

"The Old Schoolhouse Bank Robbery: Three Hits and You're Out"

by Janet S. Thobaben

Back in the spring of 1968, Centerville was a quiet, small town with two-lane roads passing through the center going north and south, and east and west. There was little apparent to the casual observer to show it was changing from a farm community to a suburb. Only the opening in 1957 of its first bank, a branch of the First National Bank of Miamisburg in the remodeled old Schoolhouse No. 5, indicated things were stirring in the community. The small rectangular, red brick bank building, still showing many of its past school house characteristics, stood next to Gerber's overgrown orchard. Casey's Pure Station was on the north side of the bank occupying the corner of Bradstreet and N. Main Street. Across the road, Hill's Pills, the only drug store in the village, had a few cars parked out in front. A barber shop and paint store along with Hill's Pills occupied Centerville's first strip shopping center. Adam Zengel's new plat of homes was situated on Maple Street behind the bank and Gerber's nine acres. Maple Street ran past C.L. Stingley Elementary School. Children were noisily enjoying lunch recess on their playground. The bank's parking lot at the back of the building was accessible by a drive on both sides of the bank. This parking lot was separated from the Zengel plat of attractive Cape Cod homes by a fence and trees. On the south side was Gerber's orchard, which was covered with scrub bushes and vines. The bank was Centerville's first in its 172 year history and testified to its rapidly increasing growth and new prosperity. Before 1957 the local farmers and merchants had always banked in Miamisburg or downtown Dayton.

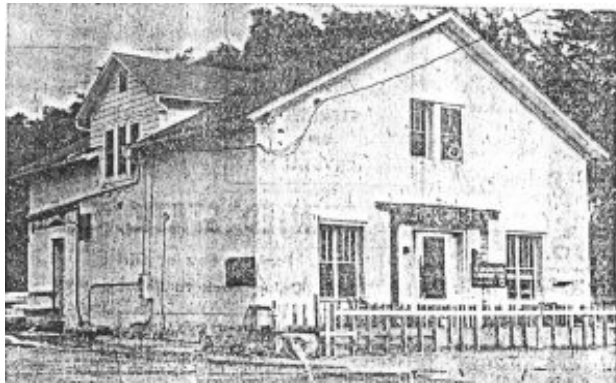


Photo courtesy of Dayton Newspapers, Inc.

In 1957, Schoolhouse No. 5 was renovated to house Centerville's first bank in its 172 year history. Previously, citizens of the community banked in Miamisburg or Dayton.

Tuesday, April 30, started out with normal bank business, at least it was that way until 12:25 p.m. Carl Dumford was the only teller at his window. Jane Moyer was at her desk in the little lobby where she took care of new accounts. Carroll Grouse, the bank manager, was in his office. No one paid much attention to a short, stocky man in his late thirties dressed in a green plaid shirt, army fatigue hat, sun glasses, and dark work pants. He appeared to be like many other laborers who stopped at the bank, that is until he pushed a paper bag into Dumford's teller window. "I want some money," he said in a thick accented voice. What he had said wasn't too

audible. Dumford asked the man to repeat it, whereupon the man pointed a small snub-nosed gun at him and thrust the paper bag over the sill. "I want some money," he repeated in a much louder and harsher voice. This time Dumford had no trouble understanding. Bank employees are all instructed to accommodate such requests while

also setting off their alarm button. The robber with a flick of his gun indicated to Dumford that he wanted him to hand over monies in the other tellers' tills. So he quickly obliged and the robber stuffed the money into the bag and the excess money into his shirt. The robber then made a hurried exit out the back door to the parking lot.



In 1968, the First National Bank of Miamisburg was robbed on April 30, June 17, and July 11 by the same man. After the first robbery, the tellers knew that he would come back.

He brushed past Jane McIver, a teller just returning from lunch, who was unaware of the preceding events. Moyer observed the drama and also had set off her police alarm. The other tellers were at a table counting money and were oblivious to it all. There was no alarm sound inside or outside the bank. This alarm was an early design and allowed a full three to five minutes before the police in Centerville were actually alerted with a call from a downtown center that was the receiver for the alarm. Moyer and Dumford moved quickly into Grouse's office to

inform him of the robbery. Grouse and the others rushed to the back door. The robber had disappeared into the field beside the parking lot. Grouse, feeling somewhat angered and frustrated that his bank had been robbed, quickly got into Police Sergeant Darrell Conley's cruiser that had just driven into the parking lot. They drove around the block to Maple Street not really knowing what or who they expected to see. They saw nothing. The street was empty. They returned to the bank.

Back at the bank, Dumford and Moyer had locked the doors as a protection for the evidence. The two then immediately wrote down what had happened and a description of the robber for the police. The police recorded all the information that those present at the robbery remembered. At this point the F.B.I. was notified and they came in on the case. A composite sketch of the robber was prepared and posted at appropriate places including the bank and later in the newspapers.

