

**The Bank Robbery
of
The First National Bank
of Jacksonville, Alabama**

May 20, 1955

Jesse & Mary Ellen Wood

Preface

We are writing this information in May 2001, about forty-six (46) years after the robbery of The First National Bank of Jacksonville, Alabama. This personal account will give some information about things that took place which may or may not be in the newspaper articles included in this scrapbook. We hope you find it helpful.

The robbery occurred on the morning of May 20, 1955. One of the articles written in *The Birmingham News*, dated July 1, 1962, states that the armed theft of \$86,476.00 made it the largest bank robbery in Alabama's history. FBI records show ten people were convicted in the case. This remains the largest recorded crime of its kind by the FBI. This was a frightening experience for many people. We are lucky no one was hurt or killed.

Many of the newspaper articles in the scrapbook have errors.

Jesse and Mary Ellen Wood

**The Bank Robbery of
The First National Bank of Jacksonville**

On the morning of May 20, 1955, four men came into our home and took me and my wife, Mary Ellen, and our two children, Diane and Mickey, hostage. We lived then at 505 Second Street in Jacksonville, Alabama. The men had planned to rob The First National Bank of Jacksonville that morning and had come to our home because I was an officer of the bank. Diane was eight years old and Mickey was three.

It was about 7:15 a.m. when Mary Ellen answered a knock at the front door. When she opened the door, two men were there dressed in business suits. They asked to speak to Mr. Wood. Mary Ellen came into the kitchen to tell me that I was wanted at the front door. I went into the living room, and the two men were standing inside the room. One man introduced himself as "Mr. Jackson". He said he was a reporter with *The Anniston Star*, and he wanted to speak to me in private. I was to present a rifle that day to a member of the R.O.T.C. at Jacksonville State University during a ceremony. The bank gave a rifle each year to a R.O.T.C. member who won the rifle shooting contest. I thought "Mr. Jackson" might want to talk to me about the event and the statements I planned to make during the presentation of the award.

We went into the den and sat down on the couch. "Mr. Jackson" sat down next to me and the other man sat in a chair in front of me. At this time, "Mr. Jackson" pulled out and held a .38 caliber revolver on me while the other man took a sawed off 12 gauge shotgun from under his coat. He held the shotgun on me while "Mr. Jackson" wiped his fingerprints off the door that he touched. Then they both put on gloves. By then, two more men had come into the den. They had stockings over their heads with openings cut out for their eyes. At this time, "Mr. Jackson" told me they were robbing the bank and for me to call my wife and children to come into the den. "Mr. Jackson" told me that if there was any outcry, we would all be killed.

Mary Ellen and our two daughters came into the den. I explained what was taking place. The robbers brought rope already cut to length and tied Mary Ellen and Diane's hands and feet. They did not tie Mickey's, as she was only three years old. They told us that they were on a schedule and the robbery must be completed by 9AM or we would be killed. As I was leaving for the bank with two of the robbers, the other two were left to guard Mary Ellen and the children. "Mr. Jackson" told the two men that were staying in our home if they heard a siren or alarm, for them to kill my wife and children and leave. When I heard this, I refused to leave my family as I could only control so much of what would be taking place during the robbery. I told "Mr. Jackson" there could be a fire in some house and the fire department would turn on their sirens or the police could be chasing a speeding car with their siren on. I told him I would refuse to go to the bank with him. When "Mr. Jackson" realized that I did not intend to go and leave my family, he assured me that no harm would come to my family if I did what he told me to do and if my family were harmed, he would shoot the one that harmed them. I realized that the bank robbery had already started and if I did not go with them, they would probably kill all of us, as two of them appeared to be on drugs.

One month to the date of the bank robbery, on June 20, 1955, the Chief of Police of the City of Jacksonville was shot and killed. When I heard all the sirens sounding off, I remember thinking at the time, how glad I was that this did not take place one month earlier.

I want to state at this time that Mary Ellen was under the most pressure. I remember thinking of the fear she would have to endure being left in the house with two of the robbers and our children. Mary Ellen was a brave and strong person under the circumstances, even more so since she had just come home from the hospital after losing a baby the week before.

Later, Mary Ellen proved very helpful when the FBI and the Alabama State Department

of Investigation stayed at our home, day and night, asking questions and gathering evidence left behind by the robbers. She was very observant during the two hours or more she was held hostage. She told the FBI the brand of cigarettes the robbers smoked and after they finished smoking, they would flush the cigarette butts down the toilet in the bathroom to do away with the evidence. She remembered that one of the robbers had a hole in the sole of his shoe. She gave the FBI the approximate heights and weights of the robbers and the type of voice they had. She could not give the color of their hair, eyes, or facial features only because of the stockings they were wearing.

I drove to the bank with a pistol pressed to my side while "Mr. Jackson" told me of their preparation. He said, "I talked to you over the telephone yesterday." I told him that I had not talked with him. He said that he had called me from a pay phone in front of Crow Drug Store and asked to speak to Dr. C. R. Wood, and that I had said that Dr. Wood lived about two blocks away and that I was Jesse Wood. He said they had driven by our house and made the call to be sure that was where I lived. On the way to and from the bank, people I knew waved at me. "Mr. Jackson" pressed the pistol tighter to my side and made me wave back and smile at them.

After we got to the bank, Tommy Miller, who worked maintenance, was outside by the back door. I was told to get him inside the bank. I asked Tommy to come inside and then explained to him that the bank was being robbed. He was tied up and put on the bathroom floor. "Mr. Jackson" asked him if he were comfortable. Tommy told him that the floor hurt his head. "Mr. Jackson" placed a roll of toilet paper under his head, and Tommy stayed that way until I was able to return to the bank and untie the employees.

When the employees arrived for work, I met them at the side door where they usually entered the bank. "Mr. Jackson" was with me each time I let one of them in. The employees later told me that they thought the robbers were bank examiners because they were dressed in business suits.

I told each employee as they came in that I wanted to speak with them in the back room, which was used as the lunchroom. When we got to the doorway, I told them the bank was being robbed and for them to do exactly as they were told. At this time, one of the robbers tied the employee's hands and feet with rope. At no time would I allow the robbers to give the employees an order about what they were to do. They talked to me and I talked to the employees. I felt this would make the employees feel safer.

I was very proud of the employees for the way they conducted themselves. Everyone was in a dangerous situation if things went wrong. If all went well, they were reasonably safe and their families were not in danger. The robbers ordered them to sit tied in chairs and to be quiet. Their exceptional behavior kept someone from being hurt or killed during the robbery. They were all brave young ladies.

T. Weller Smith, one of the bank officers, was late to work that morning. I knew he had a heart condition so I called his home and suggested he stay there for the day. I knew the robbers had a time schedule, and because of Mr. Smith, they were already running late. The robbers were to be back at our home by 9:00AM. I knew that we would not be able to finish by 9:00AM when the bank was scheduled to open, so I put the "Closed for Holiday" sign in the glass front door. There were customers already waiting to come into the bank, and someone called out, "Jesse, what holiday is today?" I just smiled and waved to them.

While we were waiting for Mr. Smith, I looked for his car through the blinds on the window. I told "Mr. Jackson", "I believe I see his car coming." "Mr. Jackson" looked through the window and then quickly knocked me away. Later, I learned it was one of their getaway cars I had seen.

Another reason they were running late is because I would not open the vault until the employees arrived. I wanted a lot of witnesses to prove that I was being forced to open

the vault and safe. I told the robbers that the vault was on a time clock and would not open until a certain time. The safe containing the money was also on a time clock.

While we waited for the time clocks and Mr. Smith, I answered the telephones. It was customers calling in about their accounts or other business. I told the customers that the employees were "tied up" at the moment and to call back later.

Earlier at my home I had answered a call from a preacher who had taken his wife to the hospital during the night. He had given the hospital a check and did not have enough money in his account to cover it. He asked me to hold the check until he could come by the bank later to make a deposit. I told him I would. I answered every call the same, with a pistol to my head. (I would have liked to ask him to pray for my family and me, but I knew I could not get away with that.)

During the robbery, the other robber (who I later learned was Thomas Pendley) walked me to the vault every few minutes to check and see if the time clock had run down so I could open it. I could tell he was on drugs. He was holding a shotgun. He cocked the hammer and patted the trigger, then lowered the hammer and broke the shotgun and the shell fell to the floor. Then he picked it up and put it back in. I watched him do this over and over. I held the metal handle that turned the safe door. I could have easily knocked him in the head with that handle, taken his shotgun, and killed "Mr. Jackson" when he came to find out why we had not returned. I could not do this knowing the other two robbers were holding my wife and children hostage in our home.

When the safe opened, I was told to put the money in a suitcase they had brought for this purpose. I just dumped the money into the suitcase. Thomas Pendley made me dump it back out and stack it neatly.

While I was arranging the money, he put his face about six inches from mine and asked,

“Could you identify me if you saw me again?” “No sir,” I said. Then he told me they were with a mob from Chicago and that if I did, they would kill my family and me. Even though he was wearing sunglasses, I noticed his strange eyes, which later helped me identify him from the mug shots.

When Mr. Smith finally arrived, I met him at the back door. I let him in and told him the bank was being robbed. I said, “There are two armed robbers behind the doors with guns pointed at you.” His face was already trembling with fear when I said, “Do exactly as I tell you.” I asked him if he needed a pill for his heart. A shake of his head was all he could manage. I was ordered to tie him up, but I tied the ropes loose so that he could get away once we were gone. After this, we left the bank immediately.

After we left the bank and got to the car, “Mr. Jackson” signaled to the getaway cars and they also left. One car was parked near Hollingsworth Gulf Service Station, and the other car was parked on the west side of the public square.

During the time the two robbers were at our home, Evelyn, our sister-in-law, brought her son, Jackie, over for Mary Ellen to take to school. When Evelyn knocked on the front door, one of the robbers hid behind it. He told Mary Ellen no one could come into the house. Mary Ellen opened the front door and explained to Evelyn that our children were sick and she would not be able to take Jackie to school that day. Evelyn wanted to come inside to see the children, but Mary Ellen said no because she was afraid that it may be something she or Jackie could catch. Evelyn left, but her feelings were hurt.

When we returned to our home, I hoped I had talked the robbers out of taking me with them. I believed they would kill me and leave my body somewhere out of the way. I knew they were the types of people who would commit murder without hesitation. I told them I knew everyone in Jacksonville and most in the county. Someone would probably see me and give the authorities information about them and the direction they had taken.

I was still not sure if they would leave me with my family when they left our home. They discussed this amongst themselves. Then they told me to turn around and put my hands behind me. I did as I was told. I expected to be shot in the back or hit over the head with a pistol. They tied my hands behind my back, pushed me down on the couch, and then tied my feet.

After they left the house and I heard the car doors close, I kicked my feet until the ropes came loose. I ran to the kitchen and used a butcher knife to cut my hands free. I went into the den and cut the ropes off Mary Ellen's hands and gave her the butcher knife to free her feet and Diane.

