

LSU professor's killer is sought

By **BOB USSERY**
Staff writer

New Orleans police had no leads Wednesday night in the killing of an LSU professor shot by a robber late Tuesday as he walked a friend home in the French Quarter.

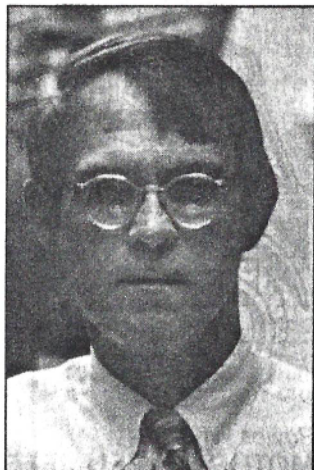
Jeffery LaFage, 44, died on the friend's porch in the 600 block of Barracks Street about 10:40 p.m., police said. A bullet pierced his jugular vein, causing him to bleed to death, the coroner's office said. LaFage, an LSU entomologist,

was walking with Tamra Carboni and was within 20 yards of her home when a man who had been following them grabbed Carboni's purse, police said.

Holding a gun in one hand, the man tried to pull the purse with his other hand, but the strap would not come off her shoulder and he pulled again, police said.

"LaFage said something to the effect, 'You don't have to do this,'" New Orleans Police Sgt. Bob Young said.

The man then raised his gun



Jeffery LaFage

Bled to death on friend's porch

See **KILLER, A-6**

Killer

From Page 1

and shot LaFage once in the neck, Young said.

The man escaped empty-handed by walking up Barracks Street, crossing Royal Street, and getting in a car parked on the downtown side of the 700 block of Barracks Street, two spaces from the corner, witnesses told police. The car turned left on Dauphine Street and disappeared.

Although no witnesses remembered seeing a getaway driver, police believe the gunman may have had an accomplice because he entered the car on the passenger side, and the car appeared to be running when he got in, police said.

LaFage ran across Barracks Street to Carboni's front porch, where he collapsed and died, police said.

An autopsy by the Orleans Parish coroner's office determined LaFage died from a bullet

wound that struck his jugular vein, causing him to bleed to death, a spokesman for Dr. Frank Minyard said.

Police described the suspect as a black man in his mid-20s, 6 feet tall, weighing about 190 pounds. He had short hair and a medium to heavy build. He wore a short-sleeve, multicolor pullover shirt with a white collar, and blue jeans that appeared to be new.

The getaway car was a two-door blue Buick or Chevrolet, witnesses said. The car had square taillights, and what appeared to be a pink light around its license plate.

Police said LaFage was working on a project aimed at destroying termites in French Quarter buildings, and had dined with friends earlier Tuesday night at a St. Philip Street restaurant.

LaFage drove frequently from Baton Rouge while involved in the termite project, and kept an apartment at 718 St. Philip St. for his overnight stays in New Orleans, friends said.

Termite researcher had found his niche in saving Quarter

By LYNN CUNNINGHAM
Staff writer

Jeffery LaFage never met a stranger until Tuesday night, when he was gunned down in cold blood on a French Quarter street.

LaFage, a scientist with an international reputation for research on termites, felt most at home in his laboratory at LSU. He ran a laboratory, taught graduate courses in entomology and published many articles in his field. He recently was elected president of a prestigious international research group.

But unlike many scientists, who seldom leave the cocoon of academia, LaFage managed to be a student of the book and a man of the world. The pursuit that stirred him the most was a project he had just begun in the French Quarter.

Since March, LaFage had been directing a federally financed project for the Vieux Carre Commission. He was trying to rid the historic district of a threatening parasite: the Formosan subterranean termite.

"He had found a niche," said his assistant, Keith Delaplane, who worked with LaFage for six years on the Baton Rouge campus. "It was a way to international fame. In academia, we zero in on the technical biological application. But that was Jeff's strength: He saw the science, but looked for a way to apply it. We had a unique opportunity in the French Quarter."

LaFage, who visited New Orleans several times a week, dutifully held seminars in the Quarter to help residents deal with the

mounting termite problem and laid termite traps in courtyards and in trees. Each week, he counted every bug in the traps.

But LaFage was more than the termite man to the French Quarter residents he met. He became friends with the folks along his trap route. The people and the place fascinated him.

LaFage "developed a great deal of love for the Vieux Carre," said Mary Morrison, a 40-year resident of the Quarter. "He began to perceive it as a neighborhood, not just a tourist trap. That it was full of good, solid people trying hard to preserve it."

Morrison, one of the first to offer to let LaFage put his traps at her house, last saw the scientist 10 days ago, when he brought her a bouquet of flowers to thank her for letting him park his truck in her driveway, a precious commodity in the French Quarter.

Ruby Wilkinson, owner of Miss Ruby's Restaurant on St. Philip Street, treated LaFage to dinner the night he died. LaFage, she said, often stayed in her guest house. He was interested in a cookbook she is writing, and was helping her to get it published.

