



D&C photo by T. Gordon Massecar

Clifford Roach and grandson, Louis Jr.

... 'I killed Louis protecting this home and the baby,' he said.

Clifford Roach lost his daughter, killed her husband, went to jail and is now being sued to help the grandchild he loves. But he's not bitter. He was just ...

D. & C. OCT 31 1976

... 'Trying to do the right thing'

By JOHN STEWART

Clifford Roach spent his life trying to keep his family out of the poverty of his "Tobacco Road childhood" in Alabama.

It meant working 20 years as a cook in the Air Force. It meant retiring to a job as a mailman. It meant having his wife, Waverly, hold a job, too.

It meant teaching his four children middle-class values—like working to get ahead, going to church, getting an education.

But most of all, it meant protecting his family and home.

But then the realities of Inner City life, the very hardships he wanted to spare his family, came crashing down.

His daughter, Denise, became pregnant and was forced to marry.

Less than two years later she was shot dead by a policeman.

Forty nine days after that—almost to the minute—Roach shot Denise's husband dead.

Roach spent the next two months in jail. He couldn't make bail.

He pleaded guilty to manslaughter and lost his government job.

Last week, a \$500,000 damage suit



D&C photo by T. Gordon Massecar

grandson, Louis Jr. is home and the baby,' he said.

was filed against him for killing his son-in-law.

It was just fate

But through it all, Roach didn't blame anyone. He still doesn't.

"I know nothing can bring my daughter back," Roach said. "I know she's happy that I'm taking care of her son. She's probably happy too that Louis (Hawkins, Denise's husband) is with her now. He's only about eight graves away. She loved that man."

"I feel sorry for the cop, too (Officer Michael Leach, who shot Denise Hawkins). I'd like to meet him someday, shake his hand and tell him so."

"I know he (Leach) didn't do anything wrong. It was an accident. I don't believe he murdered Denise but she didn't want to hurt him. I won't deny that Denise had a knife in her hand, but she was running for her life."

"Louis (Hawkins) wasn't that bad either. It wasn't just him, there are a

million kids out there just like him. They get on the wrong road and there's no one that sets them back on the right one.

"But I killed Louis protecting this home and the baby."

2 months — 2 deaths

Roach's daughter, Denise Hawkins, 18, was shot to death about 8:45 p.m., Nov. 11, 1975, by Officer Michael

Turn to Page 6B

e been convicted by any my home and family.'

—Clifford Roach

"I get mad everytime I see in the paper someone saying how bad the jail is here," Roach said. "I've been places in the South that are worse than jail. I didn't like being confined, but the county jail here isn't so bad."

He was just trying

D. & C. OCT 31 1976

From Page 1B

Leach in one of Rochester's most controversial police shootings.

On Dec. 30, 1975, Roach shot Louis Hawkins, 23, to death in the living room of his home at 258 Post Ave. The men were arguing over the custody of Hawkins' son and Roach's grandson, Louis Jr., who was then just 18 months old and who was staying with the Roaches.

On Aug. 23, Roach pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter. He was sentenced to 60 days in jail and four years-10 months probation. He lost his job as a mail carrier for the U.S. Postal Service the next month because, as a convicted felon, he can't hold a government job.

Last week, the court-appointed law guardian of Louis Jr., lawyer Lloyd L. Hurst, filed a \$500,000 damage suit against Roach for killing Hawkins in order to guarantee the child's future welfare. Hurst also filed a \$1 million damage suit against Leach and the City of Rochester for Denise's death.

Roach, 43, talked about his life, the death of his daughter and son-in-law, his sentence, jail and his values in an interview at his home last week.

While he talked, Louis Jr., now 2½ years old, chattered and played nearby. Across the room on a credenza sat a portrait of Denise.

"You know, I have a little more deep feeling for him than my own son," Roach said as he held Louis Jr., reminding the child to behave until they could rake leaves together outside after the interview. "The baby is the only thing that's left of Denise."

