



Louis Hawkins Jr.

✓ Boy, 6, dies; orphaned by 1975 shootings

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He was the youngest survivor of a family whose tragedies were a part of Rochester history.

Louis J. Hawkins, 6, who was orphaned in 1975 after his mother was shot by a Rochester policeman and his father was shot in a dispute over his custody, died yesterday at Strong Memorial Hospital.

Louis became ill with a virus when he was three, said his grandmother Waverly Roach, 258 Post Ave. "A virus was going around... my husband always thought he had the Russian flu. It got in his heart and he had it ever since," she said. Doctors said it was myocarditis, congestive cardiomyopathy, she said.

An autopsy was to be performed today.

He never really knew his father, or his mother, Denise, whose shooting sparked protests in the black community and a grand jury investigation into the incident.

"I showed him pictures (of his parents), but he was really too little to know. He called us mommy and daddy," said Mrs. Roach, his guardian.

"We never discussed it around little Louis. It was something we felt he didn't need to know. We knew he'd be reading about it eventually, and maybe that's why God took him away. God did this for the best," Mrs. Roach said.

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Louis Jr.'s mother was killed Nov. 11, 1975. When police responded to a report of a family squabble at an apartment on Joseph Avenue, Officer Michael Leach fired a shot at Mrs. Hawkins, who he said tried to attack him with a knife. A grand jury later cleared Leach of any wrongdoing.

The shooting touched off a number of protests in the black community.

Several weeks later, the boy's father, Louis Hawkins Sr., was shot by Clifford Roach, the boy's grandfather, during an argument over custody of the child.

Roach pleaded guilty in August 1976 to a charge of second-degree manslaughter and was sentenced to 60 days in jail and four years and 10 months of probation.

"One died in October, one in November and one in December," Mrs. Roach said about the Hawkins family. "At least one thing I know is that he'll be with God."

The boy will be buried next to his parents in a family plot at Riverside Cemetery after services at Antioch Baptist Church Thursday, Mrs. Roach said.

Louis was a kindergarten pupil at Nazareth Hall School.