A small article in both the Dayton Journal Herald and Dayton Daily News reported the robbery and stated that \$10,000 had been stolen. Grouse said it was closer to \$12,000. There didn't seem to be much interest in the robbery outside of Centerville which was noticeably aroused. Everyone just had to see the scene of the robbery.



Composite picture of robber prepared by the F.B.I. in May 1968 and posted in the bank.

He pointed his small snub-nosed gun at the first teller and said in his French Canadian accent, "I want some money." After the first robbery, a better alarm system and not-so-visible cash drawers were installed. After the second robbery, an agent from the C.C. Pinkerton Detective Agency was hired.

Maurice Raymond Desjardins, a French Canadian from Montreal, complimented himself on his successful adventure. He thought he had planned the bank robbery well. The 22 revolver had been purchased several days earlier at Rink's Discount Center in Middletown. It was a small bank in a small town with a delayed alarm system. He knew that because he had earlier worked on the electrical connections in the street out front when electrical repairs were made there. He had a good job as an electrician on a construction job at Armco Steel in Middletown. But his lifestyle and appetite for betting on horses at the Lebanon Raceway and River Downs soon exhausted his financial resources. At age 39 he felt life owed him more. His earlier life in Montreal had been less than successful. He had made a mistake in Joliette, Quebec, in 1961 when he was caught after robbing a bank at night. He served one of a two-year sentence at Prison Montreal for that crime. It also brought estrangement from his

wife and four children. The ease with which he had carried out the robbery in Centerville made him think his luck had changed. His landlady and her attractive daughter would be impressed with his new found wealth. He did enjoy being thought of as an easy spender. That was his idea of success. He had passed himself, and his family in Canada, off as being wealthy and even owning a gold mine.

The first thing he was going to buy was a car. His old 1956 Oldsmobile wasn't good enough anymore. A few days later he purchased a brand new Oldsmobile in Lebanon. The car dealer had been amazed when he paid \$2,800 cash down on the car. He tore the bank's paper strips from his neat stacks of bills with abandon as the salesman's eyes blinked. The car was delivered to his rooming house in Middletown the next day and he finished paying \$2,800 for it, again in cash. His landlady and pretty daughter were as excited over the car as he was. They were impressed with the extravagance of the yellow Oldsmobile with its black top and chrome trim. He couldn't wait to drive it over to the racetrack for an evening's betting.

Grouse asked the bank officers for a better alarm system. Moyer, in a later interview, said all the employees felt the robber would return. It had been easy pickings

for him. Cash drawers were installed so money in the tills would not be so visible. Things settled down to normal. Daily comments on the robbery faded away as time passed. But the sensitivity of bank employees to foreign accents and a certain type of headgear on short men was evident in a certain episode. McIver and Todd Ebetino, Sr. were at a table behind the teller windows when they heard a heavy accented voice talking to a teller. They quickly exchanged knowing looks and turning around saw a short man wearing a funny cap leaving the bank. There was no doubt in their minds who the man was. They rushed to Grouse's office. Grouse informed the authorities their suspicions about the short man with the accent. The man was later identified as a priest at St. Leonard's College. Needless to say the priest was quite upset when he was questioned by authorities and he returned to the bank to let them know how he felt.

Banking business went on as usual for 48 days. Then on Monday, June 17, at 2:25 p.m., a man dressed in paint splotted coveralls, a bluish grey work shirt, and wearing a brown straw hat and sunglasses entered through the back door. Desjardins had carefully planned his apparel so as not to appear familiar to bank employees. He had a lot more confidence this time. His booty from the first robbery had dwindled rather quickly. He expected this robbery to be even easier. His new car was parked inconspicuously at Stingley School with other cars. He knew his way well through the orchard and past the old chicken coops, around the ponds, and out onto Maple Street right next to the school parking lot. He enjoyed the excitement of planning and carrying out the robbery. He walked briskly over to Dumford's teller window, pushing aside a teenage boy standing there. Dumford saw him and this time he felt afraid. Every employee in the bank knew it was the robber again even before he opened his mouth and asked for money in his heavy French accented voice. He was waving his gun around pointing it at the other tellers also. This time he went to each teller's windows and filled his paper bag. During this time Moyer, who was sitting at her new accounts desk, had pushed her silent alarm and moved quietly into Grouse's office. "He's here again," she told him. By this time Desjardins had taken money from the three teller windows and turning quickly he ran out the back door.

Desjardins had shown a lot more confidence his second time around and had secured \$7,900 for his efforts. It seemed as though Centerville's first bank really was a gold mine for him.

Ebetino, assistant bank manager who had missed the first robbery, told news reporters that the employees were very upset and all felt the robber would be back for another hit on the bank. Bank officials heeded the demands for some protection by the bank employees and contacted the C.C. Pinkerton Detective Agency. Peter Lemmer, recently returned from Vietnam, was sent to the bank as an investigative detective. The bank employees felt more secure with the Pinkerton detective on duty. Again business went on as usual and Lemmer assumed his station in a small office he selected for its view of the teller's windows and back door hallway. The tellers were still talking about the chances of the robber making a third hit on the bank. Lemmer had his doubts about that.

