

CITY

An Off-Duty Officer Kills Himself at a Rock Concert

By CHUCK SUDETIC

An off-duty police officer committed suicide during a St. Patrick's Day concert in a mid-Manhattan theater late Saturday, shooting himself once in the head as a local Irish rock band was playing an encore, the police said.

Two women behind him in the theater's crowded balcony were hit by the bullet, a police spokeswoman, Officer Valerie St. Rose, said.

The officer, Christopher Gargan, 22, of Merrick, L.I., had accompanied another off-duty officer and a woman, whose names were not released by the police, to the Academy at 234 West 43d Street for a concert by Black 47, a local band popular with police officers, Officer St. Rose said.

The gunshot came at about 10:40 P.M., moments after a security guard in the concert hall spotted Officer Gargan carrying his 9-millimeter weapon in his holster, Officer St. Rose said.

"There was no argument," the officer said. "The security man informed him that if he was a police officer, he should conceal his weapon."

Officer Gargan removed his gun from its holster with his left hand,

held it to his head and fired, Officer St. Rose said. The bullet struck two women behind him: June Anderson, 43, the wife of Larry Kirwan, the leader of Black 47, was wounded in the hip, and Sharon Wormworth, 36, the wife of the band's tour manager,

A fatal bullet, as a night of music comes to a close.

Nico Wormworth, was struck in the hand, Officer St. Rose said.

Ms. Anderson and Mrs. Wormworth underwent surgery at Bellevue Hospital Center yesterday for wounds that were not life-threatening, Officer St. Rose said.

Neither woman knew Officer Gargan, who was pronounced dead an hour after the shooting at Bellevue, Officer St. Rose said. He was the second New York City police officer to die in less than a week; officers who marched in Saturday's St. Patrick's Day Parade on Fifth Avenue

wore black bands on their badges to mourn Officer Kevin Gillespie, 33, who was killed on Thursday after a carjacking and gun battle in the Bronx.

Police officials said that Officer Gargan, who was apparently intoxicated at the time he fired the fatal bullet, had nothing in his personnel file that would indicate any disciplinary or other problems. He joined the Police Department in February 1994 and had been reassigned to the Manhattan South precinct last Friday after two years on a traffic detail, the police said.

"It was a career-path transfer," a police official said, explaining that the move had nothing to do with any problems the officer was experiencing on the job.

Grief-stricken members of Officer Gargan's family refused to comment on his death.

Neighbors, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Officer Gargan had grown up in Merrick, on York Place, a tiny street with 10 single-family homes.

"He was a wonderful, beautiful person, and his loss will definitely be felt by his friends and his family," said one neighbor who was contacted

by telephone, and who said she had known the officer all his life.

Asked whether Officer Gargan had any personal problems that might explain his death, she answered, "Definitely not."

Mr. Wormworth said that his wife had been sitting five seats from Ms. Anderson in a roped-off section of the balcony as the concert was drawing to a close.

"She apparently put her hand in the air," Mr. Wormworth said. "She thought it was a firecracker, then looked at her hand. It was bleeding and there was smoke coming from the wound."

He said his wife was taken by police car to the hospital.

Mr. Wormworth said all of the 1,500 concertgoers were to have been frisked on their way into the hall.

Ms. Anderson told her husband, Mr. Kirwan, that she heard a bang and felt a pain in her stomach.

"She didn't know what happened," Mr. Kirwan said. "She just saw people running."

Police officers are not required to carry their weapons while off duty, and are advised not to carry them to events when alcohol is being served, a Police Department official said.



Nico Wormworth at a press conference. His wife, Sharon Wormworth, is also present.

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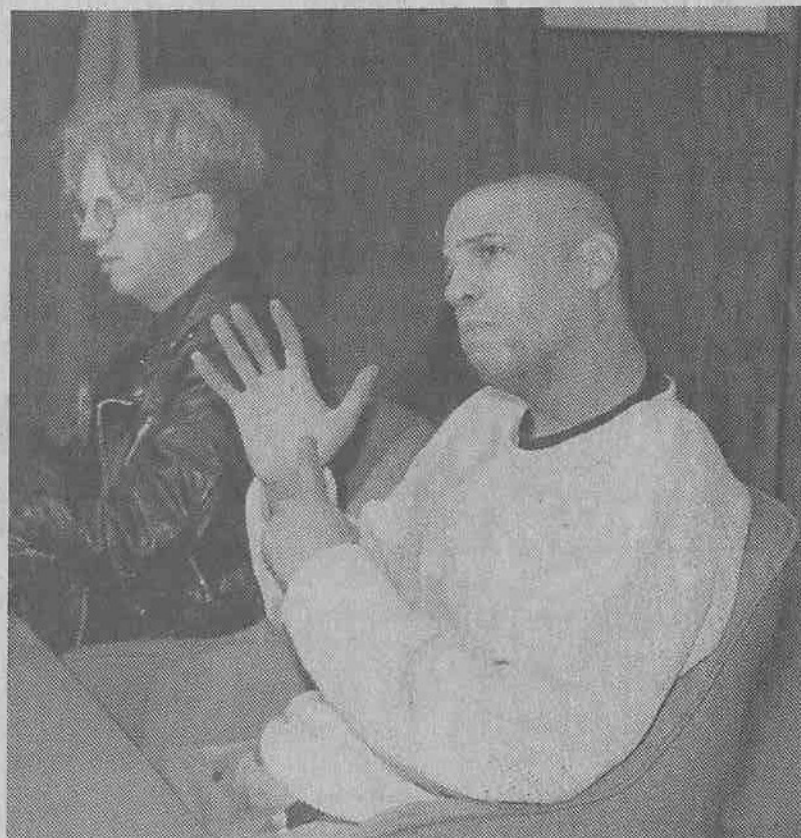
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Frances Roberts for The New York Times

Nico Wormworth, right, manager of the band Black 47, at a news conference. His wife was hit by a bullet that killed an officer. With Mr. Wormworth was Larry Kirwan, whose wife was also wounded.

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