I locked the front door and then called the Jacksonville Police Department to tell them what had happened. I told them the type and color of the car the robbers had left in, the amount of gas in the tank, and the direction I thought they might have taken based on questions they asked about the location of the Alabama Highway Patrol office. I told the police the robbers had all left, and I left the back door to the bank unlocked. I also told the police the employees were still tied up inside the bank.

After that, I tried to call the Alabama Highway Patrol office, which was located in Oxford, Alabama. At that time, Oxford was a long distance call and the telephone company employees were on strike. I was able to talk to a supervisor with the telephone company. I gave my name and told the supervisor that it was an emergency and to please connect me. The supervisor said "Jesse, this is Kelso, what is the emergency?" We knew each other well, and I told him to connect me with the Highway Patrol office because the bank had just been robbed. I told him that I would tell him about it later. Once connected to the Highway Patrol office, I gave them information I thought they could use.

On the way back to the bank, I left my family at Evelyn's home. When I got to the bank, the police officers were in the public square behind bushes with their guns out. Not one

of them had gone into the bank. I went into the bank and untied Mr. Smith and the other employees. Mr. Smith was so upset that he had his wife come to the bank and drive him to his doctor. His doctor recommended he spend the next several days resting in bed.

I told the tellers to take out what cash they had left that was not taken by the robbers. I had them balance their teller sheets and compare them to the ones from the day before in order to determine the loss. The total loss was \$86,476.00. During this time, I notified the FBI and the US F&G Bonding Company to report the loss and the robbery.

I sat at a desk with the FBI looking at stacks of mug shots. I noticed a picture on the corner that I recognized. I told the FBI agent sitting across from me, "This is a picture of "Mr. Jackson". The picture was of Joe Paul Andrews. It was hard for them to believe because the picture had just been sent over by the Gadsden Police Department, and only because an informant told the police that he suspected Andrews might have been involved in the bank robbery.

The informant who told the Gadsden Police that Joe Paul Andrews might be involved in the robbery said Andrews came by his place to buy some liquor. He told Andrews, "I thought you had that behind you and you are now preaching." Andrews told him the preaching was just to get him away from Kilby Prison.

Our bank always held monthly meetings on what to do and how to act if we were ever robbed, therefore, we were able to give the FBI a lot of information about the robbers. We were able to describe their height, weight, hair color, how they walked and other things. We told the FBI that "Mr. Jackson" had been an athlete. We based that on the way he moved and how he would spin as he turned when walking. We were later told that he had played basketball, and he had dived off Noccolula Falls in Gadsden, Alabama. (The Falls are 90 feet high.)

We also told the FBI that Thomas Pendley was a gambler. When he was taking money from the safe in the vault, he said that he did not want any coins, only bills. He asked me what was in a bag in the corner. When I told him silver dollars, he said, "Put them in, as that is my weakness." The FBI missed catching him by just a few hours in Las Vegas, Nevada.

I identified the mug shot of Thomas Pendley by his nose, eyes, and what hair I could see from under his hat. I turned the picture over, and it showed Pendley had been arrested 58 times. The FBI caught Thomas Pendley in Bismarck, North Dakota. He was holding a man, his wife, and his children hostage. Pendley forced the man to go buy drugs for him. When the man left his house, the FBI and the local police were outside waiting. They went inside and arrested Pendley.

Since Mr. Smith was home recovering, he had not looked at the mug shots. Most of the employees were unable to positively identify Joe Paul Andrews as "Mr. Jackson". An agent of the FBI went to our home and brought Mary Ellen to the bank to see if she could pick him out of the mug shots. When Mary Ellen saw Andrews' picture, she started to tremble and asked for a cigarette to calm her nerves. The agent said that after seeing the reaction of Mrs. Wood, there was no doubt that this was the man involved in the bank robbery. The agent said it was not necessary to show the picture to anyone else.

During the investigation, the FBI told me they had approximately 40 agents assigned to this investigation. The Alabama Department of Investigation also had several agents assigned. The FBI had a helicopter fly in mug shots of criminals that might be involved in the bank robbery. The helicopter landed in the public square.

The day after the bank robbery, a member of the Board of Directors of the bank came into my office and asked me if I was involved in planning the bank robbery. I was shocked he would even think I was. I explained to him that if I had been involved in planning the

robbery, I would not have let the robbers come to my home and put my wife and children through what they had endured.

I left my office and walked into the room the FBI agents were using during their investigation. I explained to them what the board member had just accused me of. I insisted they have me take a lie detector test so they would know I was not involved in the robbery. The agent in charge told me that was not necessary. The first thing the FBI does in a bank robbery investigation is to have each officer and employee of the bank placed under suspicion as being involved. The agent told me I had already been cleared as well as all the employees of the bank.

A few weeks after the bank robbery, Mr. Henderson, the father-in-law of Joe Paul Andrews, came to my office and told me the authorities were taking his grandson from his daughter and Andrews. He asked me to go to court and tell the judge that he was a good and honorable person. He requested I ask the judge to allow him to have custody of his grandchild. I explained to him I had not met him before today, so I could not do what he was asking me to do. I told him that a few weeks ago his son, Preston Henderson, and Andrews had come into my home and held my wife and children hostage and threatened to kill them.

Mr. Henderson told me the pastor of his church and the chief of police of his city would go to court with him to persuade the court to award him custody of his grandson. I told him this would be good, and I hoped he would get his grandson, but under the circumstances, I could not go to court and be a witness for him. I did not know him, and I would not go to court and say that I did. I wished him the very best, and I hoped he would get custody of his grandson.

After the bank was robbed and I knew the leader was Joe Paul Andrews, I thought he might have gotten the idea to rob the bank while he preached on the square. Sometime

before the bank robbery, a convict preached in the public square across the street from the bank. He was wearing a striped prison uniform and had a ball and chain around his ankle. I asked who was preaching. I was told that he was a preacher from Kilby Prison in Montgomery and led "The Church Behind Prison Walls".

An article in *The Anniston Star* newspaper, dated June 3, 1955, states in part that Joe Paul Andrews turned to religion and conducted sermons during his stay in Kilby Prison. His Sunday services were so popular they were broadcast from the prison by radio stations in Birmingham and Montgomery. The article also stated that he sinned a lot and was involved in many crimes before he turned to religion. He said he wanted to see how much he could steal and wanted to be another John Dillinger or Pretty Boy Floyd. Andrews escaped from prison at least twice and was shot multiple times in gun battles with the police during each escape.

The four robbers that came into our home were **Joe Paul Andrews, Preston Henderson, R. C. Martin, and Thomas Pendley**. The driver of the getaway car was **Allen D. Ellis**. I do not know who drove the second car.

Before R. C. Martin was caught, the FBI said they had reason to believe he might still be in the area. They did not tell me why they thought this. They said if we went out at night, we needed to leave our outside lights on and not to pick up hitchhikers. They also told the school authorities that only Mary Ellen or myself should pick up Diane after school.

Before R. C. Martin was arrested, I was served with a summons to appear before the grand jury in Birmingham, Alabama. I was on the witness stand most of the first day of the hearing. I went back the next day hoping to finish. I was near Pell City, Alabama when I noticed an old car with an Ohio state tag that was broken down on the side of the road. A man was standing by the car trying to flag someone down. I stopped to help him.

The man asked if he could ride to Birmingham with me since his car was broken down. I hesitated, knowing that the FBI had told me not to pick up hitchhikers. The man said, "Mr. Wood, I will appreciate it if you will let me ride with you." I asked him how he knew who I was. He said he saw me at the courthouse in Birmingham yesterday, and he told me he was **R. C. Martin's uncle**. I told him to get in the car, and I drove him to Birmingham.

R. C. Martin's uncle said that R. C. had gotten out of prison and had come to Ohio to work and live with him. While he was in Ohio, Joe Paul Andrews telephoned him from Texas and said they were ready to rob the bank in Jacksonville. Mr. Martin said that R. C. Martin's mother was broken hearted about her son planning to rob the bank and being sent to prison again. He said she was so sick that she had to stay in bed most of the time.

The Last Trial of the Bank Robbers

Months after the bank robbers were caught, there was a final trial for several of them at the Federal Courthouse in Anniston, Alabama. Mary Ellen and I were summoned as witnesses. There was a huge crowd of people who had gathered to hear the trial. We made our way into the busy hallway but were never able to get into the crowded courtroom.

U. S. Marshals brought several of the bank robbers through to the holding room behind a door at the end of the hall. Each were chained from their waist-belt to their handcuffs and shackled with leg irons. There were two Marshals with each prisoner and one in every corner of the hallway. The Marshals in the corners held Tommy guns. We were told later that an anonymous group had threatened to rescue them at the trial.

As the prisoners walked past us to the holding cell, we tried to recognize their faces. A few minutes later the door opened and we could see the iron bars of the cell and the prisoners behind them. They must have recognized us as their hostages because two were pointing at us.

Mary Ellen and I were the only people connected with the bank summoned to be witnesses at the trials. The robbers all pled guilty and we did not testify at the trial that day.

Prison sentences received:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Joe Paul Andrews | 30 years |
| 2. R. C. Martin | 30 years |
| 3. Thomas Pendley | 25 years |
| 4. Preston Henderson | 20 years |
| 5. Others | 1 year and one day, up to 12 years |

**These are four things that I think were funny or cute
that resulted from the bank robbery:**

Diane: During the robbery, one of the robbers asked Diane if she was afraid. She told him "I have seen this type of thing on TV, and have read about it in newspapers, but I never thought it would happen to me."

Mickey: After the robbery, our three-year-old daughter was afraid of the men who would pick up the garbage. When she was bad and did not mind us, I would tell her that I was going to let the garbage men get her. She would say, "And I will have the bank robbers get you!"

Becky: She worked at the bank and was there the day of the robbery. She was the type that dressed well and knew she was beautiful. Throughout the day, after the robbery, every time I was near her she would say, "Mr. Wood, can I talk to you?" I told her I was very busy with the FBI agents and representatives of the bonding company. This went on into the afternoon. Finally, I said, "What do you want to talk to me about, Becky?" "Mr. Wood," she said, "When you tied my feet together this morning, could you tell if I needed to shave my legs?" I was glad to know this was all that concerned her about the robbery.

Becky and Margaret: They were the last two employees to arrive at the bank the morning of the robbery. When I heard a knock on the door, I told "Mr. Jackson" that could be Becky and not to scare her because she was pregnant. When I opened the door, I saw Margaret. I told her to come into the back room because I needed to talk to her just as I had told the rest. When I started to tie her up, "Mr. Jackson" said, "I understand you are pregnant. You sit in this chair by yourself so that you will be more comfortable." I said, "No, she's not pregnant, it's Becky."

Margaret said, "I'm pregnant, too!"

"No, you're not," I rebutted.

"Yes, I am," she insisted.

