

July 13, 1942—Excellent police duty for arrest of three hold-up men.

March 22, 1943—Commendation for arrest of murderer.

Detective Burke, who was a plumber before entering the department, had spent virtually his entire police career attached to the Bathgate Avenue station in the Bronx.

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