

DETROIT OFFICER KILLS MAN IN DISPUTE GUNFIRE ERUPTS AT CLOSING IN GREEKTOWN

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An off-duty Detroit police officer killed a 27-year-old Detroit man in a shootout, apparently over a woman, in Greektown early Sunday, police said.

They said the dead man, **Mark Anthony Nelson**, fired first at Officer Gerald Thomas, 24. Thomas, an 8th (Northwest) Precinct officer who has been with the department since April 1986, has been removed from street duty while the matter is under investigation.

Police said **Nelson** pulled out a gun and began shooting at Thomas and a friend of Thomas as they left the Old Parthenon restaurant on Monroe at about 2:25 a.m. Sunday.

Thomas' companion, Henry Shepard, 24, of Detroit, was listed in serious condition at Detroit Receiving Hospital with a gunshot wound to his buttocks. Shepard had no comment Sunday.

"The police haven't told me what happened. All I know is my son is dead," said **Nelson**'s mother, Elizabeth Littlejohn. "I don't know where my son was or who he was with last night. The police said they'll tell me what happened after they finish their investigation."

Thomas could not be reached for comment.

A Detroit officer, who asked not to be identified, said **Nelson** was upset because he felt Thomas was "hitting on" his date.

The victim and the woman he was with apparently did not know Thomas but sat near them while dining at the Old Parthenon, the officer said.

When Thomas got up to leave the restaurant at the same time as **Nelson** and his date, **Nelson** allegedly became enraged when Thomas told the woman that he would see her again soon, the officer said.

Police would not identify any witnesses but confirmed the dispute was over a woman.

The officer said that after the men left the restaurant, **Nelson** fired a gun, hitting Shepard and missing Thomas with a second shot.

Thomas, who is required to carry his weapon while off duty unless on vacation, returned fire, striking **Nelson** once between the eyes, the officer said.

Police said **Nelson** died at Detroit Receiving Hospital of a bullet wound to the head.

"With those two having it out on the street like that, we're lucky innocent people weren't killed," the officer said. "A lot of people were in the streets leaving bars to go home. We could have had a real, tragic problem."

Thomas made news in 1988 for another off-duty incident. While on vacation then, Thomas helped arrest Samson Fee Koger, who was accused of raping nine women on the east side. Koger later was convicted of two rapes.

Sunday's shooting was the second this month involving an off-duty officer. On July 4, police said, a 23-year-old man was seriously wounded in the back while trying to break up a fight at an accident scene at Conner and Harper. The officer's gun fired accidentally when he tried to arrest one of two men he found fighting near their wrecked cars, investigators said.

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Page: 1A;

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