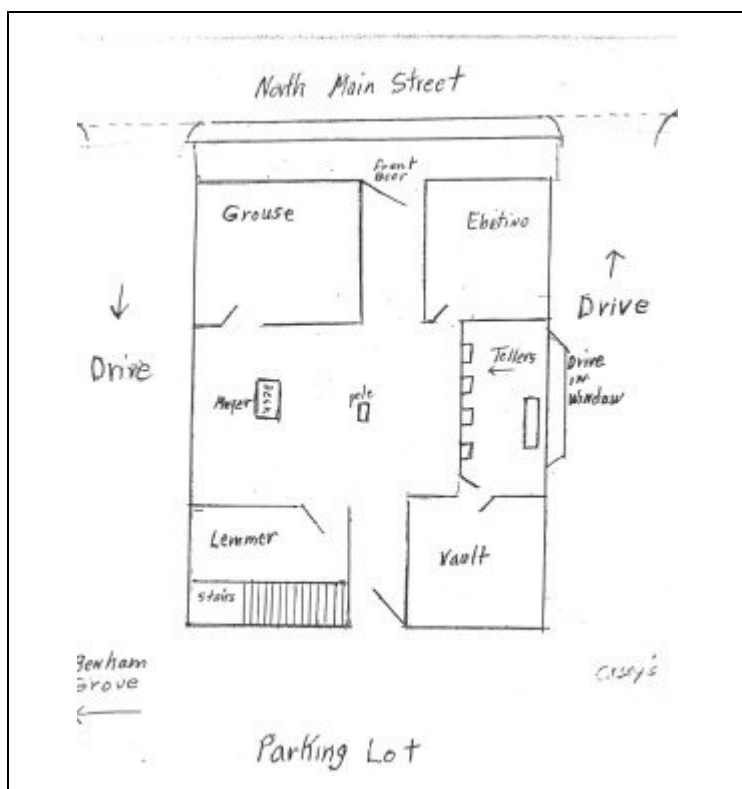
There was a sketch of the bank robber on the bulletin board in the back door hallway. The same sketch had appeared in the newspapers after the second robbery.

The newspapers in reporting the second robbery used four inches of type this time. Centerville's little bank was making bigger news.

On July 11, summer weather brought a relaxed atmosphere to the small community. The Ox Roast had been a great success and July 4th had been fun. People were thinking about vacations. Dumford was already on his vacation.

Moyer was at the service desk across the lobby from the teller windows as usual. A customer had just left her desk and she was using the accounting machine. Detective Lemmer, dressed in a two-piece grey suit to give the appearance of a bank employee, had his snub-nosed Smith and Wesson hidden under his suit coat. He sat in the small room by the back door with the door ajar so that he could observe people coming and going into the bank. He had been sitting there for a month since the second robbery. In his opinion the robber in all likelihood would not return to the scene of his two successful robberies. But he thought out what he would do in case it did happen. His experience in counter-intelligence while serving in Vietnam had sensitized him to the job

at hand. As he contemplated that thought, a tanned, short, muscular man in a yellow T-shirt, baseball cap, and sunglasses entered and stopped short in the center of the bank. He seemed to look hard at the tellers.



Lemmer assumed a standard firing position in a squat with both hands on his gun. "Freeze," he yelled. Desjardins raised his gun and pointed it directly at Lemmer. At this Lemmer fired hitting the door frame. With that Desjardins ran out the back door with Lemmer in hot pursuit.

Desjardins was stopped for a moment. The tellers were all women. Where was that one male teller that was usually there? Perhaps a woman would be more cooperative. He moved to the teller closest to the back door, Teresa Houck, shoved in his paper bag, waved his gun in her face, and stated quietly, "Give it to me - more, more." Houck did not have a knee alarm in her teller's cage but she tried anyway and hurt her knee. As she was reaching for the last bundle of money, he went over to McIver's window. McIver had already hit the knee alarm button when she saw him come in the back door. She placed

her "bait" money and marked twenty dollar bills plus four hundred and twenty in new fives on the counter. Desjardins still in a hurry said, "Quick, quick. Put it into the sack." Barbara Flaum, the next teller in line, knew what he wanted and placed the money on

the counter. He didn't need to speak to her. On his way out past Houck's window, she handed him the money from her till that he hadn't picked up. She was a very frightened woman and didn't want to make the robber angry. What she didn't realize was that she also had handed him customer's paid water bills. With that she collapsed to the floor and sat there crying. Nobody before had ever stuck a gun in her face.

Lemmer knew instantly that the robber had returned for his easy pickings in the small bank. Ebetino also realized the robber was back. He had just come down the back stairs from the file room and had found a gun pointing at him. "Get over there," was the gun owner's command. Ebetino quickly moved behind the tellers. Moyer pressed the alarm and hurried into Grouse's office to tell him about the robbery.