They left her sitting in the chair.

Later in the day I saw her and said, "Margaret, you're not pregnant. Why did you say you

were?" She told me she was afraid and hoped they would be more compassionate if they thought she was pregnant. One of the articles included in the scrapbook states *two* of the employees were pregnant. Margaret was glad she was not pregnant and the article was in error.

Some of the things I have written about are in the newspaper articles and some are not. I hope this helps you understand a few things that may or may not be in the articles. We were very lucky that no one was hurt or killed during the robbery. The robbers were dangerous and mean people.

Jesse N. Wood

The Anniston Star

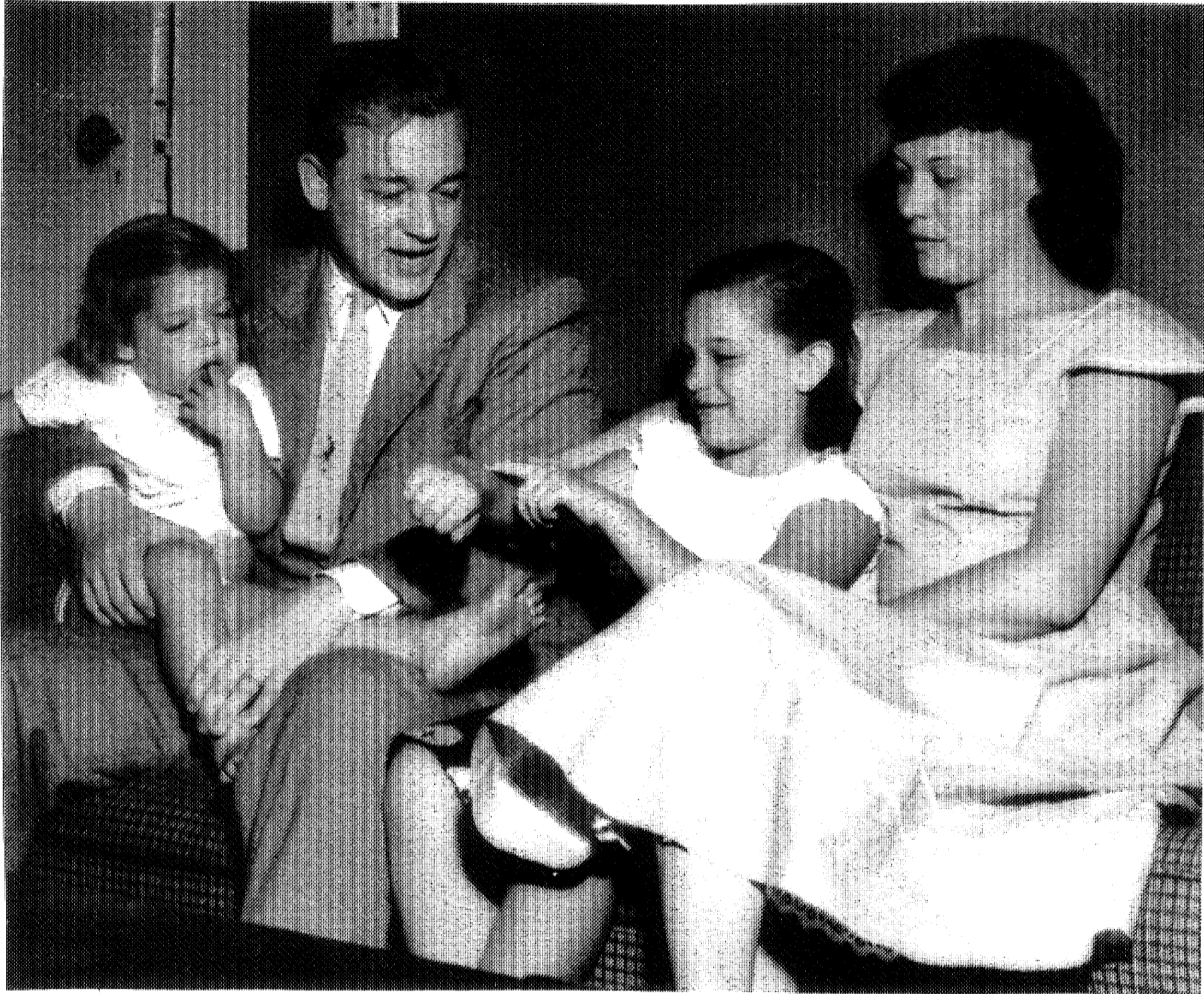
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AP and UP News

ANNISTON, ALABAMA, FRIDAY, MAY 20, 1955

Four Bandits Get 85 To 90 Thousands In Daring Jacksonville Bank Holdup



Elaine, Jesse, Diane and Mary Ellen Wood
(age 3) (age 30) (age 8) (age 28)

Diane is showing Jim Robbins, a reporter with the Post-Herald Newspaper of Birmingham, AL, the rope marks on her wrist that were made by the rope a robber used to tie her with this morning when she was held as a hostage.

The robbery started in our home about 7:15 a.m., on the morning of May 20, 1955. This picture was taken in our home the night of May 20, 1955.

Bandits Elude Wide Search

Wood Prays As Bandits Pull Crime

Knew They Meant Business, Bank Executive States

By CODY HALL
Jesse N. Wood prayed for silence yesterday as he watched, and was forced to aid, the robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville.

Two robbers took him to the bank while two others remained at the home of the young bank executive, holding Mrs. Wood and their two children as gunpoint hostages.

"I knew they meant business," said Wood, who described two of the men as wearing stocking or net masks over their faces.

Feared Fire Alarm

Throughout the hour and a half between their appearance at the Wood home and their disappearance with \$86,727.12 of the bank's cash, Wood stood in fear of any fire alarm or other indication which might have caused the bandits to harm his wife and children.

"About 7:30 this morning," Wood said shortly after the robbery, "two men came to my door and told my wife they would like to speak to me. I went into the living room and one of them said he was a Mr. Jackson of The Anniston Star."

Wood said he asked the quartet in and as they went into another room, one pulled out a pistol and another a shotgun. The other two bound his wife and children. Wood said the apparent leader was soft-spoken but blunt in his warning:

"One outcry, one alarm and your wife and children die. Get that through your head." Then turning to the two who remained at the Wood home, he added:

"We'll be back at 9 o'clock. If there is any alarm of any kind, any siren or anything, shoot that woman and those two children and get out."

Employees Threatened

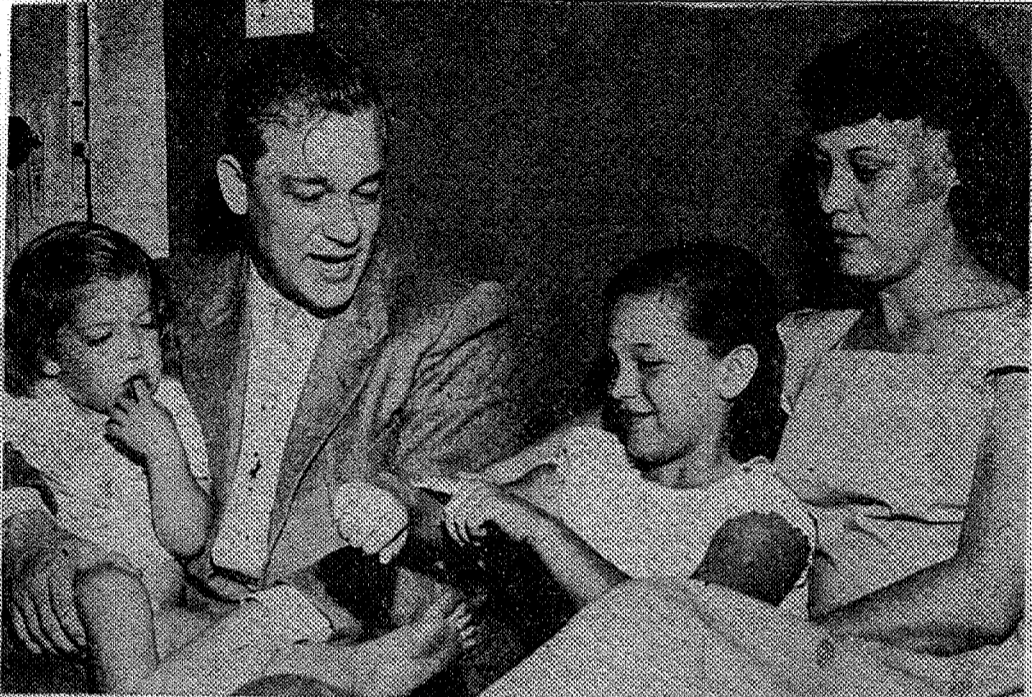
Wood said the employees at the bank were given the same stiff threats.

"When I left home with them this morning, I didn't expect to come back. I just knew I was going on a one-way ride."

Wood, a combat veteran of World War II, said Friday's experience surpassed anything he had ever been through before.

"My entire family's existence was based on whims. It was hell, if you'll pardon the expression."

The assistant vice-president and cashier of the bank, Wood said he was almost numb throughout the ordeal, knowing that the Jacksonville Fire Department alarm could be heard all over town, remembering that the gas company has a big siren which blows whenever
(See Wood, Page 2, Col. 1)



TERRORIZED FAMILY—Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Wood and their two children, Dianne, 8, and Elaine, 3, are shown at home last night after their morning of being held as hostages.

Pulls big bank robbery but can't open piggy bank!

A piggy-bank thwarted one of the robbers who pulled Alabama's largest bank hold-ups Friday.

One of the two bandits who guarded the family of Jesse N. Wood, assistant vice president of the Jacksonville bank came across the small metal bank while searching the Wood home.

Inside the bank was money Mr. and Mrs. Wood were saving as an "education fund" for their two little girls, Dianne, 8, and Elaine, 3.

While one robber guarded the mother and two girls, the other tried to open the piggy-bank. Failing without a key, he finally tossed the bank aside in disgust.

WOOD

(Continued From Page One)
a leak occurs, that an ambulance might go screaming through town at any moment.

Back at the Wood home, Mrs. Wood — only recently out of the hospital and still in ill health — and their two daughters, Dianne, 8, and Elaine, 3, anxiously awaited events.

Make Selves At Home

The two masked men made themselves at home, one guarding Mrs. Wood and the children while the other walked about the house.

One found a piggy-bank belonging to one of the girls and tried to open it, but the key was missing and the bank was tossed aside.

The bandit then found \$60 and Wood's pistol and took them. Wood said the \$60 was a rent payment he'd collected for a friend in Gadsden. One bandit bragged to Mrs. Wood:

"I've killed four men and killing you would be just like taking a drink of water."

Once Mrs. Wood was released from her bonds when friends she'd invited for coffee knocked, she turned them away on a pretense, saying that Elaine was sick.

