

Teenager Explains The Riot

A 17-year-old Crane High School student, James Parker, of 1336 S. Union st., touched off the hydrant that flooded the near Westside with rioters Tuesday.

This was the scene from his eyes.

It is thick with alleged police brutality, intimidation and oppression.

At about half-past noon Tuesday, Parker said he and nine or 10 other youths decided to open the hydrant at the corner of W. Roosevelt rd. and Throop st. as the best answer to the sun and humidity.

"We just wanted to cool off," he explained, "and we couldn't go to the 12th st. beach because the water is polluted there and it's closed."

Later, mothers in the neighborhood explained that although there is a pool in a public park in the adjacent predominately Italian area — "we don't send our children there for fear of a riot."

Parker said that the first police who arrived after the hydrant had been opened told the youths "It's O.K. as long as you don't obstruct traffic."

Then, more children and teens began splashing and the second group of police ordered that the hydrant be turned off.

"We told them," Parker said, "that if they shut off the hydrants that flowed all night in the Italian neighborhood, we'd shut off ours."

"The cops answer was quick and vicious," said Parker.

"One grabbed a kid about 8 years old off the hydrant and hurled him onto the grass.

"Then they slugged my friend Gary in the gut (Henry Maurice Gary, 20, address unkown) and when I went to help him up, they busted my head."

Parker and Gary were taken to the Racine st. police station . . . Parker had to be rushed to the Bridewell where doctors put 10 stitches in his head to close the wound.

He was returned to the station where he said he saw officers beat Gary. Parker accused two Negro policemen of failing to protest the beating after the white police had told them to keep quiet and had asked that the Negro police support them in case of a brutality charge.

Gary, who had also been treated at Bridewell, reportedly suffered multiple bruises.

The seven were told they could leave on a recognizance bond, but refused when they heard Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was coming to get them out.