Desjardins was not prepared for the next bit of action. As he hurried to the back door an older woman, Mary Hardin, stood transfixed. She saw the holdup man walking straight toward her with a gun pointed her way. She had a money bag in her hand from I.G.A., where she worked. She was sure he would take it. She became rigid with fear. He pushed her out of the way. Lemmer now was in sight in the lobby. He assumed a standard firing position in a squat with both hands on his gun. "Freeze," he yelled. Desjardins raised his gun and pointed it directly at Lemmer. At this Lemmer fired hitting the door frame. With that Desjardins ran out the back door with Lemmer in hot pursuit. Ebetino cried out, "Go get him, Pete." About three steps out the door, Lemmer saw the robber turn and fire at him. The bullet hit the pavement in front of him, and realizing he had no cover, he retreated to inside the doorway. Desjardins ran again and Lemmer moved back into the parking lot. A lone car in the lot afforded Desjardins some cover as he fired again at Lemmer and Lemmer fired shots back. Desjardins looked anxiously at the overgrown orchard and made a run for its cover. Lemmer fired two parting shots at the robber, but stopped short of entering the wooded area. Lemmer's second bullet had hit Desjardins' leg, but made a clean entry and exit. Desjardins stumbled, but fought his way through the underbrush.

A woman in Casey's Pure Station next door to the bank had witnessed the parking lot shoot-out and shouted "Go get him, you dummy." Lemmer answered her with, "Here's the gun. You go get him." The gun was empty. Lemmer well remembered his three-year war experiences in Vietnam fighting the Vietcong. The woman onlooker evidently had watched too much TV where the Rambo types never got shot.

Another witness to the shooting was a young boy, Mark Wehrman, who had ridden into the parking lot on his bike. Unaware of all the action until he entered the bank parking lot, he quickly dropped his bike and "Hit the dirt." He had learned something useful from his TV action shows.

The quickest thinker at Casey's Pure Station was a young attendant who jumped into his car and drove around the block to Maple Street. Upon his return he said he saw a short, bald-headed man emerge from the wooded area and go back into it. Now that was a great addition to the description of the robber. The word was quickly passed that the robber was bald. Desjardins' attempts at disguising himself were fast unraveling.

Lemmer was standing at the edge of the wooded area when a police car drove up. Lemmer pointed to the woods and said, "He went that way." One policeman with drawn revolver proceeded into the overgrown orchard. Lemmer proceeded back into the bank

to write up the details of the affair. It was his responsibility to be ready with accuracy for a debriefing by police and F.B.I.

Police Chief James R. Smith had started the wheels turning in organizing one of the most massive manhunts in the area's history. Like Lemmer, he too had planned for such a situation. After the second robbery, Police Chief Smith had recommended to bank officials that the alarm system be changed so that the "alarm drop" would go more directly to the police station. That would save crucial time in activating a response. The change in the alarm system was made before the third robbery. When the alarm was received, all active police officers were notified. It just so happened that a patrol cruiser was on Maple Street when it was alerted to the robbery. An off duty officer, Steve Rodgers, was riding in the cruiser and was dropped off near Stingley School with a shotgun. Chief Smith was establishing a perimeter around the area of the robbery. Steve Rodgers' presence made all the difference in the world to Desjardins' plans to get to his car. The police cruiser proceeded on to the bank parking lot. The organized posse included all the officers Smith could muster in his 1968 Police Department, the Kettering Police Department, F.B.I. agents, Montgomery County Sheriff's deputies, even members of Box 21, and the Washington Township auxiliary firemen. The auxiliary firemen got carried away with enthusiasm and arrived on the scene with shotguns. Some were promptly sent home from the manhunt to discard their weapons and return unarmed. The hunt included a leashed tracking dog and a helicopter. The tract of land, known today as Benham's Grove, was overgrown with scrub, trees, vines, and provided ample hiding places. Chief Smith and Lt. K. Lively were on the scene shortly after the "alarm drop" came in. Using a jeep, a search was made of the Gerber property by Smith and Ed Phillips. Smith's German shepherd, Cory, was along to get experience tracking for police work. When Phillips attempted to kick in the door of one of the old chicken coops, Cory, confused over his expected behavior, proceeded to bite Officer Phillips. The officer had to seek medical care at a local doctor's office nearby. It is unknown if Cory entered police work again. Lt. Lively was assigned to interview witnesses in the bank. Several old, long, dilapidated chicken coops behind Gerber's barn were all checked as well as a pond area. Amy Gerber, a young girl arriving home for her birthday celebration, thought all the activity was in honor of her birthday. Later, the family found quite a few cigarette butts on their patio. They always assumed that perhaps the robber stopped there to smoke before the last robbery.