LaFage, a native of Waterbury, Conn., had several interests outside the often obscure world of entomology.

With his best friend, Victor E. Sachse, he ran a fledgling classical music record label, often traveling to the northeast and Europe for taping sessions.

LaFage was also one of the first volunteers at Baton Rouge's public radio station, WRKF, and helped choose the station's first record library — as well as keep bugs out of the place.



Professor from LSU slain in N.O.

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Jeffrey P. La Fage, an internationally known Louisiana State University entomology professor, was shot to death during an attempted robbery in the French Quarter, police said.

La Fage, 44, of Baton Rouge, was attending a meeting in New Orleans and had been helping the Vieux Carre Property Owners, Residents and Associates organization with a project to rid French Quarter buildings of Formosan termite infestations.

La Fage was walking a woman home from the meeting when a gunman approached them on Barracks Street sometime after 10:30 p.m. and demanded money, police said.

The robber grabbed the woman's shoulder bag with one hand while holding the gun. When the strap would not come off the woman's shoulder immediately, the robber pulled harder, police said.

"You don't have to do this," police said La Fage told the robber.

The robber then shot La Fage in the neck, said Sgt. Robert Young, a police spokesman.

The robber ran away empty-handed and fled in a car. La Fage died on steps leading to a French Quarter residence, police said.

La Fage is the second LSU employee to be killed in the French Quarter this year. LSU housing coordinator Randy M. Robichaux was killed in an armed robbery attempt during Mardi Gras on Feb. 6.

La Fage was a "very warm mentor," his research associate Keith Delaplaine

Professor

CONTINUED FROM 1A

said Wednesday.

"He was an extremely enthusiastic and energetic man, totally devoted to his work," Delaplaine said. "It was hard for me to keep up with him."

E.A. Heinrichs, chairman of the entomology department at LSU, said that La Fage will be missed.

"He was a very active individual. He had a lot of energy and a good sense of humor."

He had an international reputation and had just been elected president of the International Research Group on Wood Preservation, which was quite an honor, Heinrichs said.

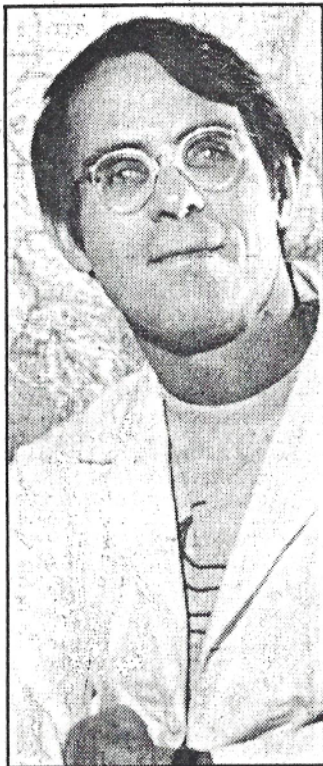
La Fage also worked closely with the private pest control industry and the State Department of Agriculture. He had numerous publications to his credit and belonged to many professional organizations. La Fage had been with LSU for 12 years. He came from the University of Arizona where he earned his Ph.D. in 1976.

Caroline Krack, a member of the Vieux Carre organization, said La Fage was highly regarded among quarter residents and his expertise was recognized throughout the nation.

"The man is loved all over the quarter," Krack said.

La Fage is survived by his wife and two daughters, who live in Baton Rouge, and his parents, who live in Connecticut.

Funeral services will be at Rabenhorst Funeral Home at 4 p.m. Thursday. Burial will be in New England.



Jeffrey P. La Fage

New Orleans robber kills UA alumnus-entomologist

From Citizen Staff
and Wire Reports

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La Fage, 44, a Louisiana State University professor, was attending a meeting here and was shot as he walked in the French Quarter, police said.

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The robber grabbed the woman's shoulder bag with one hand while holding the gun. When the strap would not come off the woman's shoulder immediately, the robber pulled harder, police said.

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The robber then shot La Fage in the neck, said Sgt. Robert Young, a police spokesman.

The robber fled empty-handed, and La Fage died on steps leading to a French Quarter residence.

La Fage had been with LSU for 12 years. University of Arizona entomology department officials said he received a Ph.D. at UA in 1976.

UA Professor Emeritus William L. Nutting said of La Fage, "He was one of the best graduate students I've ever had."

La Fage received both a master's degree and his doctorate at UA, Nutting said.

"We had a very close relationship. It was like a father-son relationship. When I heard this, it was like he was my own son. It's a terrible tragedy."

The pair had kept in contact over the years. "I just visited him a couple of months ago," Nutting said. "I'm just glad I had the opportunity to do that."

"He was ambitious, a real doer, a real productive scientist. He was internationally known in termite research."

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La Fage was a "very warm mentor," research associate Keith Delaplaine said yesterday.

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