Other Two Return

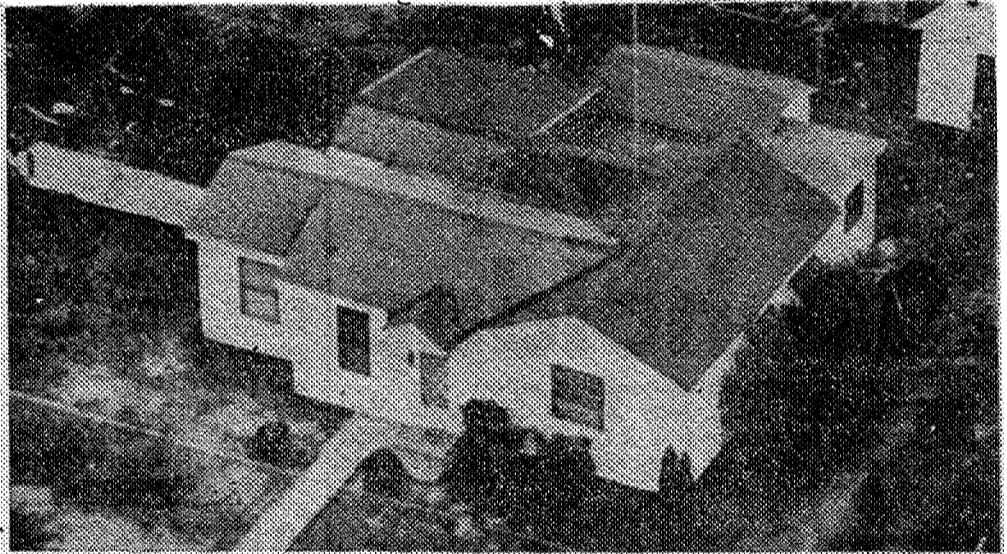
Then the other two bandits returned with Wood.

"They'd said they would come back at 9 o'clock," the bank official said, "and it was two minutes until 9 when we got back."

Wood was also bound and warned not to attempt to free himself for 30 minutes, one bandit threatening to return and kill the entire family if the alarm was given too early.

"My wife was hysterical and crying," Wood said, "but they were not harmed. I finally got myself untied and then untied my family. Then we called the police."

"I'm thankful my family and I are alive."



Where banker was kidnaped—This aerial view of the home of Jacksonville Banker Jesse N. Wood shows the lane next to his home used by the bank robbers to slip up on his house. They kidnaped him and held his family hostage inside with the warning they would be killed if "anything went wrong" with the robbery of the Jacksonville First National Bank.

bandits get \$90,000

Kidnap cashier, tie others, wait out time-lock

Jacksonville bank holdup

BIRMINGHAM NEWS MAY 20, 1955

BY CLANCY LAKE, News staff writer

JACKSONVILLE, Ala., May 20—Four "unusually polite" bandits quietly staged Alabama's biggest bank robbery here today, fleeing with between \$85,000 and \$90,000.

The quartet of armed white men looted the vault of the First National Bank here after kidnaping Jesse N. Wood, assistant vice president and cashier, from his home.

No one was injured in the holdup.

After Wood was surprised at his home, two of the bandits forced him to accompany them to the bank. The other two remained at the house, keeping Mrs. Wood and her two daughter, Diane, 8, and Elaine, 3—under guard.

ONE OF THE TWO MEN who took Wood to the bank was armed with a sawed-off shotgun, the other with a pistol.

At the bank the bandits waited inside, meeting employes as they arrived for work. When the employes entered they were taken to a back room and tied up. They were held under guard in the room, which is used as a lounge and kitchen.

AS EACH EMPLOYEE entered, Wood explained that the bank was being robbed and that the

More on robbery, Page 10

bandits had promised not to injure anyone "if they didn't get out of line."

T. Weller Smith, vice president, walked into the bank as the holdup was in progress.

When one of the bandits made a move to strike Smith, a woman employe remarked:

"He's a reasonable man and will not give you any trouble."

Smith was then told to sit down and was tied up.

Among the employes who were bound by the holdup men were Mrs. Margaret Deason, a teller; Miss Denola Aderholt, Mrs. Betty Hicks, Mrs. Catherine Angel and Mrs. Margaret Blair.

WHEN A TIME LOCK opened the bank vault, the bandits scooped up between \$85,000 and \$90,000. The loot was placed in a cheap black suitcase in which the bandits had brought the rope used to tie up the bank employes, and in Wood's brief case.

After raiding the bank vault, the robbers forced Wood to help them carry the money to a repossessed bank car. They then drove Wood to his house, picked up their confederates and fled.

This is Woods' account of the robbery:

"This morning—about 7:30 a.m.—someone knocked at our front door. My wife answered and they wanted to know if I was home. Two men told her they wanted to see me.

"They introduced themselves as being from The Anniston Star (a newspaper). They told me they wanted to talk in private, then pulled guns and told me it was a holdup.

"They told me if I made one outcry they would kill me and my family. They told me they were going to leave two armed guards with my family and that if anything went wrong with their plans to rob the bank they would kill me and my family and others at the bank."

Wood continued, "There were four men at the house. Three of them had pistols. One had a sawed off 16-gauge shotgun."



Banker kidnaped—Jesse N. Wood.



Bank vice president—Dan W. Gray.

MY WIFE and two daughters, Dianne, 8, and Elaine, 3, were home. They tied up my wife and the oldest girl. The little girl did not know what was going on, but I tried to explain it to Dianne and told her to do what they said.

"Two men, wearing nylon socks over their heads to distort their features, remained with my wife and children. The other two, one carrying the sawed off shotgun, made me get in my car and drive down there to the bank and let them in. Then they made me put up a sign in the bank that it was a bank holiday.

The News Paper Made A Mistake; This picture is OF J.M. Wood, Jesse's FATHER.



He was kidnaped—Jesse N. Wood said the Jacksonville bank robbers told him that if he made one outcry they would kill his wife and two children, then kidnaped him an hour before the time vault opened at the bank where he served as cashier.

DAN. W. GRAY WAS NOT AN ACTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE BANK. HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. HE WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE TIME OF THE BANK ROBBERY

As the workers began arriving at the bank, they made me greet each one at a side door. They told me to tell each one that I wanted to see them in private in a back room. I took them to the back

room where the man with the sawed-off shotgun was stationed.

"The two men in the bank then tied the bank employes up, binding them hand and foot. Each one was warned that if he made any attempt to cry out all of them would be killed. In all they tied up six of the women who worked at the bank, the bank janitor and Vice President T. Weller Smith.

"THEY WAITED until the time-lock on the bank vault opened and then scooped up between \$85,000 and \$90,000. After they got the money, they waited until Mr. Smith came in and then tied him up. They told the girls then that they were going to leave with me, and take me back to my house. They said, 'We have got Wood with us. We have nothing to lose. If you make one sound or alarm we will kill him.'

Turn to Page 10, Column 4

Continued from Page 1

"They took me back home in my car, which they had forced me to drive to the bank. Then they took me inside my house and tied me up. I got loose a little later and called the police and sheriff's office. No one in the bank made a move until they knew that I had been freed."

Dan Gray, a vice president of the bank, said the robbers apparently had planned the move for sometime.

He said one of the robbers who accompanied Wood to the bank had been in the bank about two days ago, making various inquiries.

He said the other man, who operated in the bank, wore dark glasses.

All of those held prisoner in the bank said they had no idea a robbery was under way until the shotgun was pointed at them and they were warned not to make a sound.

THE BANDITS' GET A WAY CAR later was found abandoned at Germania Springs, two and one-half miles north of Jacksonville on Highway 11.

Roadblocks were set up by the

State Highway Patrol around Jacksonville, a town of 5000 about 70 miles east and north of Birmingham.

Federal Bureau of Investigation agents joined officers here in the manhunt.

Estimate of the amount stolen was made by Vice President Gray. He said the loss was covered by insurance.

Vice President Smith said the robbers were "unusually polite."

They were especially considerate, Smith said, of the women employes and told them repeatedly: "Just behave now and you won't be hurt a bit."

Smith said at least one of the men had been in the bank before, presumably to "case" the place for information in planning the holdup.

VETERAN LAW enforcement officers said the robbery was the biggest of any kind in Alabama history.

Largest previous robbery recalled today was the \$52,000 stick-up of the West End branch of the First National Bank of Birmingham Jan. 23, 1954.

Alabama Gunmen Snatch \$85,000

Thugs Kidnap Official; Employes Threatened

JACKSONVILLE, Ala., May 20 (AP)—Four daring bandits kidnaped an officer of the First National Bank in his home Friday, held his family gunpoint hostages and forced him to open the bank where they escaped with an estimated \$90,000 haul.

The FBI and state police of Alabama and Georgia touched off a massive manhunt but feared the smooth-working professionals who pulled the job had a long start. Their get-away car was found abandoned on the outskirts of town, indicating another vehicle was waiting.

The loss was covered by insurance.

THE DESPERADOES showed up at the home of Assistant Vice President Jesse N. Wood shortly after the family was astir for the day and gained entrance by one of their number posing as a reporter from Anniston, 15 miles away.

Wood said he escorted the men to another room whereupon one wheeled on him with a pistol in his hand.

Two of the bandits stayed at the home holding Wood's wife and their two young children, age 3 and 8.

Wood said the other two forced him to drive them to the bank in his own car. He said they talked all the way but warned him, as they had back at the house, that any hint of spreading an alarm would mean death for him and his family.

"They told my family and me if any sirens or alarms went off the two who stayed with my family had instructions to kill them and said they would kill me at the same time," Wood said.

At the bank, the bandits had to wait for the time clock to open the vault at 8 a.m. CST and spent the time checking in arriving employes and binding them.

POLICE theorized the bandits came from somewhere in the Eastern time zone. One was heard to say "we're running an hour ahead of schedule." Alabama is on Central Standard Time, an hour behind Eastern.

The robbery was smoothly handled and calmly executed, with a dash of grim humor thrown in. After the bank employes all were inside, Wood was required to hang a sign on the door reading, "Bank Closed, Legal Holiday."

"They warned the workers that no alarm must go off within 30 minutes of their departure," Wood said.

Wood said his home also was robbed of \$60 but that his family was not harmed. His wife was hysterical, however, after the ordeal.

Mrs. Wood described the bandits as "average looking, in their late 30s or early 40s."

She said the first two who entered their home were dressed "real nicely, in sports clothes and the other two had on work clothes." According to Mrs.

Wood, the gunmen "were just average-looking people." But, she said, "they scared me to death."

MRS. WOOD disclosed the bandits' plan nearly jumped the track when a family friend "dropped by."

"They didn't tie me up until I had gone to the door and told my friend that one of my children was sick and running a fever," she said.

Mrs. Wood said the gunmen "were worried about how things were going up there at the bank. They said they didn't want to hurt us unless they had to. They said 'it all rests with your husband, if he doesn't do right it's going to be too bad.'"

The two gunmen who remained with her were masked.