Desjardins ran as fast as he could through the underbrush and trees. He was unaware that the discomfort in his leg was caused by a bullet. He only knew that he could see a policeman moving behind through the orchard. He tore off his hat and threw his nine-shot, 22 caliber revolver with it into some brush pile. As he moved out of the woods onto Maple Street, a car came whizzing down the street and slowed by him. The driver gave him a hard look, then sped on. It was the gas station employee. He retreated into the woods, but fearful of being apprehended there, he ventured out again. Determined to get to his car and escape, he was shocked to see a man up the street near the school with a shotgun. He needed to do something about his appearance. His clothes were muddy and had blood on the pants. He made a quick decision when he saw a garage door open in the house on his left. Opening the house door quietly he moved around the rooms. No one appeared to be home. Clothes, he thought - he needed new clothes. Upstairs he went and looked in a hall closet for men's

clothing. There they were just waiting for him. He quickly took off his shirt and muddy pants and put on some clean trousers and a shirt. At that moment he heard women's voices in the kitchen. Panic came over him for a moment. The money bag had to be hidden. He quickly placed the brown paper bag of money into an open athletic bag and closed the closet door not noticing that he had dropped some of the change and bills on a box on the closet floor. Down the stairs and into the living room he went.

Just then two women in the kitchen saw him. "What are you doing here?" Marie Mattingly asked. Keeping his cool, Desjardins answered, "I am an F.B.I. agent. There's been a bank robbery. It's all right. The man is dangerous. Stay in and you'll be all right." With that he walked outside and joined the crowd which had grown to almost 300 people.

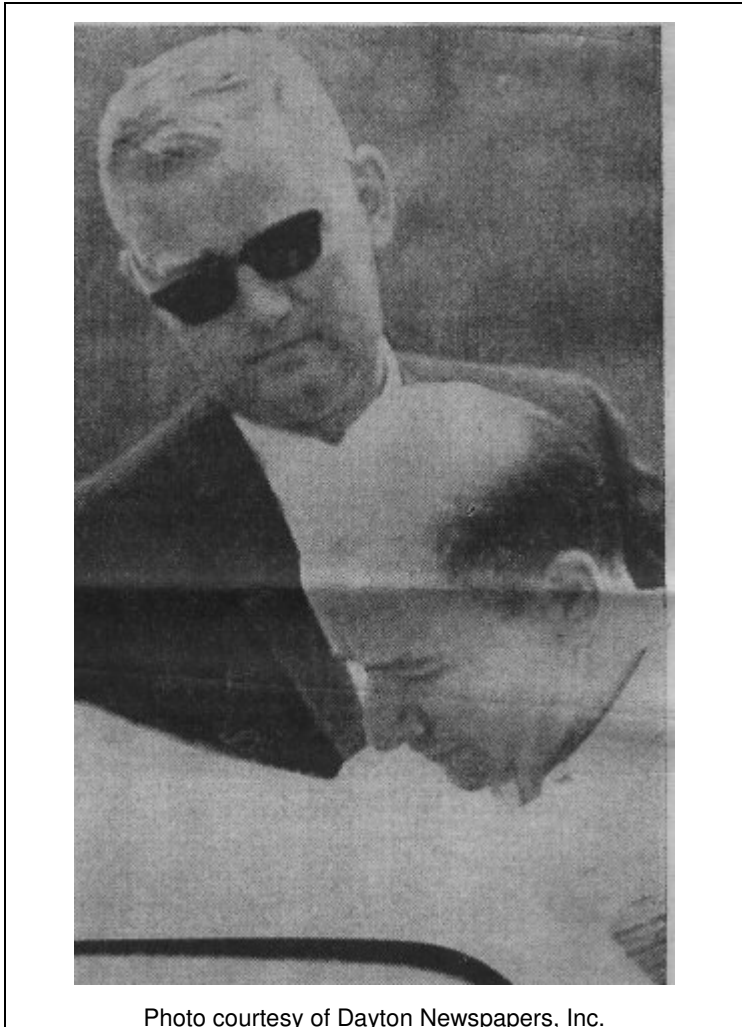


Photo courtesy of Dayton Newspapers, Inc.

The robber was wounded, but he ran through the woods and out onto Maple Street. He saw a house with the garage door open and quickly ran into it. He went upstairs to change out of his muddy clothes and stash the loot. He thought he could fade into the crowd, but he was wrong.

Mattingly and her friend, Dolores De Francis, looked at each other. It had been quite a surprise to them when they had seen the big crowd outside and even had to honk the car's horn to get people to move so they could drive into the driveway. Mattingly thought perhaps it had not been such a good idea leaving her doors open, as was her custom, so her children could come in to the bathroom. The F.B.I. agent's presence had really startled her. As she thought about it, she questioned why even an F.B.I. agent would just walk into a house. She sat down in a chair and asked De Francis to check with a police officer. Something wasn't right. The man's clothes looked familiar.

De Francis found a man who seemed in authority outside and related to him about the so-called F.B.I. agent they had found in the house. The real F.B.I. agent asked her for a description and she looked over

the crowd and pointed to a short, bald man standing on his tip-toes to see over some of the crowd. With that the real agent immediately recognized the robber from the

composite "wanted" picture. In a moment two agents each had quietly taken an arm of Desjardins and escorted him to their vehicle. Agent Bud Cofer advised him of his rights. Ninety minutes after the third bank robbery and shootout, it was all over.

