Willard Wages Uphill Fight For His Life

W. G. Willard, city detective, waged a courageous uphill fight for his life this morning against tremendous odds stacked against him Saturday night when two shots fired from the .38-calibre pistol of a drunken Negro pierced his abdomen.

Willard’s gameness and the blood of his buddies kept him in the fight that police attendants thought was as good as lost early this morning. He rallied from a low ebb in the life line at 8:30 this morning and was given another blood transfusion at 11 o’clock.

Five volunteers from the ranks of the men he worked with were standing ready to give additional blood if needed. He was suffering considerably, they said.

Police Department Gloom

There was never a gloomier day at police headquarters.

Red-eyed from loss of sleep, those who were on duty today anxiously awaited calls at intervals from policemen who were at the hospital with Willard’s family.

Willard shot three times with his .38-calibre pistol. Three shells were found in the Negro, Fred Burt, when they removed his body from Happy Hill. The Negro fired first, evidence disclosed. He emptied five shots from his pistol. Only two found their mark, the detective. One of the bullets that sunk into Willard’s abdomen glanced and went into his leg.

Negro Tried to Shoot Wife

The Negro opened fire on Willard after the detective, who had been summoned to Burt’s house with Sergeant R. C. Cable, had chased him about a block. Cable, inside the house were Burt had attempted to shoot his wife earlier in the night, heard the shots ring out over the hill a short distance away. He reached the scene to find the detective stretched on the ground. Off a little distance, the Negro lay fatally wounded. He died in about 35 minutes.

At noon, hospital attendants reported Willard’s condition as ‘grave’.

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W. G. Willard, above, city detective, died at 4:15 o’clock this morning at a local hospital from wounds received in a pistol battle with a Negro here Saturday night. The Negro, who shot at the officer three times, two of the bullets striking him in the abdomen, was killed by Willard in the exchange of shots.

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Gun Wounds Prove Fatal To Willard

W. G. Willard, 37, city detective, died at the City Hospital at 4:45 o’clock this morning, of wounds received in a pistol battle on Happy Hill here Saturday night.

He was wounded when two bullets, fired from a .46-calibre pistol by Fred Burl, 41-year-old Negro WPA worker, pierced his abdomen.

The Negro, drunken and resisting arrest, was killed at the scene. He died approximately 15 minutes after the firing ceased.

Doctors, who kept a constant watch at his bedside, said the detective fought a courageous fight for his life as an almost certain loser. His family, policemen and friends stayed within call of his room most of the night. They had an outside hope for Willard early yesterday after he was given two blood transfusions.

Suffered Considerably

He regained consciousness yesterday, but suffered considerably, hospital attendants said.

Willard was taken to the hospital by fellow policemen immediately after he was struck down by the gun fire of the drunken Negro.

The detective and his squad partner, Sergeant S. C. Cable, were summoned to 1322 Pine street about 11 o’clock Saturday night by Burl’s wife. She said Burl was drunk and had attempted to shoot her.

Willard caught sight of the Negro and chased him about 200 yards from the house down Foster street. The Negro turned and opened fire when he reached a creek crossing. He fired five shots from his .45-calibre pistol, two finding their mark. Willard plugged the Negro in the chest with three shots from his .38-calibre pistol in as many ticks.

Popular With Others

Popular in the police family, Willard began his service with the police as a patrolman in 1927. He illustrated ability as a traffic officer and as patrolman and was shifted to the detective division in 1932. He was active in athletics and was interested in hunting and fishing.

Before taking up police work here, Willard was a machinist for the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company and for some time worked as an inspector for the Winston-Salem Chair Company. He was a member of the Southside Baptist Church.

A resident at 2330 Westfield avenue, Willard was married, the father of three children. A brother, S. L. Willard, is a member of the state highway patrol and is stationed at Burlington.

The police records show that Willard’s death is the first department loss of a man in action since 1927 when L. G. Teague was killed by a Negro in making an arrest.
Mr. Willard was born in Yadkin county, February 13, 1901, son of William H. and Lina Hitchens Willard. He moved to Winston-Salem in 1912, and had made his home here since that time. He was a member of Tabernacle Baptist Church.

On June 28, 1924, he was married to Sara Elizabeth Lawter. Survivors include the wife, three children, Edsel, Jack, and Betty Gray Willard; the mother, Mrs. J. M. Trogden, of Kernersville, route two; two sisters, Mrs. D. C. Smith, of this city, and Mrs. H. J. Darnell, of Greenbaw, Va.; three brothers, L. R. and B. N. Willard, of this city, and B. L. Willard, of Burlington.

The body will remain at Vogler's Chapel until 8 o'clock tonight when it will be removed to the home, 2330 Westfield avenue.

Funeral services will be held at the home Wednesday afternoon, 4 o'clock, conducted by Rev. J. Nell Taylor, Rev. L. H. Forson and Rev. J. F. Carter. Place of burial has not been decided.

Active pallbearers will be members of the police plainclothes division. They are R. G. Cable, T. M. Mackle, C. E. Bowman, Captain W. R. Burke, R. N. Carroll, J. R. Bowles, Vance Cook and L. R. Stilwel.

Honorary pallbearers will be members of the police department, Mayor W. T. Wilson and members of the police committee of the board of aldermen.