

## **TWO WORLDS, ONE DEATH SHOVE INSIDE SCHOOL ESCALATES INTO VIOLENT STANDOFF, TEEN'S KILLING**

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**KENNETH BAUMGART** was an A student at Pershing and a skilled athlete. He also had an arrest record and hung out with a gang.

The feud had been brewing for weeks -- who was a punk and who wasn't, who could beat up whom, who was a tougher man.

All it took to set things off -- and leave a 16-year-old Pershing High School freshman dead of a gunshot wound and three teens under arrest on murder charges -- was a shove.

But was it a gang problem, or merely an escalating dispute between teenagers who thought backing down was a sign of weakness?

**Kenneth Baumgart** died Monday after being shot in the school parking lot on Detroit's east side.

Interviews with witnesses, family members and police officers, as well as a review of court documents, help show what led to his death. They also portray a teen who lived in two worlds. Baumgart was the overachieving son of two Detroit police officers, an A student in his freshman year at Pershing and considered a dominant player on the junior varsity football team.

He also hung out with a gang and wore its signature colors.

And he had a juvenile arrest record -- incorrigibility, assault of a family member, violation of probation, possession of a shotgun. Baumgart was on intensive probation with Wayne County Juvenile Court, and had to report to a probation officer nearly every day.

Baumgart, a beefy kid who wore his pants slung low, was described by several people Tuesday as a bully who tried to prove he was tough.

Two weeks ago, he waved a gun at 15-year-old Michael Lee McCune while driving by in his blue Oldsmobile Cutlass in McCune's northeast Detroit neighborhood, according to McCune's sister, Cordeny Williams, 24, and brother Larry McCune, 17.

"He always said that his parents were police officers and if he killed someone he'd get away with it," Williams said.

Nothing happened immediately. But on Sunday, Baumgart and Michael McCune got into an argument outside Baumgart's house on Norwood near East 8 Mile, according to Williams and Larry McCune.

McCune's family said Baumgart threatened him with a gun.

Later that day, Williams and other relatives went to straighten things out at Baumgart's house, where his mother, Debra Hillock, and stepfather, James Hillock, live. His mother is a detective at the 9th (Gratiot) precinct; his stepfather is a traffic enforcement officer at the 7th (Mack) precinct.

"The mother, she told us it was over with," Williams said. "But it wasn't over with."

At 10:55 a.m. Monday, the dispute flared up again, this time in a hallway at Pershing High.

One of Baumgart's friends is said to have purposely bumped or tripped Michael McCune, also a freshman. The two exchanged words and Baumgart's friend told McCune: "I see you after school."

McCune's cousin, Durrell Hagerman, 16, saw and heard the simmering dispute. Hagerman was in Pershing's hallways that morning, though he is a student at the Frederick Douglass Academy, an alternative school for troubled kids.

At about 1:40 p.m., Hagerman and Baumgart's friend exchanged harsh words and began to fight before teachers broke it up, McCune said.

Hagerman apparently left the school and returned later with a gun, McCune told police.

"He had the gun when he came to the school around 2:25 p.m.," McCune said. Larry Walker, a 15-year-old Pershing freshman, had told Hagerman about the problems with Baumgart.

"This had been going on for some time," McCune said.

The three of them -- McCune, Hagerman and Walker -- belonged to a group of kids that used a gang moniker, though family members said they were not a gang nor involved in any criminal activity.

"I'm not in a gang and I don't think they are," Walker told police.

Hagerman, a Pershing student through June 1996, transferred briefly to Henry Ford High School, then was admitted to Frederick Douglass on Jan. 29, said the academy's principal, Thomas Woodhouse. He said Hagerman isn't "reflective of our program," as officials had only had about six weeks to work with him.

Juvenile Court records show no convictions for McCune and Hagerman, but McCune had once been arrested on a shoplifting charge. Walker had been arrested in connection with curfew violations, felonious assault of a police officer and carrying a concealed weapon.

