

Trail of crime ends in officer's slaying - His death ignites hunt for fugitive

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Detroit police knew James Maurice Langford was dangerous and violent.

His six-year criminal history included murder, assault and gun charges. He was a prime suspect in a 1993 double murder and a 1998 murder and home invasion.

Langford was acquitted by a jury in the first case and prosecutors dropped the charges in the second when a key witness failed to testify. Police and prosecutors still insist he was responsible for all three murders.

Yet, when Langford became a fugitive in June 1998 after failing to show up for a pretrial hearing on his third gun charge in four years, there is no record the cops ever looked for him. They didn't hunt him down until six months later when he murdered one of their own.

Less than two weeks after he and four accomplices gunned down Officer Shawn Bandy in December 1998, police tracked Langford 584 miles across two states to a Philadelphia apartment where he was hiding.

Before the killing, the then 24-year-old fugitive lived three minutes from the 11th Precinct at an address police had on file.

It is an all-too-familiar story in Detroit, which accounts for nearly 90 percent of the wanted individuals in Wayne County. Fugitives, emboldened by the failure of police to hunt them, openly associate with other dangerous felons and carry out brazen crimes.

Langford was no exception.

The day 23-year-old Bandy was ambushed, Langford spent the afternoon cruising Detroit's east side in his distinctive white and green van with four other convicted felons, each with long histories of violence. They were plotting a kidnapping for ransom.

Langford, the ringleader and a wanted fugitive, drove a van registered in his name and made no attempt to avoid public places.

That afternoon, the five men went to a popular video parlor and played games for several hours. They later drove to a Radio Shack and bought two-way radios before going to the home of one of the men to pick up an AK-47 semi-assault rifle and several handguns.

Armed, they waited on the public street outside the home of their intended victims, Athena Akins, 30, and her 12-year-old son. The men targeted Akins because they thought her boyfriend could put his hands on large sums of cash quickly.

When the mother and son arrived in their driveway, Langford pulled the van behind her Lincoln. Two of the men jumped from the van and pulled Akins and the boy into the vehicle in broad daylight.

They robbed her of \$400 and used her cell phone to call her boyfriend, demanding \$100,000 in ransom. The boyfriend negotiated the price down to \$5,000 and dropped the money off in a parking lot. After the kidnappers picked up the cash, the boyfriend called police and gave them a description of Langford's van.

Shortly after the kidnappers released their victims, Officer Bandy and partner Jeffrey Bonner spotted the van and gave chase. Other officers joined the pursuit.

Bandy and Bonner pulled the van over on Westphalia Street, on Detroit's east side. As the officers prepared to approach the stopped vehicle, one of five armed suspects, **Montez Moore**, 26, opened fire with an AK-47 from inside the van, blowing out the van's curtain and back window and spraying the police cars with bullets.

Bullets shattered the windshield of Bandy's car, striking him twice in the face and fatally wounding him. The spray of gunfire from the AK-47 also critically wounded Officer Lloyd Todd, who was in another patrol car. Todd was struck in the left eye and suffered permanent brain damage.

Like Langford, **Moore** was no stranger to life on the streets as a fugitive. Earlier in the year, **Moore** had twice ducked court dates on weapon and probation violation charges before he was picked up and put back on probation.

All five men escaped after the shooting. Three days later, Detroit police arrested the first of the group, D'Andre Coffey, in connection with another kidnapping for ransom that occurred three months earlier. The victim in that case was tortured and shot to death. Coffey, 25, a criminal with a rap sheet of gun violence, was quickly connected to the Bandy case.

Within weeks, the other killers were behind bars.

Langford, **Moore**, Coffey, and Thomas Culbreath were convicted of Bandy's murder and sentenced to life without parole. A fifth defendant, Eugene Childrey, 18, cut a deal with prosecutors to testify against the others and was sentenced to five to 15 years in prison.

"I am astonished. I honestly did not know he (Langford) was wanted at the time," said Susan Bandy, the mother of the slain officer. "I knew about the other killings (he was involved in) but I didn't know he was wanted. He was living openly in Detroit carrying out his usual business of kidnapping wives or girlfriends for money."

Caption: Susan and Max Bandy listen as **MontezMoore** receives a life sentence in 1999 for the murder of their son, Detroit Officer Shawn Bandy. Before the shooting, **Moore** had twice ducked court dates on weapon and probation violation charges. Shawn Bandy Lloyd Todd James Langford **MontezMoore**

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