The young housewife said her children "controlled themselves pretty good, in fact, my baby didn't even know what was happening."

The FBI said the two bandits with Wood forced the officer to drive with them to the bank and open the establishment about 8 a.m.

Armed with a pistol and a sawed-off shotgun, the highwaymen posted themselves at the entrance to the bank and greeted each of the seven employes as they reported for work.

AS EACH entered the door, the bandits grabbed them and herded them into a back room where they were bound and gagged.

Each was told: "Keep quiet and nothing will happen if you don't misbehave."

The employes said they were not mistreated.

Authorities said that after all the employes had reported to the bank, the bandits "just sat around for about an hour" and waited until the time lock on the vault automatically opened at 8 a.m.

When they were able to enter

The ATLANTA JOURNAL
Friday May 20, 1955

\$85,000 TAKEN BY THUGS

Continued From Page 1

the vault, the bandits scooped up between \$85,000 and \$90,000 in cash, Wood said. They crammed the money into Wood's briefcase and in a cheap black suitcase they had used to carry the ropes with which they bound the employes.

Wood then was forced to return to his home with the gunmen who picked up their two companions there and escaped after freeing Mrs. Wood and the children. They were not harmed.

IT WAS THE second bank robbery in Alabama this week. The Bank of Gordo near Tuscaloosa was robbed of \$1,000 Wednesday by a gunman who was captured a few hours after the holdup. Jacksonville is about 15 miles

northeast of Anniston in eastern Alabama. The Alabama highway patrol later found a car believed to have been used by the bandits, abandoned outside the Jacksonville city limits. The car, a 1952 Oldsmobile, had Alabama license plates.

City authorities, county deputies, the highway patrol and the FBI all entered the four-pronged investigation. Roadblocks were established on all highways leading to and from Jacksonville.

Authorities said the bandits apparently changed cars after abandoning the Oldsmobile or else fled on foot with their loot.

Authorities feared the bandits got a long head start in their escape. The holdup went unreported for more than an hour because the employes were bound and unable to report the crime.

By midmorning, the small bank in this college town was swarming with law enforcement officers who went over the entire plant searching for clues.

JACKSONVILLE NEWS
MAY 25, 1955

First National Bank Robbed; Bonding Co. Restores Loss

Friday morning, May 20, seemed no different on the square in Jacksonville to other days. Men and women reported to work at their usual hours; business men made the regular morning trip to the post office; and the regular routine was begun as usual.

One thing was different! The First National Bank did not open—

the blinds were drawn and a small sign placed on the front door said: "Holiday—Closed". Depositors waited outside until the sign appeared; policemen made their regular rounds to inspect parking meters, and traffic moved around the bank without even questioning the fact that there is no bank holiday on May 20.

Shortly after 9 o'clock, the picture changed quickly. Chief of Police Emerson Whiteside received a call from Jesse Wood at his home to go to the bank and release the other employees who had been tied up by bank robbers. He also called the Highway Patrol and Sheriff Roy Snead. Then the story began to unfold.

Kidnap Official

About 7:30 o'clock Friday morning, two men appeared at the Wood home and asked to speak to Mr. Wood, one of them saying he was a "Mr. Jackson from the An-niston Star". The first two men were unmasked but they were joined by two others who wore nylon socks over their heads. After they got into the house they pulled out a pistol and shot gun, and two of them tied up Mrs. Wood and the oldest little girl, Diane, age 8.

The leader of the group told Mr. Wood that they would kill his wife and children if there was any outcry or alarm. He said that if any alarm, any siren of any kind went off, the men guarding his wife and children had orders to shoot to kill.

Employees Tied Up

They had Mr. Wood drive them to the bank in a car belonging to the bank. When they arrived there, they forced him to open the back door of the bank. Once inside, they waited for the time lock on the vault to go off and for the bank employees to arrive. As each arrived, she was bound and placed in a back room of the bank which is used for a lounge. The janitor, who was waiting at the bank for Mr. Wood, also was tied and placed in the back room.

The bandits went about the robbery in a very calm manner, it is reported. They emphasized that robbing banks was their business and if they received co-operation of the bank employees there would be no trouble; if they didn't they would kill them, and that was that.

When T. Weller Smith, assistant vice-president, was late in reporting to work, the leader of the gang had Mr. Wood call his home. Mrs. Smith told him that Mr. Smith had left the house and would be there in a few minutes. When he was seen approaching the bank one of the men told the other one to hit him in the mouth when he came in, but the bank employees told them he was not a well man and that he would be reasonable, so they did not hit him.

Only Currency Taken

When the timelock went off, the bandits scooped up the money in an old suit case and "borrowed" Mr. Smith's new brief case for the overflow. They took \$86,712.12, all currency, and made their departure, taking Mr. Wood with them. They told the bank employees not to move or give any kind of alarm; if they did, they would kill the entire Wood family.

When they returned to the Wood home, two minutes before 9 o'clock, they tied up Mr. Wood and left in the bank's car. Later the car was found abandoned at Germania Springs.

Mr. Wood managed to get his bonds untied and notified the police, highway patrol and sheriff.

The men who remained at the Wood home ransacked the place and took \$60.00 which they found that was rent money collected by Mr. Wood for a friend in Gadsden.

In a short time law enforcement men from county, state and federal agencies were on the scene checking the meager clues left by the bandits, who had planned every step with clock-like precision.

The bank re-opened for business at 12:30 p.m., and on Saturday the bonding company sent a check to cover the entire loss. Bank officials emphasized that the loss was fully covered and there was no way anybody could lose on it.

Police Alerted

Police in surrounding states were alerted and every step is being taken to apprehend the bandits.

from the Chase Manhattan Branch Bank in Queens, N. Y., last April 6. There the bank official was kidnaped at his home and forced to admit the robbers to the bank.

Law enforcement officers say the job was one of the smoothest ever pulled, and the biggest in Alabama history.

One of the men visited the bank on Wednesday to get some coin covers and asked several questions about the bank, it was learned. Bank employees said they seemed to be familiar with every detail connected with the bank, even to having Mr. Wood park his car in the usual place.

Airplane Discovers Car

Soon after the alarm was spread Russell Greenleaf took off in a plane belonging to Eugene Burnham and Roscoe Shipman and began to search for the robbers from the air. He discovered the getaway car which the bandits had abandoned at Germania Springs and notified officers. The officers were able to get footprints left around the car which might help in tracking them down or in identifying them.

Wednesday, May 25, 1955



LOSS RESTORED—The United States Fidelity and Guaranty Co. presented the First National Bank with a check for the amount stolen in the bank robbery on Saturday. Couriers bring the check were, left to right, W. A. Barnes and T. J. West; the check is accepted by Col. C. W. Dugette, Jr., in the presence of Jesse Wood, assistant vice-president and cashier; and Dan Gray vice-president.

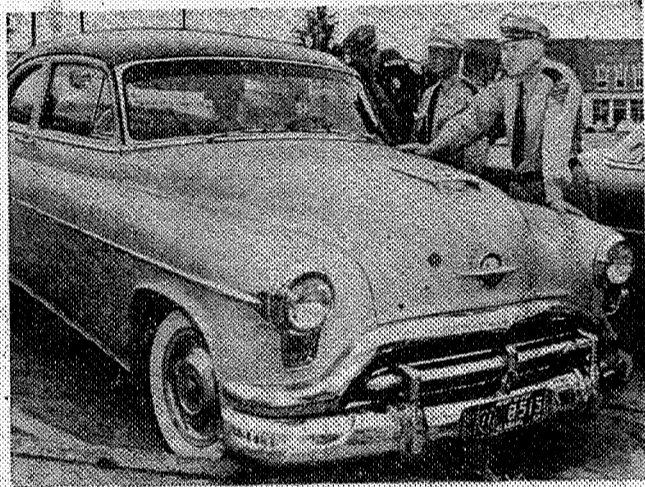
BIRMINGHAM NEWS
MAY 20, 1955



Bank employees tied up by robbers—This group of employees of the First National Bank of Jacksonville was rounded up by robbers as they entered the bank Friday. They were threatened with death if they cried out, then tied up. Left to right are Mrs. Carrie Smith, Mrs. Becky Hicks, Mrs. Kathryn Angel, T. Waller Smith, Mrs. Margaret Deason, Mrs. Margaret Blair and Denola Aderholt.



KIDNAPED—Jesse N. Wood, assistant vice president and cashier of the Jacksonville bank, who was kidnaped by robbers is shown above at the door of the vault from which a record state haul was taken.



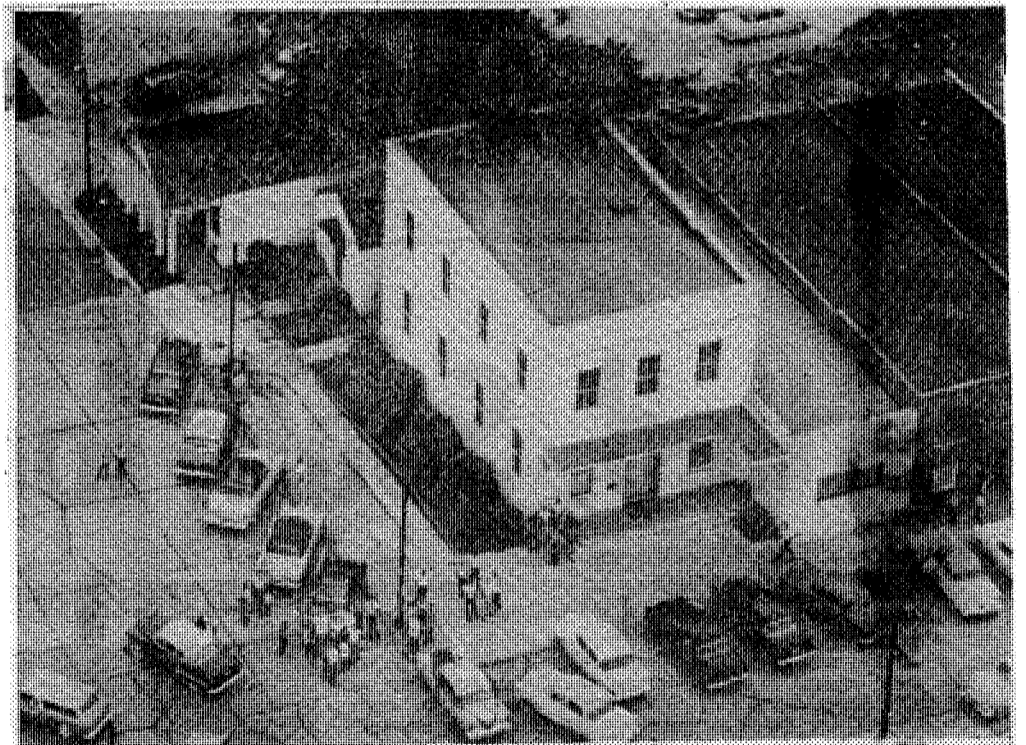
Abandoned getaway car—Three of the officers who joined in the search for the Jacksonville bank robbers are shown looking over the bank's car used by the bandits. Right to left are Highway Patrolman Lloyd Jemison, Calhoun Sheriff Roy Snead and Deputy H. L. Randall.

