

# Killings Bare Ambush at Dinner Party

**Husband Cuts Telephone  
Wire, Slays Rival and  
Turns Shotgun on Self**

Homicide inspectors said today that a murder-suicide here Saturday night was the carefully planned action of a husband who had been betrayed by his wife and his best friend.

The victims were: William H. Stephens, 37, and Joe D. Brown, 34, both laboratory technicians at the Shell Development Company in Emeryville. Police said that

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Stephens used a shotgun to kill Brown and then fired a blast into his own head.

Stephens left a note indicating that he spared his wife, Bernice, 26, because she was a "good mother" to their daughter, Deborah, 22 months.

The shootings occurred at the Stephens' basement apartment at 3910 Ardley Avenue while the three were spending an evening together, still friends to all appearances.

## **WIFE GETS DIVORCE**

Homicide Inspectors Merle Longnecker and Joseph Bertoglio said the affair between Brown and Mrs. Stephens already had caused Brown's wife, Dorothy, who lives at 2117 Dwight Way, Berkeley, to obtain an interlocutory decree of divorce and that Stephens had started divorce proceedings against Mrs. Stephens.

The two couples had been friends for 15 months, the inspectors said, and had frequently gone out together on the Browns' cabin cruiser. About a month ago Mrs. Stephens told her husband that she was in love with Brown and wanted a divorce.

## **FILES CROSS-BILL**

Mrs. Stephens filed for divorce on May 25, but withdrew her suit when Stephens filed a cross-complaint. He had agreed that she would have custody of their daughter. The couple continued to live together at their Ardley Avenue apartment.

Inspectors Longnecker and Bertoglio reconstructed Saturday night's events this way: Brown had dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Stephens and they were having coffee and cake when Stephens remarked that the room was stuffy and smoky.

Mrs. Stephens opened a window from the top, but Stephens walked over and opened it from the bottom as well. Then he went for a walk. Mrs. Stephens and Brown remained in the kitchen working a crossword puzzle. While Mrs. Stephens was attending to her baby in a bedroom, Stephens placed the barrel of his shotgun through the open window and shot Brown in the head.

## **FLEES TO NEIGHBORS**

Then Mrs. Stephens fled to a neighbor's apartment and called police. While there she heard another shot and officers found Stephens dead in the yard when they arrived.

Stephens had cut the telephone wires and had the gun ready in his car, police said.

Brown, who lived in a hotel at 40th Street and San Pablo Avenue since separating from his wife, married Mrs. Brown on April 25, 1947. A former wife and child live in Lancaster, Pa.

The Stephens married on December 25, 1947. Deborah is their only child.