

## MAN'S MENTAL PROBLEMS ON RECORD SINCE 1969

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**Charles Knowles**, the gunman who killed two Detroit police officers before he was shot to death by police Monday, had been hospitalized for mental illness at least six times since 1969, most recently at the instigation of a police officer.

"Mr. **Knowles** believes people are plotting to hurt him, and that he is a very wealthy person. He believes the hospital is a huge mansion and his home," psychiatrist Don Jones wrote in a report after examining **Knowles** in March at Detroit Receiving Hospital.

Wayne County Probate Court records show **Knowles** had been repeatedly diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic who had a history of not taking medication to control his condition unless he was hospitalized. But the only overt act of violence in the records is a 1982 fire **Knowles** set at an apartment building where he lived on Hibbing in Detroit.

On March 23, Officer David Siwah of the 5th (Jefferson) Precinct said neighbors on Springle reported that **Knowles** was barricaded in his apartment and refused to talk to anyone.

When the police went to investigate, **Knowles** "refused to walk or talk for officers; had a blank stare on his face and had hot water running over his apartment for two days," Siwah reported. "Subject's feet and legs badly swollen and was standing in three inches of water. Subject further had everything in apartment covered with tinfoil."

Records show Siwah's commitment petition was dismissed when **Knowles** agreed to enter Samaritan Health Center.

**Knowles** also was hospitalized for mental treatment in 1969, in 1979, twice in 1982 and in 1986, and this year. He had been treated at the Detroit Psychiatric Institute at Herman Kiefer Hospital and at Northville Regional Psychiatric Hospital.

Different psychiatrists diagnosed different forms of schizophrenia, a mental illness marked by disordered thinking, delusions and hallucinations.

Schizophrenia's symptoms can be controlled with drugs. But **Knowles** did not always take his medication, and the disease apparently led to a range of bizarre behavior. Court records show he sometimes went days without eating, changing clothes, or speaking to anyone; appeared withdrawn and suspicious to the doctors who examined him, and told doctors people were plotting against him.

On May 2, 1986, in another petition to have him committed, **Knowles**' sister, Earline, said her brother had "not pulled off his clothes or eaten anything since the 29th of April. He just stood up and walks the floor. . . . He really needs help."

A court psychiatrist wrote in the file: "Long history of mental illness. Patient has not been taking medication or going to the clinic."

The 1982 fire led to another commitment attempt.

Detroit Police Officer Gerald Tokman wrote that " **Knowles** was sitting in a vehicle after setting an occupied building on fire," wearing a motorcycle helmet and holding a light bulb. Tokman said **Knowles** did not respond to police, even when they shined a flashlight in his eyes, and officers had to break into the car to get him out.

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