**Jacksonville photos
by Robert Adams**

All photos of the Jacksonville bank robbery by News Staff Photographer Robert Adams.



ROBBED—Here is the outside of the First National Bank of Jacksonville which was robbed of \$86,727.12 yesterday.



Site of bank holdup—This is an aerial view of the First National Bank of Jacksonville, where robbers escaped Friday with some \$87,000. Employees were tied up after they entered a side door just to the right of the main entrance. The pavement at the rear of the bank leads to the back room where the robbers kept the employees.

ANNISTON STAR MAY 28 1955

Staff Held As Hostages During Act

Getaway Car Found; Wide Net Thrown For Daring Quartet

By SAM JONES

The First National Bank of Jacksonville was robbed of about \$87,000 by four men early today while the cashier's family and the entire staff were held as hostages.

Bank employes said the bandits got away in the bank's car after warning them to keep quiet for 30 minutes before giving the alarm.

The car was found abandoned a short while later between Jacksonville and Piedmont, and a wide-spread net has been set up in Alabama and Georgia for the men.

An official said the entire lot is covered by insurance.

Employes Tell Story

The story of the brazen, well-planned robbery, which took more than an hour, was told by a half-dozen employes who were tied up one by one as they reported for work.

Four men, they said, drove up to the home of Jesse N. Wood on Second Street about 7:30 a.m. He is cashier and assistant vice president.

Two of the thugs were left with Mrs. Wood (who has recently been hospitalized) and their two children while the other two forced Wood to take them to the bank, where they entered and waited, armed with a sawed-off shotgun and a pistol.

As each employe came to work, one of the robbers and Wood met them at the door, took them quietly to a back room used as lounge and kitchen, and tied their hands and feet with manila hemp cord.

Six Held At Gunpoint

Six women employes were bound in this manner and held at gunpoint while the bandits waited for the vault to open. The janitor, Tommy Miller, also was tied up and made to lie on the floor.

While they waited, the women were made to sit on a couch and chairs and the men chatted with them "like gentlemen." They didn't offer to hurt them.

Last to enter the bank was T. Weller Smith, assistant vice president, who let himself in the door. "The robbers were going to hit him in the mouth when he came back to the room, but we told them (See Staff Page 8 Col 1.)



INTERIOR OF ROBBED BANK—This photo of the main banking room at Jacksonville's First National Bank was made less than an hour after two gunmen walked out with some \$87,000 after tying up eight employes. The main entrance is at right of picture on the wall. In left background Dan Gray, vice president, talks with Deputy T. J. Trammell, while Deputy Raymond Hall discusses the robbery at right with Mrs. Carrie Lee Smith, who was bound with other employes in a back room.

STAFF

(Continued From Page One)

he had been sick and pleaded for them not to do it," Mrs. Carrie Lee Smith said.

Smith, too, was tied up.

In the meantime the vault's automatic lock had opened the door and the men stuffed almost all the currency it contained into a ragged, black pasteboard handbag in which they had brought the string.

Take Smith's Briefcase

They took Smith's briefcase and stuffed the remaining bills into it, leaving only some small bills and silver.

After waiting until all the employes and officers had come to work, the men warned the women and Smith to wait a half-hour before giving the alarm, "or we would just as soon shoot Mrs. Wood and the children as to take a drink of water."

The bandits overlooked \$5,000 in a safety-deposit box.

Then they left, taking Wood with them. It was about 20 minutes to 9 o'clock.

Wood said they got into the bank car, a 1952 Oldsmobile that had been repossessed by the bank, and drove to his home. There they turned him loose, picked up the two confederates and drove away.

Mrs. Wood and the children were not harmed, and none of the workers at the bank were hurt.

Wood immediately phoned the Jacksonville police and the Highway Patrol.

The employes bound and left with Smith included Mrs. Smith, of the loan department; Mrs. Margaret Blair, bookkeeper; Mrs. Margaret Deason and Miss Denola Aderholdt, tellers; Mrs. Kathryn

Angel and Mrs. Betty Hicks.

Their wrists still bore marks of the hemp string.

"At first they acted like gentlemen," one of the women said. "They were very polite and the dark one, who did most of the talking, talked about his family."

'Holiday Today'

Before they left the bank the men made Wood pen a crude sign, "Holiday Today," and stick it on the front door of the building to keep anyone else from entering.

Descriptions of the men left at the Wood home were not obtained immediately.

The employes described the tall, dark-skinned talkative man as about 30, wearing a tan coat, yellow tie, gray straw hat and tan trousers.

The other robber was stocky (about the build of Smith), wore a brown hat, dark glasses and a gray coat. He had "rough-looking" skin and was about 35 years old.

Neither was masked. They talked like Southern people and seemed very calm most of the time. One wore leather gloves and the other plastic gloves.

One had a revolver and the other carried a sawed-off shotgun.

The car was discovered by a deputy sheriff at Germania Springs on the Jacksonville-Piedmont Highway a few minutes after 10 o'clock.

Miss Aderholdt said the talkative one had come into the bank last Wednesday as a customer. He looked around, asked who the president was and got some coin wrappers.

One of the men told one of the women he had seen her somewhere before.

When they left with the money, one remarked that they were 20 minutes ahead of schedule—that they hadn't expected to leave until morning.

Some mention of a getaway car belonging to the men was heard during the wait, but apparently nobody noticed the automobile in which the four men were brought to the Wood home and later picked up on the highway.

Police Chief D. E. Whiteside said he passed by outside the bank at least a couple of times in his routine duties at the time the two bandits were holding the employes and robbing the vault.

He was unaware that anything was wrong, however, until he received a call from Jesse Wood, the kidnapped cashier, about 9:15, as soon as the men had got away.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which has jurisdiction because of the bank's membership in the Federal Reserve System, was called in immediately.

Investigating officers include Jacksonville Police Chief D. E. Whiteside and officers, Sheriff Roy C. Snead's department, the Highway Patrol and other agencies assisted in setting up roadblocks.

The exact amount of money taken was not determined shortly after the robbery, but Vice-President Dan W. Gray said all the loss was insured and he took steps to reopen the bank during the morning.



VICTIMS OF ROBBERS—Four employees of the First National Bank of Jacksonville (above) recount their experiences this morning when the bank was robbed. The employees are (left to right) Mrs. Margaret Deason, Mrs. Kathryn Angel, Mrs. Becky Hicks and Miss Denola Aderholdt. They and other officers and employees of the bank were tied up with string, like that held by Mrs. Deason, while the bandits waited for the time clock to open the vault.



WHERE THEY SAT—Five of the six tellers who were tied up at the Jacksonville bank robbery yesterday show where they waited for the robbery to end. Left to right are Mrs. Margaret Blair, Miss Denola Aderholdt, Mrs. Carrie Lee Smith, Mrs. Kathryn Angel and Mrs. Margaret Deason. The sixth teller went home early. She was Mrs. Becky Hicks.



SHOWS ROPE—Mrs. Catherine Angel shows rope with which robbers tied her up.

Talkative Bandit Calm And Witty

Woman Says She Was 'Scared To Death; One Thug Wisecracks

By GODY HALL

An attractive young widow with four children almost got a gift of \$1,000 from one of the bandits who robbed the First National Bank of Jacksonville today.

Mrs. Kathryn Angel said one of the talkative robbers told her:

"If I could I'd give you a thousand of this to help you with those children, but the government would only take it away from you."

Mrs. Angel, whose husband was killed two years ago in a railroad accident, was one of the employees of the bank met at the door by Jesse N. Wood, assistant vice president and cashier, and one of the bandits.

She Describes Scene

Here's the way Mrs. Angel, still nervous from her experience, told of the holdup:

"Mrs. (Margaret) Blair and I were coming in together talking about the Salk polio shots and when we got to the door of the bank, Mr. Wood was standing there and I said:

"'Jesse, isn't it so that the children aren't going to have any more shots?'

"'This man was standing behind Jesse and I thought it was just someone opening up an account. A lot of people come in early to open up new accounts.

"Then Jesse said 'Lay your purses on the counter and come on in the back. I want to talk to you.'

"We came on back in the back to the lounge and he said to us 'This is a holdup. Just be calm and do what the man says and we won't get hurt.'

One Does All Talking

"Then Jesse laughed and I guess we did too and Mrs. Blair asked him the second time what he said. The one man had a sawed

(See Bandit Page 8 Col. 3.)

BANDIT

(Continued From Page One)

off shotgun and the other one had a pistol in his pocket. He took it out and I saw it. The one with the pistol did all the talking. The other one just stood around and did what he said.

"The one with the pistol said if we'd do as he said, no one would get hurt, but if anybody did anything we oughtn't do, he'd just as soon shoot us as not."

Mrs. Angel said each of the employees was met at the door by Mr. Wood with the bandit at his back. Each was escorted into the lounge and tied with a light manila rope.

The pistol-carrying bandit, she said, dogged Mr. Wood's steps, going with him to the door, standing beside him as he answered the telephone.

Wood said the robbers tied up his wife and 8-year-old daughter, Diane, leaving 3-year-old Elaine free.

"When they took me back to the house, I found her sitting in the den, crying while the two men held pistols on her," he said.

"They tied me up, too, and told me not to get loose for 30 minutes or they'd kill me. As soon as they left I got free and called the Police."

Wood said his wife had been released from the hospital only two weeks ago and was still in poor health.

"He asked each one of the girls," Mrs. Angel continued, "if she was married and if she had any children. He asked me and I told him I had four children and that my husband was dead."

It was then, she said, that the magnanimous talker made, and turned down, the offer of \$1,000.

He Shows Wit

"He said he wasn't going to take

any of the money out of our purses," Mrs. Angel added. "He said he just wanted what Uncle Sam had."

The talkative bandit apparently enjoyed his role of a modern day Robin Hood — with a touch of Scotch thrift in his veins — as he regaled his audience with his own philosophy, according to Mrs. Angel.

"He said he'd probably get killed over the money, but said if we'd cooperate, we wouldn't. He said robbing us was just his line of business, just like banking was our living. They were very nice to us and never pointed the guns at us."

When the time clock opened the bank vault, the two bandits scooped up the cash, crammed it into two bags and left with Mr. Wood.

"I was scared to death the whole time," Mrs. Angel said. "I've had a lot of things happen to me, but never anything like this. I was just petrified and it seemed like they kept us back there for hours."

Mrs. Angel doesn't begrudge the \$1,000 she didn't get from the bandit. She is just glad it's all over with.

