Homicide toll rises to 20 in BR

BY MELISSA MOORE

A 19-year-old man arrested two months ago on a drug charge on South 16th Street was killed there Thursday by a shotgun blast to the head, according to witnesses.

The city's 20th homicide of the year happened in the parking lot of a small, white brick block apartment complex decorated with graffiti.

Nearly in the center of the wall, someone had spray-painted a gun and the word "kill"

Roger White of 3521 Geronimo St., died at Baton Rouge General Medical Center about a half-hour after the 1 p.m. shooting outside 191 S. 16th St., police said.

Witnesses said the killer and the victim "passed a few words" about 15 minutes before the shooting, but said it didn't appear to be a major conflict.

The victim, a man who had been in the neighborhood selling clothes, left and returned with a shotgun, the witness said.

"He poked him once with the shotgun and then shot him in the head," said one of the witnesses.

White's mother, Linda Collins, said her son spent a lot of time on South 16th Street. He grew up one block over on South 17th Street before the family moved to Geronimo Street in 1993, she said.

"He just hung out over there," she said. "It's a bad part of town, that's all!"

Collins said she was shocked by the death of her oldest child, who left behind a 17-year-old brother and an 11-year-old sister.

"I just can't believe it. It still hasn't registered yet," Collins said Thursday afternoon.

This wasn't the first time White had been a victim of crime in his old neighborhood.

On July 20, 1992, when White was a 10-year-old Tara High School student, another teen-ager pulled a gun on him and took the Nike Air Jordan athletic shoes from his feet. Charles Neely, 18, was later convicted of armed robbery in that crime.

Two months ago, White was arrested in the 100 block of South 16th Street on a count of possession of crack cocaine, according to Parish Prison records. He was released on a $3,000 bond.

The case was still pending at the time of his death, court records show.

A 16-year-old girl who has lived on South 16th all her life watched the explaining of police officers from her perch on the trunk of a car.

"I couldn't move easily with her crutches and a bullet in her left foot," the girl said. She said she was shot at her home the night before this killing.

"Sixteenth Street's just bad," she said.

It wasn't always that way, she said. Violence in the neighborhood has increased in the past few months, she said.

Cpl. Kevin Cavell said White's shooting was at last the fourth time since midnight Wednesday that police had been called to the short street on gun-related incidents.

Police have no motive and no suspects in the shooting and ask that anyone with information call the Robbery/Homicide Division at 389-4009 or Crime Stoppers at 964-7070.

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