

## **A PLEA HEARD AMID CHAOS : 'DON'T LEAVE ME' - NEW DETAILS EMERGE IN OAK PARK OFFICER'S SLAYING: COPS FILL COURTROOM FOR ARRAIGNMENT**

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Author: GINA DAMRON, FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Footsteps pounded down the hallway.

Heavy, fast.

Yisroel Mondroe turned away from his video game and listened to the scuffle from behind his apartment door in Oak Park.

Glass crashed from breaking windows.

There were low grunts, Mondroe said, like the sounds of people wrestling on the dingy carpet in the narrow hallway after midnight.

Then **a** gunshot - **a** pop so loud and shocking, Mondroe said, that he could almost feel its force.

It was early Sunday, and Oak Park Officer Mason Samborski lay on the floor between two apartments, fatally shot, police say, by 16-year-old Jonathan Belton of Detroit. Belton was charged **as** an adult Friday and faces life in prison if convicted on murder charges.

"It was quiet for **a** little time" after the commotion, Mondroe, 22, said Friday.

Then police came.

Someone yelled.

"Officer down, officer down," recalled Mondroe, who said he didn't see the shooting and never opened his door until police came knocking.

These new details about what happened Sunday at the Rue Versailles apartment complex have emerged from the building's residents **as** attorneys ready themselves for court hearings later this month and family and friends of both Samborski and Belton cope with their grief.

**As** the cops stormed the complex and the shooting unfolded outside of his door, Mondroe says he **heard a** voice, but he's not sure who it was.

"Don't leave me," the voice said. "Don't leave me."

It started with a traffic stop

It was early Sunday when Samborski made a traffic stop near 10 Mile and Greenfield roads, calling in his location to dispatchers.

He pulled over Belton, who was driving a 1997 Jeep Cherokee without a license.

Police say they believe the teen told Samborski, 28, of Howell that he had a relative at the Rue Versailles apartments, also near 10 Mile and Greenfield roads. Samborski drove Belton to the complex, to a building on South Montmartre Court.

Oak Park Public Safety Director John McNeilance has said it's unclear why Samborski took the teen to the apartment complex rather than bringing him into the station.

But, he said, police believe Samborski was trying to turn the teen over to an adult. Samborski, though, did not call in the trip to dispatchers. Oak Park Lt. Michael Pousak has said officers always should notify dispatch of what they're doing.

When Samborski and Belton arrived at the apartment building, they buzzed the residence of a 15-year-old girl, who is a friend of Belton and was home alone that night, her father, Daniel Jackson, said Friday.

He said his daughter opened the apartment door, peered out and saw the officer and teen standing on the porch through the glass door. Jackson said he believes his daughter talked to Belton and Samborski. The details of what happened next are cloudy, but Jackson said somehow the officer and Belton ended up in the building.

A scuffle ensued. Mondroe was in his living room, playing "Call of Duty" on his Xbox with his brother when he **heard** the tussle. Once the shot rang out, Mondroe and his brother called 911.

Police "were here instantly," he said.

Jackson said he believes his daughter went back into their apartment before the officer was shot.

She was "scared to death," he said.

Police said emergency officials who arrived at the scene tried to help Samborski, who was shot in the head.

As police flooded the apartment complex, Mondroe said he **heard** them knock on each door. When the knock came on Mondroe's door, he answered. He and his brother were escorted out. Samborski was taken to Providence Hospital in Southfield, where he was pronounced dead.

Mondroe said they waited in patrol cars and were taken to the police station. They were questioned and eventually released.

Flowers and stuffed animals now sit inside the front entrance of the apartment building, where blood still stained the carpet Friday.

'It's extremely difficult'

More than two dozen Oak Park officers lined the walls of a tiny courtroom Friday, listening quietly as Belton appeared by video for his arraignment.

Belton's family watched from benches, as the teen pleaded not guilty in Oak Park's 45B District Court to one count each of first-degree murder and murder of a peace officer and two counts of possession of a firearm in the commission of a felony.

Judge David Gubow remanded Belton to the Oakland County Jail without bond.

Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Ken Frazee said Belton assaulted a Detroit Public Schools officer in 2006. Wright Blake, Belton's attorney, told Gubow that his client is not on probation.

The teen's mother, Jawana Belton, did not want to discuss her son's case, but said she wants "people to know that he's loved."

The decision to charge Belton as an adult fell to new Oakland County Prosecutor Jessica Cooper, who took office Thursday. Cooper did not return calls for comment.

Frazee said only Cooper could comment on the case.

A hearing is to be held Jan. 14, with Belton's preliminary examination set for Jan. 16.

After Friday's hearing, as the officers filed out of the courtroom, McNeilance said getting back to work has been difficult.

"It will take a while to bring back some sense of normalcy," he said.

Contact GINA DAMRON at 248-351-3293 or [gdamron@freepress.com](mailto:gdamron@freepress.com).

CAPTION:

Members of Belton's family watch his video arraignment as Oak Park officers gather behind them. More than two dozen officers lined the walls of the tiny courtroom on Friday.

Photos by ERIC SEALS / Detroit Free Press

Oak Park Officers David Cardinali and Daniel Rose listen Friday as 16-year-old Jonathan Belton of Detroit is arraigned by video in Oak Park's 45B District Court. Belton faces charges in the Sunday death of Oak Park Officer Mason Samborski. Belton pleaded not guilty.

ERIC SEALS / Detroit Free Press

John McNeilance, Oak Park's director of public safety, talks to the news media on Friday after the arraignment. "It will take a while to bring back some sense of normalcy," he said of work for Oak Park officers.

CAPTIONWRITER: Officer Mason Samborski

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