

Oscar Wilkes, Ardmore Police Officer is Slain

John B. Gandy, City Truck Operator Charged in

Death of Assistant Police Chief

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Oscar Wilkes, 48 year old assistant chief of police of Ardmore, was shot to death at 8:30 p.m. last night. The shooting occurred at 819 Hargrove northwest.

John B. Gandy, 38, truck operator, who lives at the address, has been charged with the first degree murder in the slaying. Gene Ritter, county attorney, files the complaint against the defendant today.

Gandy, in statements to Ritter, Fred Collins, assistant county attorney, and others, admitted he fired three shots at a car which drove into his driveway. He insisted he did not know that the man in the car was Wilkes. His contention was that he had been threatened by another man; that he believed this man had followed him to his home and that he was the person in the car.

Wilkes, five years on the Ardmore police force, and assistant chief for the past year, was highly esteemed by fellow officers and citizens as a peace officer. He is married and has a wife, one son and two step-children. He lives at 220 Moore southeast.

One of three shots, which Ritter says Gandy admits firing, found its mark in the lower throat of the officer. It ranged downward, apparently striking the heart. Wilkes was instantly killed. When fellow officers arrived at the scene, the victim was lying on his back, his head at the rear of the car. A toothpick, which he had been chewing at the time he apparently got out of the car, was still between his lips. He was taken to the Ardmore sanitarium and hospital but was dead on arrival. The body was removed to Bettes funeral home.

One of the bullets from the .38 calibre special revolver had struck the windshield of the police cruiser and gouged out a groove into the glass. Another had struck a fender on the car.

Gandy told Ritter he shot from the porch of his house. The night was extremely dark. The Gandy residence is near the middle of the block. The police car had parked at the extreme east end of the driveway. The house was north and west of the car. About 20 or 25 feet separated the car from the nearest edge of the porch. A drizzle of rain was falling.

Neighbors heard the shots. One of these called the police. The highway patrol had also heard the call. The police car with Lee Wallace and Dan Worley, patrol officers, answered the call and arrived almost the same time that Frank Grall and Calvin Duncan, highway patrolmen, appeared.

They arrested Gandy and took him first to the police station and later to the county attorney's office. Wilkes body had been removed to the hospital and then to the undertaking establishment.

Officers searched the house. They found a .38 calibre nickel plated revolver. It had five loaded cartridges in it's chamber and one that had been fired. Three empty shells were picked up on the porch and in the house. One of the battered slugs which had struck the car was found.

Apparently, officers said the gun had been reloaded after the shooting.

Ritter said that Gandy had been drinking. Later, in his statement, which he signed in the presence of witnesses, the truck contractor admitted that he and a woman companion, had been to two beer places south of town. They had some drinks. He insists "I was not drunk and I was not sober - I had been drinking some." He reiterated that he did not know that the man in the car was a police officer and had thought all the time it was his enemy, whom he said had threatened him.

Ritter said that Gandy, the woman, Jacqueline Thomas, and her divorced husband, Raymond Howie, as well as Gandy's young son, John Gandy Jr., 14, had made statements.

He said that Gandy told the following story of the incidents leading to the tragedy:

Gandy and Jackie Thomas had been together Thursday afternoon. They had gone to two beer places south of town. After a while, Gandy said, Jackie had left his booth and was sitting in another booth with some people. He wanted to go home. An argument followed. Finally the woman agreed to accompany him.

He took her, he said, home. She did not want to get out of the car but wanted to go some other place. She lives on Twelfth avenue southeast. Gandy said he "pushed" her out of the car and both went into the house. The argument continued, he said. Then Jackie decided to call her former husband, Raymond Howie, from whom she was divorced in October. Jackie and Howie both verified this story. Howie, unable to get a coherent explanation from his former wife, as to why she called, and disturbed at her voice, decided to come to her house. He drove from his own home and parked his car back of Gandy's, in the one-car driveway.

As he entered the house, Gandy was leaving. Gandy said he told Howie, "She's in there if you want her." Howie said he did not say anything to Gandy. He asked his ex-wife what the trouble was. Getting no reply, he went out to the car where Gandy was sitting and intended, he said, to ask him what was the matter. Gandy, he said, slammed the doors shut, threw his car into reverse and pushed Howie's car out of the driveway, across the street and into a ditch. Gandy then drove away toward downtown. Howie said he returned to his former wife and that they both remained in the house until officers picked them up for questioning around 9 p.m.