Roach married Waverly in 1952, two years after he joined the Air Force. One of their five children died in infancy and the other boy and three girls were reared at various military bases, from France to Denver, Colo.

Roach retired from the Air Force in 1971 and became a mail carrier in Rochester. Waverly works at Eastman Kodak Co.

Biggest mistake of his life

Roach didn't like Louis Hawkins from the first day Denise brought him home. "There was no peace in this house from the first day he stepped foot in here," Roach said.

But Denise became pregnant, and Roach, following middle-class tradition, made them get married in June 1974, after she was graduated from Madison High School.

"That was the biggest mistake I ever made," Roach said.

The couple had many problems, Denise left Hawkins two or three times, Roach said. One of those times she came home, but Louis followed,

demanding she return. They argued so violently the police were called, Roach said.

The Hawkinses moved so often—seven times or more—that Roach used to call them "grasshoppers," he said.

Hawkins wasn't working, wasn't attending school and had various run-ins with the law. Shortly before his death, a county grand jury indicted him for burglary and escaping police custody.

Denise's last fight

Nov. 11 the couple argued for the last time. Hawkins, Denise, and her sister Miranda Roach, 20, went that night to the basement apartment of the women's cousin, Adrian Turner, at 81 Thurston Road. While drinking Wild Irish Rose and listening to the stereo, the Hawkinses began arguing over something Louis said to Miranda. Denise got a 13¼-inch kitchen knife and tried to attack her husband.

Miranda called the police. Leach and three other officers arrived about 8:40 p.m. When they knocked on the door, Denise came out into the hallway, waving the knife. In the next few minutes, the police with their guns drawn, ordered her to drop the knife. But she lunged at Leach, who backed into another officer. Leach shot her once. She died in the hall.

A county grand jury later cleared Leach of any wrongdoing.

Roach was in Omaha, Neb., on a vacation that night. His wife telephoned him about his daughter's death. "I must have sat there five minutes, thinking what could they have robbed, for a policeman to shoot her," Roach said.

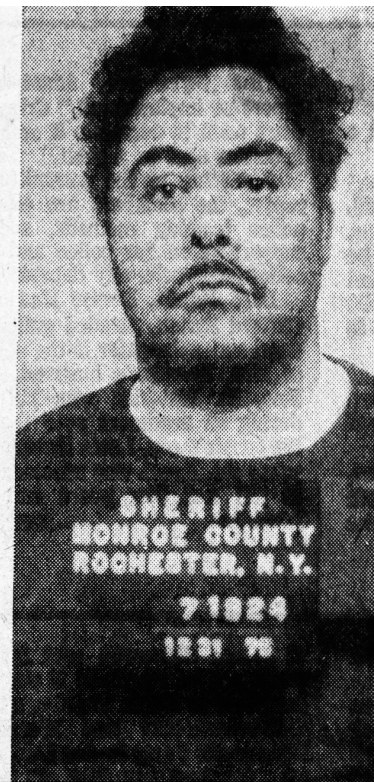
Tried to keep Hawkins away

Hawkins signed over custody of the his son to the Roaches about a week after Denise's death, Roach said. But he called to see the boy at all hours of the day, and the Roaches obtained a court order to limit Hawkins' visitations, he said.

They were going to give Hawkins those papers Dec. 30, the night Roach killed him.

"I'll never forget that night," Roach said. "There was snow on the ground. We waited until about 8 p.m. for Louis to come over, but he kept calling, saying he couldn't get a ride."

Roach finally went to bed. Hawkins arrived about 8:30 p.m., demanding the boy.



'I don't think I would have been convicted by any trial ... I was protecting my home and family.'

—Clifford Roach

"Waverly came upstairs and told me, 'Louis is here and he's going to take the child,'" Roach said. "I called the police and told them there was going to be trouble. Then I got my gun (a .22 caliber rifle Roach had made in the Air Force) and went downstairs."

Hawkins was sitting on the sofa, Roach said. Roach placed the rifle on the coffee table in front of Hawkins, squatted down on the opposite side and told Hawkins he couldn't take the boy, he said.

