

ROBBERY TURNS FATAL ON 8 MILE ROAD - WHEN EVERYBODY HAS A GUN, ARMED ROBBERY CAN BE DEADLY TO THE THIEF

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HOMICIDE NUMBER 144

Victim: **Barrett DeWayne Pettes Jr.**

Black male, 21

Date: May 6, 12:35 a.m

Location: 15224 E. Eight Mile

The victim is on the ground, under an SUV on 8 Mile, with three bullet holes in his chest clustered in a tight pattern, or center mass -- it's the work of somebody with a steady hand, somebody comfortable with a gun.

Homicide Detective Derryck Thomas studies the scene: Part of the body is covered with a white sheet. The hands are clenched, the eyes closed. A few feet away, there is a circle of chalk around a handgun. Three shell casings are scattered on the sidewalk outside the Wild Cherry Lounge.

Detective JoAnne Miller walks into the bar, carrying a clipboard and flashlight. Another officer gives her a quick summary: It appears the bar owner, Roger Bales, and his girlfriend, Crystal Hughes, were arguing outside the bar. A man tried to rob them at gunpoint; Bales pulled out his own gun and shot the robber dead.

Miller takes a seat with Hughes in the wash of dim light near an unused pool table.

"How you holding up?" Miller asks.

Hughes shrugs.

"The good thing is you are not injured," Miller says. "You are not hurt. It could have been worse."

Miller lights up a Virginia Slims Menthol and pulls out some paperwork.

"Tell me, what happened?" Miller asks. Her tone is friendly, compassionate. Miller, 50, who has been on the force for 17 years, is known as an excellent interrogator, with great instincts, able to detect whether someone is lying.

"The guy pulled out his gun and pointed it at Roger," Hughes says, crying. She is a waitress at the bar. "Roger pulled out his gun and shot. Three times."

"Where was Roger's gun?"

She points to her waist.

"He fell down and started crying and said he was sorry," Hughes says.

Miller looks at her, surprised.

"He fell down and flopped around," Hughes says, with her right hand on her face, rubbing her forehead.

Outside the bar, Thomas is working the scene. He is dressed in a dark suit -- one of 30 that he owns. Bales tells the same story, with the same details.

Thomas and Miller write a preliminary report. They identify the victim as **Barrett DeWayne Pettes Jr.** The case is assigned to Squad 3, and the investigation lasts several months. It is ruled self-defense. Bales is not charged, and the case is closed.

Bales is certain the shooting has hurt his business: "I don't know how it couldn't in the long run. I don't hear from the people who don't come in. It's like lightning, it might never happen again, but it might happen tomorrow. It could happen anywhere."

On the day of the shooting, Detroit Police confiscated 29 guns across Detroit. As fast as the guns are taken off the streets, more arrive. More than 80 percent of the murders in Detroit involve guns.

"It's a bad world and there are bad people," Bales says. "All it takes is one."

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(SIDEBAR)

How you can help

Save Our Sons and Daughters is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting peaceful solutions to violence. The organization needs donations and volunteers to counsel the families of victims of violence.

SOSAD was founded in 1987 by Clementine Barfield after her son was murdered. Barfield became the voice against violence in Detroit. She's been at the White House several times and has been honored by two presidents for her work. But SOSAD lost funding last year, at the same time violence spiked in Detroit, and she had to lay off her staff, which at one time had been 15 people, including counselors and grief advocates.

Three months behind on her rent, Barfield had to move out of her office last week, putting everything into storage. She's like a preacher, who for years has pounded her fist against a lectern, giving sermon after sermon, hoping to save someone, only to realize one day that most of the pews are empty. She is tired and worn out. "Violence is nobody's priority," she says. "We need Kid Rock or Eminem or Oprah to get behind this and do something big."

But SOSAD continues to help. Last week, the family of 7-year-old Deva White, who was killed in a drive-by shooting, called for help and volunteers at SOSAD directed them to a grief program.

"We are killing each other every day and we are complacent about it," Barfield says. "You have a war going on right here at home. After a while, it becomes a way of life."

Barfield can be reached at 2441 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48208. The office phone is disconnected but the hot line is being funded and staffed by a volunteer. Call 313-806-0392 anytime.

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Caption: Photo ERIC SEALS/Detroit Free Press

Homicide Detective Derryck Thomas looks for bullet casing and other evidence. The victim was shot three times, stumbled backward. Cystal Hughes and Roger Bales were arguing outside the bar when **Barrett** De Wayne **Pettes** Jr. tried to rob them. Although Bales shot Pettees in self-defense, the shooting has hurt his business. Standing outside his bar, the Wild Cherry Lounge in Detroit, Roger Bales shows Homicide Detective Derryck Thohmas how he raised his gun and shot **Pettes**.

Memo: HOMICIDE IN DETROIT: ECHOES OF VIOLENCE PART 2; END.;SEE RELATED STORY PAGE 3G.

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