

In six years, Detroit cop has killed three, wounded six - Officer's decisions to shoot suspects several times justified by department, prosecutors

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DETROIT -- Police Officer Eugene Brown fired at a fleeing man who had hopped a fence and taken a shot at him and another cop. Brown's bullets missed their mark, and the man disappeared during a cold winter night in 1995.

In other shootings, however, Brown's aim has been deadly. He has killed three people, as well as wounded six others, in his six years on the force. In each case, the department and prosecutors ruled Brown acted appropriately.

The fatal shootings have dogged the city, the defendant in the lawsuits, and Brown, 33, a man who was unable to land law enforcement jobs elsewhere before joining the Detroit force.

"I feel it's a serial-killer cop situation," said Herman Vallery, whose son, LaMar Grable, died in 1996 when Brown shot him eight times, including twice in the back.

Brown declined to comment last week about his actions. So, too, did Detroit Police Chief Benny Napoleon, who said he cannot discuss matters in litigation.

A common thread in Brown's fatal shootings is his decision to use deadly force while other officers on the scene did not.

The shootings are:

* On Feb. 8, 1995, Brown killed a knife-wielding Roderick Carrington, 30, with three shots in a span of about 15 seconds. Brown said Carrington refused to drop the knife and charged toward him. Brown's partner, Officer Craig Stewart, saw the entire incident and never fired. A lawsuit filed by Carrington's family was dismissed.

* On Jan. 22, 1999, Brown shot Darren Neal Miller in the face while his wife stood face-to-face with her husband, Sandra Miller claims in her wrongful-death lawsuit against the city.

The Millers had just left the Free Wheelers Motorcycle Club on Lynch Road when police began questioning them, the suit claims. Darren Miller went back inside the bar and, with police permission, Sandra Miller went to get him, her suit states.

While she talked to him inside the vestibule, Brown fired through the screen door, the suit states.

Brown said Miller, 33, came at him with a sledgehammer. Brown's partner, Officer Jason Tonti, did not fire his gun.

Police said the shooting was justified because Brown could see Miller through the screen door and thought Miller posed a threat to him and others in the bar. Police reports say an irate Miller had a sledgehammer in his hand when Brown shot him through a screen door.

"That claim ... is false and is merely a fabrication to justify what is truly an unjustified shooting," according to papers filed in the pending lawsuit.

* Brown killed Grable, 20, with three shots in the chest, all fired at close range, and two bullets in the back. That night, Brown and his partner, Officer Vicky Yost, were riding outside their precinct when they said they saw Grable walking in the rain in the 1700 block of Field, carrying a gun.

Grable, who did not have a criminal record, ran away when challenged. Brown opened fire.

"When he shoots, he never stops at one. It's always more than once," said lawyer Victor Bowman, who filed the lawsuit on behalf of Grable's family.

The only fingerprints on the gun police said Grable was carrying belong to Yost, Bowman said. She had picked it up and put it in her belt when police arrived, Bowman said.

Yost did not show up for three scheduled depositions in the case and then refused to testify, pleading her Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. She told a witness at the scene she did not fire a shot, Bowman said.

Grable's family rejected a \$750,000 settlement offer from the city. The case will go back to court on May 30.

In the summer of 1995, Brown shot at a man who had jumped from a stolen van and run into an alley. Brown said the man charged at him with either a screwdriver or a car security device similar to the Club. He missed the man, who was arrested by another officer.

Brown, a 1985 graduate of Kettering High School, joined the department in May 1993. He came to the Detroit force after six years in the Marine Corps and brief stints as a manager at a McDonald's restaurant and mall security guard, he stated in a deposition in the Carrington lawsuit.

Brown failed the entrance examination for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, he testified. The Wayne County Jail did not hire him as a guard, Brown said.

He spent most of his first four years as an officer in the 10th (Livernois) precinct.

For five months in 1994, he served as a security guard for Mayor Dennis Archer and City Council members. That year, he applied to work for the Southfield Police Department, but was placed on a waiting list and his candidacy expired two years later.

In the 1996 deposition, Brown acknowledged having more than five citizen complaints against him, though none resulted in discipline.

The department did not bring charges against Brown in any of the shootings.

Caption: Herman Vallery has created a memorial where his son, **Lamar Wayne Grable**, was fatally shot during an altercation with Police Officer Eugene Brown in 1996. LaMar Grable

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