Gadsden Times
 Friday May 20, 1955



HANDS WERE TIED—The five women employes of the First National Bank show Jesse Wood, vice-president, how the four bandits tied their hands during the robbery this morning. Left to right are Mrs. Billy Hicks, Mrs. Carrie Smith, Mrs. Kathryn Angel, Miss Denola Aderholdt and Mrs. Margaret Deason. (Photo by Opal Lovett, Jacksonville)

Politeness, Blood-Curdling Threats Mixed By Bandits In Daring Holdup

JACKSONVILLE, Ala. (AP)—Bandits who held up the First National Bank of Jacksonville today mixed politeness with blood-curdling threats if its employes disobeyed them.

Mrs. Kathryn Angel, an attractive young widow with four children, said one talkative robber said he would "give you a thousand of this (money) to help you with those kids but the government would just take it away from you."

She is employed as a teller at the bank, which was robbed of more than \$85,000 by four unmasked white men. Only two came to the bank with Jesse N. Wood, bank vice president and cashier, after kidnaping him from his home and leaving the others to guard his wife and two daughters. The bandits met the bank workers as they reported for duty and tied them up.

"We came in and Jesse (Wood) was standing at the door," Mrs. Angel said. "We thought it was someone opening up a new account. . . . Then Jesse said, 'Lay down your purses and come on in back. I want to talk to you.'"

"We came on in back and he told us, 'This is a holdup—just be calm and don't get excited' . . . I thought it was a joke. Mrs. (Margaret) Blair (another employe) asked him a second time just what he said.

"The man with the pistol said if we would do as he said no one would get hurt. But if anybody did anything we oughtn't he'd just as soon shoot us as not.

"Every time an employe came in they were all brought into the back of the bank and tied up."

"The robber with the pistol asked each girl if she was married and asked if we had any children. I said I have four children and my husband is dead.

"He said, 'If I could I'd give

you a thousand of this to help you with those kids but the government would just take it away from you.

"He said he just wanted what Uncle Sam had. He said he'd probably get killed over the money but if we'd cooperate we wouldn't (get killed).

"He said robbing us was his business just like banking was our business."

Employes said the two robbers who came to the bank both wore gloves.

The one who did the taking and met workers at the door was described as a dark-skinned man about 30 years old. He was nattily dressed in a tan coat and trousers with a yellow tie and gray straw hat, according to the description, and talked with a southern accent.

The other bandit, armed with a sawed off shotgun, had little to say. He was a stockily built man about 35 years old, with a rough-looking skin. He wore dark glasses.



TIED UP—Bank Vice President T. Weller Smith

Bandits Evade Police After \$86,000 Robbery



TRIO TRUSSED BY ROBBERS — Three pretty workers look at ropes with which they were tied yesterday when gunmen robbed the First National Bank of Jacksonville, Ala. of more than

\$86,000. Left to right, they are Mrs. Margaret Deason, Mrs. Kathryn Angel and Mrs. Betty Hicks.

AP Wirephoto

Quartet Makes Quick Getaway At Jacksonville

Entry Gained To Home Of Bank Cashier By Reporters Pose

JACKSONVILLE, Ala., May 20 (AP)—Four armed bandits who mixed politeness with deadly threats robbed a Jacksonville bank of \$86,727.12 today, then made a smooth getaway.

A stolen car in which they fled after their precisely timed strike at the First National Bank of Jacksonville, was found abandoned about two miles from this northeast Alabama city of 4,750.

The fast-moving quartet evaded hastily thrown up road blocks and a small army of state and federal officers that combed the Jacksonville area.

The Highway Patrol said late today that officers are seeking a second car seen near where the first automobile was abandoned. It was described as a light-colored 1953 Buick with a sun visor over the windshield and a white license tag with black figures.

Posed As Reporters

Posing as reporters for the An-niston Star, the four gained entry to the home of bank cashier Jesse N. Wood.

Two of the robbers remained there, with nylon stockings over their heads, guarding Mrs. Wood and two small daughters, while the other pair drove with Wood to the bank and forced him to let them in.

women employes if they were married and had children. When Mrs. Kathryn Angel, an attractive young teller, said she was a widow with four children, she said he told her: "If I could I'd give you a thousand of this to help you with those kids but the government would just take it away from you."

Talkative Gunman

But the talkative gunman also warned the bank staff, "If anybody does anything I'd just as soon shoot as not." He also threatened to kill Wood if an alarm was given.

The robbery of the small town bank 70 miles east of Birmingham was the largest such Alabama holdup in recent years. A Birmingham branch bank was robbed of \$52,000 in 1953.

But it was the second state bank holdup in three days. The small Bank of Gordo was robbed by a lone gunman of about \$600 Wednesday. Officers arrested William M. Jaudon, a Hamilton, Miss., saw mill worker, in less than an hour and charged him with armed robbery.

Wood's wife, who left a hospital only a week ago after a miscarriage, became hysterical from the frightening experience.

After surprising Wood, the gunmen tied up his wife and 8-year-old daughter, Diane, leaving his 3-year-old child Elaine free in the house.

Bound With Rope

After getting into the bank, the talkative gunman stayed in front with Wood while a stocky, rough-faced man armed with a shotgun kept guard over the employes as they were herded into a lounge at the rear of the bank and bound with manila rope.

After the vault was opened, the gunmen scooped the cash into a cheap black suitcase in which they had brought the rope, and into a brief case which they took from Wood.

They forced Wood to help carry the money to a car the bank owned and drove back to his house, where they left him and his wife and children bound and fled.

Wood said he was told not to get loose for 30 minutes or he would be killed. "As soon as they left I got free and called the police," he said.

FBI Joins Manhunt

Officers set up road blocks around Jacksonville and the Federal Bureau of Investigation and highway patrol rushed into the manhunt. State Safety Director Bill Lysterly sent a helicopter and airplanes into the area to help in the search.

Bank officials said the \$86,727.12 loss was mostly in 10 and 20 dollar bills. They said this was a normal amount for heavy weekend payrolls. Jacksonville is a busy agriculture center, with several small industries and a state teachers college.

The bandits tied up six women employes, the janitor and a vice president, T. Weller Smith.

When Smith walked in, one of the robbers made as if to strike him. When one of the women said, "He's a reasonable man and will not give you any trouble," Smith was told to sit down and then was bound.

Smith described the robbers as "unusually polite." He said they told the women repeatedly, "Just behave now, and you won't be hurt a bit."

Smith said one of the robbers came in the bank Wednesday apparently getting information for use in the holdup.

'Perfect' crime at Jacksonville—

Bandits make clean getaway in precision \$87,000 holdup



Bank employees tied up by robbers—This group of employees of the First National Bank of Jacksonville was rounded up by robbers as they entered the bank Friday. They were threatened with death if they cried out, then tied up. Left to right are Mrs. Carrie Smith, Mrs. Becky Hicks, Mrs. Kathryn Angel, T. Weller Smith, Mrs. Margaret Deason, Mrs. Margaret Blair and Denola Aderholt.

BY CLANCY LAKE, News staff writer
JACKSONVILLE, Ala., May 21—A Southwide alert was out Saturday for four or five of the slickest holdup men ever to strike in Alabama. They robbed the First National Bank here Friday of \$87,000.

The robbers struck with clock-like precision. They even had a vice president of the bank called at his home because he was late for work, throwing them off schedule in their planned getaway.

FROM THE TIME they kidnaped the bank cashier, holding his wife and children hostage under a death threat, to the time they skipped the area, every detail of the crime was planned.

City, county, state and federal officers worked into the night trying to find a flaw in the "perfect" robbery.

Meager leads to identity of the robbers include:

A plaster cast of footprints found where they had abandoned one getaway car—owned by the bank and used in the robbery.

Physical descriptions of two men, one of whom had visited the bank Wednesday. Two others, who held the wife and children of the bank cashier as hostages under a death threat while forcing him to help them rob the bank, wore silk stocking masks.

That action tended to indicate they were known locally or their faces are in Alabama rogues galleries. A fifth man, not seen by anyone, may have handled the getaway car.

TWO CARS, a 1955 Oldsmobile and a 1955 gray Buick with a South Carolina or Virginia license, were seen roaring away from town just after the robbery.

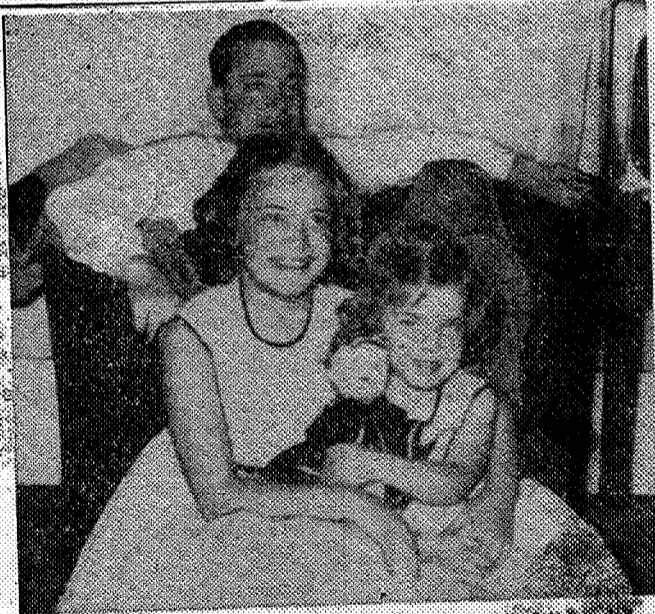
Jesse N. Wood, 30-year-old cashier at the bank was forced to help the bandits stage Alabama's biggest bank robbery to protect his wife and two young daughters.

Four men, three armed with pistols and one carrying a sawed-off shotgun, forced their way into Wood's small white cottage about 7:30 a.m. yesterday after posing as reporters for The Anniston Star. Two wore work clothes and had silk stocking masks over their face.

They herded Wood, his wife and daughters, Dianne, 8, and Elaine, 3, into a room and told them of their plans to rob the bank. Mrs. Wood and Dianne were bound hand and foot.

The two masked men then remained at the home while the other two escorted Wood to the bank in his car, which the bank had recently repossessed. There they tied up six women tellers and a vice president of the bank as they reported for work.

Turn to Page 2, Column 5



Held prisoners—Little Dianne Wood, 8, (left) and her sister, Elaine, 3, were held hostages by the bank robbers who forced their father, shown in the background, to let them into the Jacksonville First National Bank.



Harrowing time—Mrs. Jesse N. Wood and her two children were held hostages by two armed bank robbers while two others kidnaped her husband and forced him to help them rob the First National Bank of Jacksonville.

Birmingham News

BIRMINGHAM, ALA., SATURDAY, MAY 21, 1955

★★★

BY CLANCY LAKE, News staff writer
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They herded Wood, his wife and daughters, Dianne, 8, and Elaine, 3, into a room and told them of their plans to rob the bank. Mrs. Wood and Dianne were bound hand and foot.

The two masked men then remained at the home while the other two escorted Wood to the bank in his car, which the bank had recently repossessed. There they tied up six women tellers and a vice president of the bank as they reported for work.

