

Mistaken identity cause in Edward Lee death

By **Richard Reyes Fruto**
Korea Times

Edward Song Lee, the college freshman killed during the rioting in Koreatown three weeks ago, was shot in a blazing gunbattle between two groups of more than a dozen heavily armed Koreans who mistook the others for looters attacking a restaurant, police reported last week.

According to police, Lee, 18, died in a car riddled with bullets from assault rifles fired by three Koreans guarding Won San Myun Ok Restaurant at Third and Hobart streets on the second night of the riots.

"The district attorney's office is not going to seek criminal charges unless there is new evidence that comes up that indicates it was not a case of mistaken identity," said homicide Detective David Escoto of Wilshire station. "We're not looking to place anybody in jail. We're

• See Edward Lee, Page 8

Edward Lee

continued from page 1

just trying to put it together."

The police investigation clears up the cloud of doubt among Korean Americans about the circumstances of Lee's death. The Korean-language media reported that Lee was caught in the middle of a confusing three-way crossfire involving two groups of Koreans and police. Other media simply reported that he was mistaken for a looter when he responded to a call for help from a merchant.

Escoto said police based its investigation on interviews with men involved in the gunfight and evidence from the scene. Two other men in Lee's car were wounded.

According to Escoto, Lee and men in four vehicles rushed to the restaurant that night in response to a Radio Korea report about possible looters on the roof of the restaurant. A gunfight ensued when the men arrived on the scene, Escoto said.

"There was a lot of fire out there, a lot of gunshots," Escoto said.

Police have not determined who started shooting. Each side claims the other fired first, Escoto said.

According to him, the men on the roof fired about 30 to 50 rounds. The men on the ground were armed with shotguns and handguns; Escoto said.

Lt. John Dunkin, a spokesman for the Los Angeles Police Department, said police responding to the shooting confiscated 15 weapons at the scene. Police don't know how many men were on the ground because two vehicles drove away when police arrived, Escoto said.