

KOREAN STOREKEEPER BELIEVED IN DETROIT

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, January 9, 1992

Author: JIM FINKELSTEIN and JIM SCHAEFER , e Press Staff Writers

Anselmo Ha had boundless faith in the people of Detroit, his daughter said Wednesday.

The downtown business owner struggled against a tough economy and a dwindling clientele to keep his Jean Fair store open on Grand River near Woodward.

Sometimes, **Ha** gave jeans away to the street people who often visited with him at his store.

Wednesday morning, in the cold, broad daylight, someone took **Ha's** life in a shooting in what police said was apparently a robbery.

Clothes, not money, were the apparent target, since the cash register at the Jean Fair shop appeared untouched, police said.

Downtown killings are unusual, police said, but that provides small comfort for **Ha's** family.

Ha's brother-in-law, Kyu Cho, whose wig and clothes stores nearby often have been held up, consoled arriving family members and shook his fist angrily at television cameras.

"This is the heart of the city!" he shouted. "How can the mayor protect the neighborhoods when he can't keep it safe down here? There were no police -- that's why it happened."

Frustrated police officers said they had few leads. No one has reported hearing or seeing the crime, which left **Ha** crumpled on the floor of his shop just inside the door, a gunshot wound over his left eye. The body was discovered a short time after the 10:15 a.m. shooting. Police say they believe **Ha** struggled with his killer.

Downtown street homicides are rare, said Deputy Chief James Younger. In March, store owner Sang Park, who had immigrated from Korea 15 years before, was slain in a robbery attempt. In October 1990, reputed drug lord Demetrius Holloway was slain in a contract murder at another downtown clothes shop.

Ha was among many downtown store owners struggling in a depressed selling climate in the shadow of the former Hudson's, said his landlord, George Batsikouras. Many, like **Ha**, are Korean.

"There's been a lot of break-ins, vandalized properties," said Batsikouras, who owns five buildings in the area, including the boarded-up former Woolworth's on Woodward. He said he recently lowered **Ha's** rent to help him stay open.

Mun Kim, who attended Korean United Methodist Church in Troy with the victim, had worried about his friend working alone.

"I said, 'Why don't you hire someone to work with you?' He said, 'I can't afford it,' " Kim recalled.

Kim and Cho said Korean store owners have complained recently to Detroit police about what they say is a lack of protection. In 1991, their stores were targeted in numerous robberies, they said.

Cmdr. Robert Hislop of the major crimes division said his officers met recently with the store owners.

"I understand their concern," Hislop said. But, "I don't think that they're singling out Korean store owners to rob. I think robbery is the motive; it's not because of any nationality."

But Wednesday morning, Cho gestured angrily at the store where his relative lay dead, surrounded by police.

"Now they're protecting the body, not a live person," he said.

Nearby, the dead man's daughter, Eun **Ha**, 26, a Detroit Law Department employee, said tearfully that her father "wanted me to work for the city because he believed in the people of the city."

"He said I should give back to the city that helped us with a new life."

Ha, his wife, Myung Jo **Ha**, and their son and daughter came to the United States about 16 years ago from Seoul, South Korea, because "he wanted his children to have the best of educations," said Eun **Ha**.

Anselmo Ha owned several shops over the years, and had the Jean Fair shop about four years, she said. The couple lived in Troy.

Eun **Ha**, who helped her father at the store nights and weekends, said that because of the shooting, "I just lost faith in humanity. . . . All these small businesses are a little piece of the American Dream."

Anyone with information can call Detroit police at 596-2260.

Caption: Photo Color WILLIAM ARCHIE; Map ROGER HICKS

: SHOOTING DEATH SHATTERS AN AMERICAN DREAMKyu Cho consoles his
niece, Eun **Ha**, on Wednesday after she learns her father,
Anselmo Ha, was fatally shot in his store in downtown Detroit. **Anselmo Ha**

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 1A

Index Terms: DETROIT ; SHOOTING ; MURDER ; HOMICIDE ; ANSELMO HA; HOTLINE
; CRIME

Record Number: 9201010943

Copyright (c) 1992 Detroit Free Press