Gandy's story is that he started home. He said that as he turned on C street, southeast, he saw a car which he thought was following him. He said he thought it was Howie. He said that Howie resented his attentions to Miss Thomas in the interval between February, 1951 and the date of the Howie divorce and had "threatened to kill me." Howie denied this emphatically in his statement,

Ritter said. He admitted that he had, at several times, asked Gandy not to see his wife and that Gandy had agreed.

Gandy said he drove straight home into the driveway of his residence. He entered the house where young John Gandy and his younger brother were playing cards. In a few minutes he said a car drove up in front, the lights on, and turned into the driveway. Gandy said he thought it was the car he had seen following him. He said he stepped to the door and called out: "Go away, Howie - you can't come in here." The car did not leave. Gandy said he returned into the house, got a pistol, stepped to the porch and fired three shots in the direction of the car. He then told young Gandy to call the police and "tell them there's a man out there who won't go away." The boy said he called the police. He said also that he then called "Jackie" - Miss Thomas - and told her there had been some trouble. In a few minutes police and patrol officers arrived.

Hubert Bartlett, police chief, and other officers, speculating on the preliminary developments which had led Wilkes to the Gandy house, said that apparently assistant chief had had a call to the area. And enroute, he must have spotted Gandy in his car - the probability being that Gandy was driving fast.

Officers believe that Wilkes followed him home, pulled into the driveway, and waited to see if the truck contractor intended to stay there or to get into his car again. The other incidents, it seems, followed:

Clarence Harris, city manager, said he was talking to Wilkes about 8:30 o'clock near his home. A call came for an officer to go to 819 Hargrove was radioed. The call said that a man was at that address and "wouldn't to away." Wilkes told Harris he would make the call since he was only a few blocks away form the address.

If this was the case, then there is a conflict between the story told by Gandy and his son. Officers pointed out that if this the correct version of why the assistant chief went to Gandy's house, that Gandy must have told his young son to call the police about the mysterious man as soon as he entered the house rather than after the shooting itself, as their statement indicated. At any rate, police point out, at 8:40 a neighbor called from the vicinity to report gunfire and the fact that someone had been wounded.

Wilkes apparently had just gotten out of the car and must have been standing on the south side of the patrol car just in line with the windshield of his car at the time of the shooting.

Wilkes was the first city police officer to be killed in the line of duty in more than 20 years. The last policeman to die from gunshot wounds was Buddy Moorehead, who was shot to death when he endeavored to question a transient just east of the old underpass on U.H. highway 70.

Wilkes before he became a police officer was for 20 years manager of an ice plant. He enlisted in the navy in World War II. When he left the navy he became a police officer under Bartlett. Showing exceptional ability, he was named as assistant chief about a year ago.

Officers were deeply shocked at his death.

The complaint against Gandy, lodged at 10:30 a.m., is slightly different from most such complaints. It charged that John B. Gandy in an attempt to kill Raymond Howie fired "certain shots" which caused the death of Oscar Wilkes. This, Ritter said, was the form to be followed where a homicide is committed and the person not intended as the victim is killed, the specifications of intent must be provided in the information.

Rites for the slain officer are to be Sunday at 3:30 p.m., in the Lighthouse Assembly of God church. The Rev. Leslie Moore will preside and the burial following will be in Rose Hill cemetery under the direction of Bettes funeral home.

Wilkes lived in Ardmore most of his life. A navy veteran of World War II, he was a member of the George R. Anderson post 65, American Legion. He was born Jan. 28, 1898 at Oswalt in Love county. In 1941, he married Miss Margaret Essex, Sulphur.

Survivors in addition to his wife are two daughters, Jacquita and Jimmie Sue, and one son, Carlen, all of the home address, 220 Moore street southeast; three brothers, Owen, Ardmore; J. Fairfield, and Eddie, Tahoma, Wash.; two sisters, Mrs. Rachel Lewis, Oklahoma City, and Mrs. Linnie Melton, Stratford, and a number of uncles and aunts.