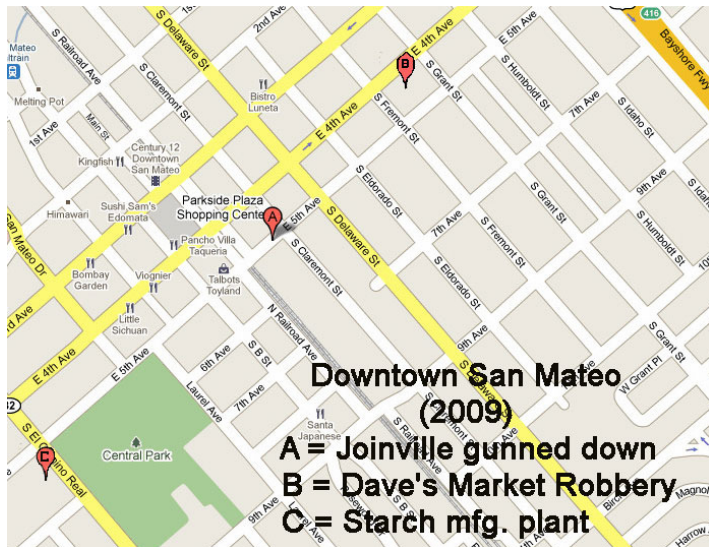


# Gordon Joinville – A City of San Mateo Fallen Hero

## Part 1 – Officer Down



In May 1968, the San Mateo Police Department received a tip from an employee of a downtown San Mateo chemical manufacturer located on the 500 block of S. El Camino Real - "C" on the map below. (That building no longer exists and is now occupied by the Westlake office building and 24 Hour Fitness.) A suspicious looking man (who refused to give his name or address) wanted to purchase 100 pounds of starch. Due to the man's insistence on remaining anonymous and the large quantity of chemical to be purchased, it was suspected that the starch would be used as a pill bonding agent in the production of an illegal drug, probably LSD. Arrangements were made for delivery of the starch on Thursday afternoon, May 23 (just 13 days prior to the assassination of Presidential Candidate Robert F. Kennedy in Los Angeles). Using an unmarked police car and dressed in civilian clothing, 12-year police veteran Detective Sergeant Gordon R. Joinville, was assigned jointly by the San Mateo Police Department and the FBI to secretly obtain the description and license plate number of the suspect's car and tail it to the lab where the illegal drugs were to be manufactured.



At approximately 5 pm, the unidentified man loaded the starch into his car and started driving away. Sergeant Joinville began tailing the car. It is assumed that the suspect quickly became aware of the fact that he was being followed. He then altered his route and started to speed away. Joinville then turned on his police siren with flashing lights and pulled the suspect's car over to the curb in front of Pederson and Arnold Planing Mill on Fifth Avenue, a few feet west of S. Claremont Street - "A" on map. (The building at that site is now vacant, awaiting demolition.)

This location is one block from the Southern Pacific train tracks. The suspect then got out of his car and approached the police car just as Sergeant Joinville attempted to make a radio call for a license plate computer check. The police dispatcher told Joinville to "stand by" due to heavy radio traffic that was busy handling an armed robbery that, coincidentally, was occurring just six blocks away at Dave's Market (now "Everybodys Market"), 916 East Fourth Avenue - "B" on map. Before Joinville could transmit the license plate number over the radio, he was shot twice at point-blank range killing him instantly. The weapon used in the slaying was a .45 caliber semi-automatic pistol. Even though the shooting occurred on a busy street in broad daylight, there

were no known witnesses to the sound of gunfire. This could be explained by the fact that a Southern Pacific train was scheduled to be passing by one block away. Sergeant Joinville, still seated, was likely shot through an open door or window while his assailant was standing in the street, on the left side of the police car. The suspect, along with his 100 pounds of starch, fled the scene.

At approximately 5:18 pm, Joinville was found dead by two small boys on their bicycles. They stared into the car, saw the bleeding man, and raced away for help. One of the boys went to Talbot's Toy Store, two blocks away, and the other went to a nearby Gulf service station on the corner of East Fourth Avenue and Delaware. The Gulf service station attendant, Bob Reed, took the boy's bike and raced to a nearby corner and then pedaled back to the waiting boy stating that he couldn't find anything wrong. (Due to his excitement, the boy probably didn't give a very good description of where the unmarked police car was located.) The boy shouted to Reed, "I'll show you!" and led the way back to Joinville's police car. At 5:25 pm, Bob Reed then broadcast over the police radio, "There's a police officer here who's been seriously hurt, send an ambulance right away..." (This is the same Bob Reed that currently operates "Bob Reed's Auto Service" at the corner of 17th and Palm Avenues in San Mateo.)

San Mateo Police Officer John Burr, who had been best man at Joinville's wedding in 1961, was the first detective on the scene--he was one of the police officers covering the Dave's Market robbery. He pulled open the car door and found his fellow police officer stretched across the front seat. Joinville was pronounced dead shortly thereafter at nearby Mills Hospital. His firearm, a .38 caliber service revolver, was in its holster and had not been fired. In examining the police car, Burr found a notebook that appeared to be hidden beneath Joinville's body. It was open to a page that had a description of a car and license plate number: "dark green 1959 Volkswagen Kharman Ghia – KKR030."



Gordon R. Joinville  
1933 - 1968

At the time of his death, Detective Sergeant Gordon R. Joinville, age 34, left behind a wife, Margaret, and two small children, ages three and four.

Next: Part 2 - The Aftermath