The excitement of the hunt had been spread by TV and radio. Kids on bicycles, policemen, firemen, neighbors, and newspaper reporters had all arrived on Maple Street and the Gerber property. One of these reporters was Dale Huffman. He was a new reporter and had heard about the robbery on his police scanner. He parked his car on Maple Street as close to the crowd of on-lookers and police as he could. As he mingled in the crowd trying to gather as much information as he could, he saw plain clothes F.B.I. men escorting a short, bald man into a car.

It was a moment before the crowd realized that the robber had been caught. But when they did, pent up nerves and curiosity exploded into an exuberant display of joy and relief. Boys on bikes did their wheelies, people laughed out loud and animated conversation between neighbors and friends raised the noise level to a babble suitable for a touchdown at a football game. Someone even seemed to organize a cheer for the

police and F.B.I. There even may have been a cart-wheel or two performed by young school girls. There were many youthful members of the crowd as well as adults who all seemed to enjoy the happening.



Photo courtesy of Dayton Newspapers, Inc.

When the crowd that had gathered on Maple Street realized that the robber had been caught, they exploded into an exuberant display of joy and relief.

One housewife said, "This is the greatest thing since Jesse James." Another woman added, "But thank goodness it's over." Another neighbor, Mrs. Walter Robertson, commented, "I think the whole community took a personal interest in this crime. It brought us all together."

Huffman was unable to get any information from the Pinkerton

detective, F.B.I., or bank officials. They were all over at the bank determining the statistics so he hung around the scene on Maple Street. He heard that the suspect had been discovered in a nearby house by a housewife. He sought Mattingly out and talked to her. Huffman was curious about the money the robber was supposed to be carrying. "Has anybody searched your house?" he asked Mattingly. "No," she answered. "Would you care if I went in and looked around?" Huffman asked. "Not at all," she replied. Huffman thought it best to include some of the volunteer firemen to accompany him into the house. Everyone knew that the robber was wearing different clothing than that described during the robbery and broadcast to the public.

Fred Shaneyfelt, an off-duty police officer coming home from a swim at Normandy Church pool with his family, heard about the robbery on the car radio. His wife dropped

him off on Maple Street and armed with his police revolver he preceded to join the search.

He found Chief Smith down by Lakeview and Maple Street and offered his assistance. Smith said the robber was already apprehended and he wasn't sure what the F.B.I. was doing. He felt they should hold the perimeter of the search area in case someone else was involved. Smith returned to the station where Desjardins was being finger printed and strip searched in the Community Room.

Shaneyfelt saw Paul Lemon, a volunteer fireman, with a shotgun and some others with side arms. This was part of the media "manhunt." Paul pointed out the Mattingly house at 175 Maple Street where the suspect had been. On seeing others inside the house, they went in. Dale Huffman was dressed in a suit and tie and thus appeared to Shaneyfelt to be an F.B.I. agent. "I am Officer Shaneyfelt," he said. "Can I help?" Everyone seemed to be looking for the robbers clothes. Only Huffman thought perhaps the loot might be there too. Huffman and Charles Steinbrunner, a *Dayton Daily News* photographer, went upstairs to check out clothes closets. In the upstairs hall was such a closet. Huffman opened the closet door and spotted some bills and change on a box on the floor. Being prudent to police procedure, he called Shaneyfelt upstairs to alert him of his find. When Shaneyfelt saw the loose money on the box, he examined the closet more closely and saw a brown paper bag in the corner. Thinking the bag probably held the robber's clothes, he pulled it out and dumped the contents on the floor. To everyone's amazement a cascade of currency tumbled out. Some of the paid water bills no doubt were included in that sea of money. Just then a camera flashed. Shaneyfelt wanted out of the picture. It wasn't proper for police to be in the picture with photographs of evidence. At that



Photo courtesy of Dayton Newspapers, Inc.

When the police officer saw the loose money on the box, he examined the closet more closely and saw a brown paper bag in the corner. Thinking the bag probably held the robber's clothes, he pulled it out and dumped the contents on the floor. To everyone's amazement a cascade of currency tumbled out.

moment Mattingly came up the stairs and saw the pile of money. "My God" she exclaimed, "it's the loot. It's the money. It's here." With that Shaneyfelt scooped up the money, put it back in the bag, and went down stairs to call and notify Chief Smith that

the bank money was found. Huffman was taking notes of all that had transpired. Shaneyfelt was wondering just who was in charge. He asked out loud "Who is F.B.I. here?" No answer was heard. "Well, then who is in charge?" he asked again. "You are, Fred," volunteer fireman Lemon replied.

In a few minutes two F.B.I. agents arrived. Bob Burkey took custody of the money, gave Shaneyfelt a receipt, and took statements from individuals while sitting at Mattingly's dining room table.

