



CARRIED TO AMBULANCE — Robert V. Strickland, on litter, is carried to the Easton Emergency Squad ambulance by squad members and police yesterday after he was shot while fleeing from police in the

Lehigh Valley Rail Road yards on South Side. Described by officials as a "prime suspect" in recent area robberies, Strickland was dead on arrival at Easton Hospital.

—Express Photo by Ed Koskey Jr.

Police Kill Burglary Suspect

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(See editorial, 'Let's Have Justice,' on Page 4.)

Easton police and the Northampton County District Attorney's office are investigating the death of a 25-year-old Easton man killed by police yesterday as he was fleeing them on the city's South Side.

Robert Victor Strickland of 204 S. 6th St., was pronounced dead on arrival at Easton Hospital after being struck by pellets from police shotguns.

Northampton County Coroner Joseph F. Reichel said 11 pellet wounds were found and seven pellets recovered from Strickland's body.

An autopsy showed Strickland died of massive hemorrhaging resulting from a laceration of the heart. One pellet, approximately 1/4-inch in diameter, pierced Strickland's heart and became lodged in his right side, the report said.

Reichel said all the pellets entered Strickland's body from the left side and not from the back.

Easton Police Chief John Young and Northampton County Dist. Atty. Charles Spaziani said Strickland was considered a prime suspect in several of the nearly 20 armed robberies in the Easton-Phillipsburg area during the summer.

When asked this morning for a status report on the investigation of the shooting, Spaziani said, "I won't talk to The Express because you live in ivory towers. I'm not telling The Express anything at this stage of the game, and you can quote me."

Spaziani earlier said Strickland was wanted on warrants from Lehigh County charging him with burglary, larceny, carrying a concealed deadly weapon, receiving stolen goods and a drug count.

Wanted posters, with Strickland's and a companion's photo, were distributed by Easton police. They described the pair as probably armed and very dangerous.

At about 1:25 p.m. yesterday, the chief said, police were told that Strickland was believed to be in the Kennedy Gardens apartment complex at Canal and Center streets.

When police went to the apartment indicated and knocked at the door, they were told they couldn't come in unless the occupant knew who was there.

At that time, police said

they heard the sound of a latch opening and someone going down stairs.

The police then saw a person fleeing. They called for him to halt three times, they said, but he continued to flee.

Finally they came upon him in the Lehigh Valley Rail Road yards, between two railroad cars. They said one of them called, "Don't make me shoot."

Police said the suspect then reached toward his waist and began to turn toward them. One shot was fired and then another, Young said.

The weapons were shot guns

firing nine-pellet, double-O buck shot, Young said.

The suspect was standing as the police approached him, but he fell when they reached him. He was taken to Easton Hospital by the Easton Emergency Squad where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

The policemen who fire the weapons were identified as William Crouse and John Harman.

Young said the two will not be suspended from duty. "It would be unfair to suspend them," he said, "because they acted with justification."

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ROBERT V. STRICKLAND

Easton Police

Kill Suspect

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Police said they have found no weapon at the scene.

Investigation in the case is being continued by city police, the district attorney's office, and the coroner's office.

District Attorney Charles Spaziani said he has conferred with NAACP leaders. He said facts in the case have been given them in order that rumors in the area may be discounted. Strickland is black.

Officials stressed that Strickland was a "prime suspect" in recent area robberies and that warnings had been circulated in flyers that he was thought to be carrying a concealed deadly weapon.

Police were warned to use caution in their search for Strickland and to consider him armed and dangerous.

According to the preliminary coroner's report Strickland sustained six wounds. These were on the left lateral chest, buttocks and left knee.

There were no wounds on the back, officials said.

A postmortem was to be conducted later.

Young said he would not comment when asked whether increased patrols in the city were being considered.

Strickland, who also had an Allentown address, was being sought on warrants from Lehigh County on burglary, larceny, carrying a concealed deadly weapon, conspiracy, receiving stolen goods and possession with intent to deliver a controlled substance.

Funeral arrangements will be announced by the Strunk Funeral Home, Easton.