

DETROIT COP HAUNTED BY DAD'S SLAYING

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Tuesday, February 11, 1992

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Detroit Police Cmdr. Rudy Thomas has dedicated his work life to the war against crime on the city's streets.

In June, however, that war gave Thomas his deepest wound when his father, Porter Thomas, 72, was shot to death during a robbery at his west side garage.

"Despite my own efforts, I couldn't save my own father," Thomas who heads the department's Narcotics Enforcement Division, said Monday. "That's been tough. It was a hurt that I can't describe."

On Monday, **Rodney Dumas**, 42, of Detroit was sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for the first-degree murder of Porter Thomas. Patrick Smith, 35, also of Detroit, will be retried on the same charge March 3 because a jury earlier failed to reach a verdict.

Dumas briefly escaped from police around 12:40 p.m. Monday, but was apprehended about an hour later.

Police say Smith told them it was he who fired the fatal shot at Thomas.

Rudy Thomas and his mother, Consuelo Thomas, 64, spoke lovingly Monday of a father and husband who governed his home with strong traditional values. Rudy Thomas said his father loved the military and served for 18 years, including in World War II and the Korean War.

"He was a patriot SOB sometimes," Thomas said.

The younger Thomas gave his father a carbine, M1 rifle for his birthday 20 years ago. The father prized it and kept it at his shop. When the robbery began last June, he grabbed it in an attempt to fight back.

Thomas said when he learned that his father had been shot, he knew right away that it must have been a robbery. The shop had been robbed in 1982. After that, Porter Thomas vowed that he would fight if it happened again.

At times, the elder Thomas would survey the deterioration and crime in the neighborhood where he operated his garage and tell his son he was still fighting a war.

"He survives two wars and he comes back here and dies with a carbine in his hand," Rudy Thomas said Monday.

It was tempting, Thomas said, to send his own men to investigate his father's death. But he chose not to meddle in the investigation.

He also feared what he might do if he came face to face with his father's killer.

When he thinks about his father's death now, the pain is still there, but so is the acceptance that there was "nothing more that I could have done."

Caption: Photo WILLIAM DEKAY

: Detroit Police Cmdr. Rudy Thomas and his mother, Consuelo, talk Monday about the loss of a father and a husband. **Rodney Dumas** was sentenced Monday to life in prison with no chance of parole for murdering Porter Thomas in June.

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 3A

Index Terms: POLICE ; VICTIM ; PORTER THOMAS ; SENTENCE ; RODNEY DUMAS

Record Number: 9201060131

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