At the back of the same closet, officers found a sweaty, yellow shirt and muddy trousers. Mattingly commented, "I guess he changed into my husband's clothes. That's why they looked familiar to me when my friend, Dolores, and I came into the kitchen and saw him."

Huffman's career got a lift with the by-line stories he was able to write after being at the right spot at the right time and thinking like a reporter. Steinbrunner's pictures were all over the paper that night.

Desjardins was totally subdued when he realized he was caught. He sat between the two F.B.I. agents in the car and had no idea where he was being taken. It was deja vu for him. He remembered 1961 in Joliette, Quebec, where he had been in a similar position when he had robbed a small cooperative bank of \$1,000. That had cost him one year in jail and the animosity of family and friends. Surely his three hits on the bank would give him life in prison. He wondered if perhaps some of his shots fired at the bank guard had hit home. Maybe he was even a murderer. Now that police had him, things could only get worse.

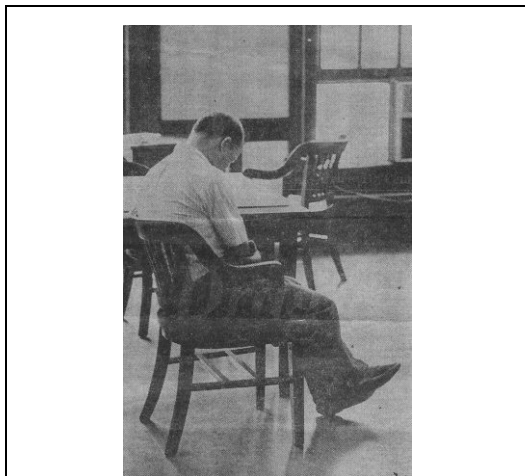


Photo courtesy of Dayton Newspapers, Inc.

The robber was very depressed and was placed in a special cell with a closed circuit television camera. It was designed for the security of prisoners with suicidal tendencies.

Centerville police under Sgt. Bill Randolph participated in questioning Desjardins, as did agents Cofer and Brown Whitley. The F.B.I. then placed Desjardins in the custody of U.S. Marshall Earl Pelfrey and he was taken to the federal building in Dayton for arraignment. It had been four hours since he was taken into custody on Maple Street.

Newspaper photographers showed Desjardin sitting very dejected in a large courtroom chair. He was weeping openly. His face was downcast and his muscular shoulders were slumped forward. After the legal papers were presented to U.S. Commissioner Robert L. Snell, he was brought forward and read his constitutional rights. The commissioner asked him if he had an attorney. "I don't want. I'm just guilty," Desjardins answered, weakly looking up. "You don't know what you're charged with yet," Snell said. "I robbed those three banks

and no use for an attorney. I'm guilty," was Desjardins' answer. Snell waived a preliminary hearing under the circumstances and set bond at \$25,000. Snell then

ordered him remanded to the custody of the U.S. Marshall's Office due to lack of bond money. Desjardins was placed in special security cell S2-1 in the Montgomery County Jail. The cell measured 10 by 7 feet. It was designed for the security of prisoners with apparent suicidal tendencies and he had made statements indicating he would attempt suicide. A special closed circuit television camera was trained on the cell and monitored in a central center.

Desjardins' spirit hit rock bottom when the cell door closed. What would Shaw, his landlady in Middletown and especially her pretty daughter, think of him now? It had been so easy to give them the impression he was a wealthy man. They paid a lot of attention to him. It made him feel so important. He had enjoyed buying gifts for them and the daughter's twin babies. And his gambling cronies, he could imagine what they would say, especially his friends at the racetrack or at work. In Montreal the wife's family would really put him down now. Here he was 39 years old and a complete failure again. His good job with Foothill Electric at Armco had paid him a good wage. But he never could hit it good at the racetracks. Shaw had really been impressed when he said he owned a gold mine. It had been a good explanation for his big money from the first hit on the bank. His new yellow Oldsmobile 78 with black vinyl top helped in the illusion of his wealthy background. Now all was gone and he would probably spend the rest of his life in prison.

At F.B.I. request, Patrolman Phillips located Desjardins' car in the Stingley School parking area and had it towed to Casey's Pure Station where it was stored inside Thursday night after being searched.

Friday morning a lawyer appeared at the jail asking to speak with him. Desjardins was not very cooperative with attorney Anthony Valen. He had no money for a lawyer so he signed a power of attorney to Valen for disposal of his car. It had been eventually placed behind the police station in Centerville. Later that day Valen, with his power of attorney, picked it up and sold it to a used car dealer. The bank's insurance company became aware of this later when they sought any money or valuables that Desjardins had acquired quite possibly with bank loot. Chief Smith said that the F.B.I. hadn't put a "hold" on the car so he had to let it go to Valen.