In December 1995, Walker was in a house on Mitchell where undercover Detroit police officer Robert Kozlowski went to see if he could buy drugs. According to Kozlowski, Walker put a gun to his head and said: "I should pop you. Are you FBI?"

Walker was arrested, but the charges were later dismissed by a court referee for reasons that are not clear from the court file.

Walker said that just after the school's 7th-hour classes at 2:45 p.m., McCune started arguing with Baumgart, who was with his brother, Shawn Baumgart, 18, and Kenneth's friend in the student parking lot.

Elisha Hatcher, a 15-year-old witness, said **Kenneth Baumgart** was not backing down.

"Then I heard a gun fire and I started running," Hatcher said.

McCune said Hagerman had been standing behind him, listening to the argument. Suddenly, Hagerman shouted "Move out the way" and began to shoot, according to Walker and McCune. Four shots were fired.

Shawn Baumgart said he thought there were more shots.

**Kenneth Baumgart** "had some words with the kid," Shawn said, describing what led to the shooting.

"I tried to get him back into the car and turned and walked toward the car when the kid fired five shots and then two" shots in the air.

"My brother got hit. I just turned and saw him on the ground. He got shot in the back one time. It went straight through his back to his heart. I picked him up and put him in the car and drove him to the hospital," Shawn said.

**Kenneth Baumgart** was dead on arrival at Holy Cross Hospital.

Hagerman, McCune and Walker ran off. They first went to Walker's house, where "we kicked it for about 20 minutes," Walker said.

Then they went to another friend's house, where they stayed about 15 minutes before splitting up.

Detroit police arrested McCune at about 6 p.m. Hagerman and Walker were arrested at 12:45 a.m. Tuesday.

Police Cmdr. Gerald Stewart, who heads the Major Crimes Division, downplayed on Tuesday any theories that the shooting was gang-related.

"To me, it seems like an argument that escalated. This shooting was not a result of a confrontation between two gangs that was planned. It had to do with a trip and it got out of hand," Stewart said.

Lt. Gerard Simon, head of the department's gang squad, said Baumgart was not a member of a gang, but affiliated himself with gang members.

"This is a good example of how problematic your acquaintances can be. He was associated with people that were involved in gangs, and that association led to his death," Simon said.

Shortly before 2 p.m. Tuesday, Hagerman, McCune and Walker and their parents and guardians appeared in a second-floor courtroom at the Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility.

Referee Richard McKnight told the group that the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office had accused them of murder, but would take five days to decide whether they should be charged as adults. In such a situation, McKnight said, the law does not allow bond and they would be held until the decision was made.

On the first floor, Shawn Baumgart and other family members were waiting to view police lineups.

When the detained youths' families came downstairs, someone flashed a gang sign and Shawn lunged toward them. Wayne County sheriff's deputies quickly moved to keep the groups separated.

As school was letting out at Pershing on Tuesday afternoon, police presence was heavy. Gang unit members waited in the parking lot where the shooting occurred and across the street from the school.

"I didn't want anyone to get the sense there was going to be any retaliation," Executive Deputy Chief Benny Napoleon said.

Paul Marshall, 18, a Pershing senior and a linebacker on the football team, said he knew **Kenneth Baumgart** as a dominant running back on the junior varsity team.

Marshall, like many other students at Pershing, said Baumgart was dabbling in gang activity.

"You can't be an athlete and a gang member. You got to drop one. I just wish someone would've told him about what can happen when you're in a gang," Marshall said. "He was just after respect and he would've gotten respect by just being himself."

Staff writer Jennifer Juarez Robles contributed to this report.

Caption: Photo NICO TOUTENHOOFD/Detroit Free Press Photo GABRIEL B. TAIT/Detroit Free Press

"My brother got hit. . . He got shot in the back."

SHAWN BAUMGART, left, and Rich Baumgart, brothers of the teen killed outside Pershing High on Monday "He always said . . . if he killed someone, he'd get away with it."

CORDENY WILLIAMS, sister of shooting suspect Michael McCune, talking about Baumgart

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