Roach said he tried to hand Hawkins the legal papers. But Hawkins jumped up, batted the papers away and lunged at Roach. Roach grabbed the rifle as he tumbled on the floor with Hawkins.

"When we came up, he had hold of my hands and the gun was firing," Roach said. Some of the bullets broke the front windows. One hit Hawkins in the chest.

"I dragged him outside then. I was mad," Roach said.

Police found Hawkins dead on the porch when they arrived. They arrested Roach for murder.

The charge was later reduced to manslaughter by the county grand jury. But Roach spent the next two months in jail, unable to meet the \$10,000 bail.

"I get mad everytime I see in the paper someone saying how bad the jail is here," Roach said. "I've been places in the South that are worse than jail. I didn't like being confined, but the county jail here isn't so bad."

...to do the right thing

B. & C. OCT 31 1976

"I talked to a lot of guys there that should have been in prison. I saw a lot of incidents that a fellow said something to a cop that, if it had been me and I was along, I'd have whipped the hell out of him. The cops take a lot in there."

Couldn't afford trial

Roach eventually pleaded guilty to manslaughter on the advice of his attorney, Charles Crimi.

"I'll say this, though. Deep down in my heart, I don't think I would have been convicted by any trial for this second-degree manslaughter. I was protecting my home and family. But I couldn't afford to pay a lawyer for a trial."

Because of the circumstances of the shooting and Roach's spotless criminal record, County Court Judge Hyman T. Maas gave Roach his light sentence. He was given credit for his jail time when he didn't make bail, which accounted for all 60 days.

May go to college

Now Roach is home most of the day, caring for his grandson. He works part time nights as a cook in a steak house, but is thinking of enrolling at Monroe College next year as an "inspiration" to his children.

"I want my kids to finish high school. They don't have to bring home As and Bs, but anybody can be a nothing. You don't have to be the best, but you try to be something, not nothing."

Clifford Roach and grandson, Louis Jr.

... 'I killed Louis protecting this home and the baby,' he said.

One of their five children died in death. I must have seen them...

Roach has gotten rid of all the guns in his home, but he still worries about protecting his family.

"I can't defend myself now that I'm on probation," he said. "But I didn't go out and hurt somebody. I was just protecting our home."

"If someone walked into my home now with a gun and I shot him, people would say, 'What's that son-of-a-bitch doing, trying to kill everybody in Rochester?'"

"They'd say, 'Lock him up for the rest of his life.'"

After legal skirmishes this year over the custody of Louis Jr., Mrs. Roach was given legal custody last June. Now Roach says he doesn't understand why he is being sued, or how anyone can hope to get \$500,000 from him for the boy he already is committed to caring for.

Baffled by suit

"I don't know how they can do this," Roach said. "I haven't been served with any papers, but I guess I'll fight it."

"All I know is that the attorney (Hurst) goes to the same church I do every Sunday."

But through it all, Roach hasn't lost any faith in his values, in the idea that he and other people are just "trying to do the right thing."

"Once we went out to Denise's grave to put some flowers on it," he said. "But there already was a wreath on it. You know, I couldn't help feeling that the policeman put it there."

Clifford
went
the gra
He was

B. & C. OCT 31 1976

... 'Tryin

By JOHN STEWART

Clifford Roach spent his life trying to keep his family out of the poverty his "Tobacco Road childhood" in Alabama.

It meant working 20 years as a cook in the Air Force. It meant retiring to a job as a mailman. It meant having a wife, Waverly, hold a job, too. It meant teaching his four children middle-class values—like working to get ahead, going to church, getting an education.

But most of all, it meant protecting his family and home.

But then the realities of Inner City life, the very hardships he wanted to spare his family, came crashing down.

His daughter Denise became pregnant and was forced to marry.

Less than two years later she was dead by a policeman.

Forty-nine days after that—almost a minute—Roach shot Denise's husband dead.

Roach spent the next two months in jail. He couldn't make bail.

He pleaded guilty to manslaughter and lost his government job.

Last week, a \$500,000 damage suit