In newspaper interviews his landlady, Shaw, stated that she thought he was a gentleman, generous, and very wealthy. She had met him through a tenant, Marcel, another French Canadian. She had stayed with two French Canadian girlfriends during Expo '67 in Montreal and knew Marcel through them. Both Marcel and Desjardins were roomers with Shaw.

She said she called Desjardins' sister in Montreal on Thursday night, to tell her about the robbery and arrest. The sister started screaming after an operator did the translation. Shaw then had to talk to the brother-in-law. The family was very upset. "I just can't believe he'd do a thing like rob a bank. His family is wealthy," said a puzzled Shaw. Desjardins, who masqueraded as an affluent Canadian had convinced his landlady.

Maurice Raymond Desjardins lay on his cot and agonized over a solution to his desperate situation. It seemed there was no way out. He could never face anyone he knew again. Shame and fear of his future added to his melancholy and despondency.

He knew a closed-circuit television camera was trained on his cell. He could see it. It was located across the catwalk by the window. He figured the camera was angled into the cell and that there was an area not covered by the camera. Once he had decided to end his life, he became engrossed in how to carry it out. He was a short man, 5'6" tall, weighing 175 pounds. One crossbar was quite high. He could step on a lower crossbar to see out the window. That raised him off the floor. It would be possible to hang himself perhaps using the bed sheet.

He was drained of tears. Suicide was his answer to escaping his agonizing situation. He had slept little Friday night. The thoughts of a trial had made up his mind. When the jail attendant brought him coffee and rolls at 6:30, he said, "I don't want any." But later he finished it off. The food crew returned at 7:30 and picked up his utensils. That was to be his last meal. His face showed the stress of his decision. Deputy Osburn Thorpe came by at 8:15 for a roll-call, cell-count tour and asked him if

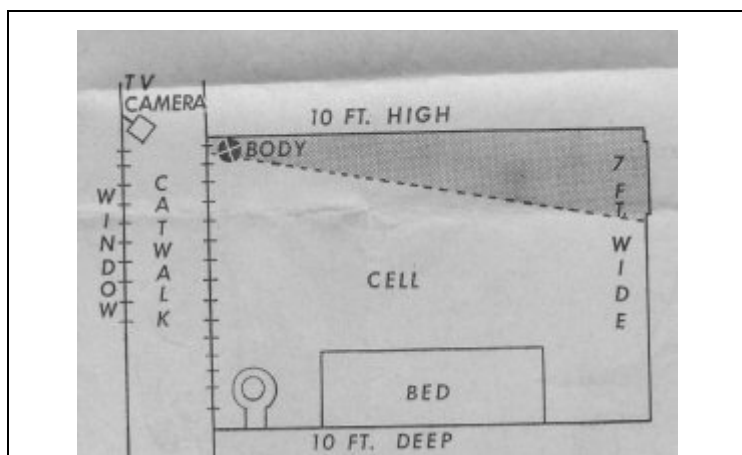


Photo courtesy of Dayton Newspapers, Inc.

The trustee looked up and saw Desjardins hanging from the crossbar on the cell door by a bed sheet. It was over for Desjardins at age 39.

everything was all right. Desjardins only nodded and stretched out on his bunk. At 8:30, Thorpe came again and asked him to make up his bunk. When Desjardins touched the bunk sheet, he made up his mind to do it then. He would hang himself from the upper crossbar.

At 9:15 a.m. trustee John Hood, who was cleaning the catwalk outside Cell S2-1, looked up and saw Desjardins hanging from the crossbar on the cell door by a bed sheet. It was over for Desjardins at age 39.

The money from the first two robberies was never recovered. The First National Bank of Miamisburg, Centerville branch, received \$35,000 from the insurance company. The citizens of Centerville had their faith renewed in the local law enforcement. The posse members had an educational experience in law enforcement and something the talk about for a long time. But Desjardins death did not close the case. There was a hand-written will found in the trunk of Desjardins car leaving all his worldly possessions to his landlady's 19 year-old daughter. Another will was in Canada and Desjardins' wife came to the rooming house to collect her dead husband's personal belongings. A hassle developed over the two wills debating the problem of which country's probate court should handle it. Immigration, U.S., and Canadian consular officials all had something to say about the wills. The F.B.I. was interested only in the bank loot. Where was it?

Desjardins' final resting place was also a problem. There was no money for internment. The Desjardins family wouldn't claim the body so U.S. Marshall Pelfrey said

he would have to be buried in Dayton's Potters Field. That was on July 15, two days after his suicide. Desjardins' attorney, Anthony Valen, talked to the family to try and arrange a better funeral. Marshall Pelfrey said it was too late. The family had already signed releases for the body. To top it all off there was doubt as to whether Desjardins qualified for Potter's Field. It seemed only those who die in the city are qualified for Potter's Field. Desjardins had died in the county jail on county property. The body lay in a funeral home for another week before attorney Valen finally authorized burial and made arrangements to bury him in an unmarked grave in Dayton's Woodland Cemetery.

In death, as in life, Maurice Desjardins followed an unconventional path. He escaped anonymity but the price was high.