THE BANK VAULT was opened by a time lock at 8:30 a.m. and the robbers took \$86,727.12, which was covered by insurance.

The leader was quiet talking but blunt at the Wood home in contrast to his later "politeness" at the bank.

"One outcry, one alarm and your wife and children die," he snapped at Wood on first entering the house. Before leaving for the bank, he instructed his two confederates:

"We'll be back at 9 o'clock. If there is any alarm of any kind, any siren or anything, shoot that woman and those two children and get out."

WOOD, WHO SAID HE never expected to see his family alive again, tried to protest and pointed out that Fire Department sirens could be heard all over town if someone turned in an alarm. He said he also told the robbers the gas company has a siren which sounds whenever a leak occurs in a line.

He said the leader of the robbers turned to him and said, "Let's you just hope none of those things happens between now and 9 o'clock."

As soon as Wood entered the bank, followed by the two men, they seized the janitor, who had just started cleaning up, and trussed him up in a back room.

Then, as six women employees entered the building, the robbers forced Wood to greet each of them at the door and tell her he wanted to see her for a moment in a back room. Once the girl reached the back room, she was tied hand and foot with short pieces of the manila hemp which the robbers had brought with them.

WHEN THE TIME LOCK on the vault opened an hour after Wood's abduction, he was forced to help the bandits scoop up the loot.

Even after they had the money, the robbers sat tight.

They had "cased" the bank so well, they knew T. Weller Smith, a vice president, was late. Ordinarily, Smith arrived at the bank between 8:20 and 8:30 a.m.

When he failed to show up after the robbers had taken the money from the vault, Wood was forced to call Smith's home to urge him to hurry to the bank because "bank examiners are here waiting for him."

However, Smith had left his home just before the call. When he stepped into the back room of the bank, the robbers were waiting, and threatened to smash him in the face. However, Wood and the women employees assured the robbers Smith, a former director of the Alabama Highway Patrol, had been ill and would follow instructions.

THE ROBBERS then made it clear they had waited for Smith because they wanted no one to enter the bank during the next half-hour and give an alarm.

They told the employees not to make any attempt to signal for aid, or they would kill Wood and his family. Then they drove Wood to his home, tied him up and fled. Wood quickly freed himself and called police and the sheriff's office.

About 9:07 a.m. the police chief went into the back room of the bank and found employees, but was instructed by Smith to make no move until Wood arrived to insure his safety. The cashier showed up a few moments later—and the manhunt began.

Indicative of the job done by the robbers to insure all details was the fact that one of the robbers "thanked" Wood for his "information."

Wood said the robber apparently was referring to a phone call he had received Tuesday night. During that call, he said, a man made it appear he was seeking someone else named Wood, but asked him his address, and if he was cashier at the bank.

"The robber said he wanted to check for sure that a bank officer would be living in such a small home. They already had my street address, but wanted to double check with me."

Several persons saw Wood and the two robbers enter the bank, but saw nothing amiss. The crooks had instructed Wood to park his car in the same parking space he always used, as another indication of their familiarity with the bank routine.

This is Wood's account of the robbery:

"About 7:30 a.m. someone knocked on our front door. My wife answered and said some men wanted to know if I was home. One of them identified himself as a Mr. Jackson, with The Anniston Star. They came in and told me they wanted to see me in private for a moment. I went into a bedroom with them, and they pulled a pistol on me and told me it was a holdup. They told me they were going to rob the bank.

"They said they were going to leave two armed guards with my family and that if anything went wrong with their plans to rob the bank they were going to kill me and my family and others at the bank.

"There were four men in the house. Three of them had pistols. One had a sawed-off 16-gauge

"MY WIFE and two daughters were home. They tied my wife and Dianne up. The little girl did not know what was going on, but I tried to explain it to Dianne and told her not to be afraid and to do what the men said.

"Two men, wearing nylon socks over their heads to distort their features, remained with my wife and children. The other two, one of them carrying the sawed-off shotgun, made me get into my car and drive down there to rob the bank and let them in.

WOOD LATER TOLD newsmen the robbers had silencers on their pistols and he "knew they meant business."

He said that when he left his home he thought he was going "on a one-way trip." He added, "I've been under pressure before. I was shot at in World War II. But this was something different. My whole family's existence based on whims. It was pure hell, if you'll pardon the expression."

The robbers assigned to guard Mrs. Wood and the two children appeared to be at ease during their stay. One roamed through the home while the other kept constant watch on the prisoners.

One of the bands—possibly worried about the size of the loot his confederates would get—tried to smash open a piggy-bank at the house, but failed because he couldn't find the key to it. The robbers took \$60 from the house, plus one of Wood's pistols.

One of the masked men seemed to enjoy telling Mrs. Wood how tough he was. He told her he had killed four men and "Killing you would be just like taking a drink of water."

Twice, Mrs. Wood said, the robbers had to release her from her bonds.

TWO FRIENDS had been invited to her home for coffee at 8 a.m. Mrs. Wood was released to answer a phone call from one of them that she couldn't make it. The other showed up at the home.

Mrs. Wood went to the door, with a pistol-wielding robber standing right beside her, and told her friend Elaine had a high fever.

The friend was puzzled by her actions, but left.

Once the alarm was given, police, deputies from Calhoun and Etowah Counties, state investigators and the FBI joined in the investigation.

A National Guard helicopter was flown to Jacksonville and landed in the town square a hundred yards from the bank. It was sent here in the event the robbers were spotted. But it was not used.

"AFTER THEY got the money, they waited for Mr. Smith. They didn't want anyone to come in after they left with me and give an alarm. They had me call Mr. Smith's home and say the bank examiners were here, but Mr. Smith already had left for the bank.

"After Mr. Smith came in, one of them threatened to hit him. Mr. Smith has been ill and we talked them out of it.

"The robbers told Mr. Smith and the girls they were going to leave with me and take me back to my house. They warned that they had nothing to lose and if anyone made a sound or alarm they would kill me.

"They took me back to my house in my car. Then they took me inside the house and tied me up. A little later I got loose and called the police and sheriff's office. No one in the bank made a move until they knew I had been freed."

JACKSONVILLE BANK ROBBED OF \$90,000

Official Is Kidnaped, Family Tied Up; Auto Found Abandoned By 4 Bandits

JACKSONVILLE, Ala. (AP) Four armed white men robbed the First National Bank of Jacksonville of between \$85,000 and \$90,000 today, after kidnaping a bank official from his home.

The bandits surprised Jesse N. Wood, assistant vice president and cashier, at his house and forced him to accompany two men to the bank while the other two guarded his wife and two children.

At the bank they waited inside, meeting employes as they arrived for work, tying them up and putting them in a back room.

When a time lock opened the bank vault they scooped up between \$85,000 and \$90,000 and carried it off in a repossessed bank car. Dan W. Gray, bank vice president, made the estimate

OFFICERS ON ALERT HERE

All law enforcement agencies in Etowah County were put on the alert shortly after the alarm was sounded. Highway Patrol Sgt. H. G. Lee, Police Chief C. Fay Boman and Sheriff Jess Owen dispatched officers to roads leading into Gadsden from the Jacksonville area.

of the amount stolen. He said the loss was covered by insurance.

One of the two men who went to the bank was armed with a sawed off shotgun and the other with a pistol.

After raiding the bank vault the robbers forced Wood to help them carry the money to the bank car. They drove him to his house, picked up their confederates, and fled.

The car later was found abandoned at Germania Springs, 2½ miles north of Jacksonville on U. S. Highway 11.

Wood said the robbers tied up his wife and 8-year-old daughter Diane, leaving 3-year-old Elaine free.

"When they took me back to the house I found her sitting there in the den crying while the two men held pistols on her," he said.

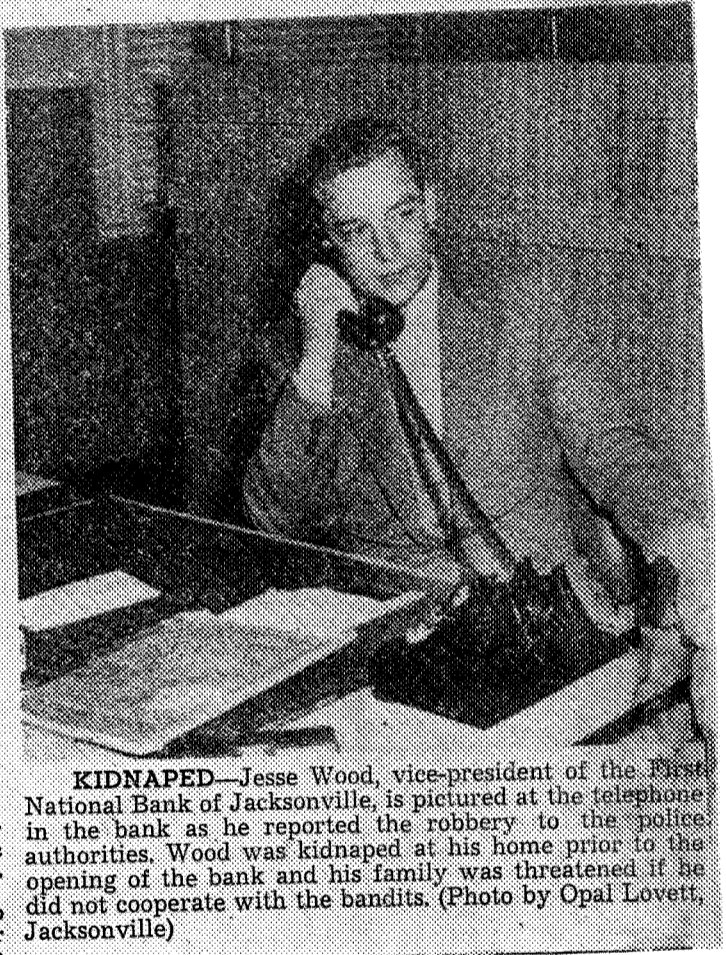
"They tied me up too and told me not to get loose for 30 minutes or they'd kill me. As soon as they left I got free and called the police."

Wood said his wife suffered a miscarriage only two weeks ago, and still was in poor health.

The Highway Patrol set up road blocks around Jacksonville, about 70 miles east of Birmingham, and Federal Bureau of Investigation agents joined local officers in the manhunt.

The robbers put the money in a cheap black suitcase in which they had brought the rope with which they bound the bank employes, and in Wood's briefcase.

No one was injured in the hold-up.



KIDNAPED—Jesse Wood, vice-president of the First National Bank of Jacksonville, is pictured at the telephone in the bank as he reported the robbery to the police authorities. Wood was kidnaped at his home prior to the opening of the bank and his family was threatened if he did not cooperate with the bandits. (Photo by Opal Lovett, Jacksonville)

As each employe entered, Wood explained that the bank was being robbed and that the men had promised not to injure any one "If they didn't get out of line."

Among the employes who were bound by the holdup men were Mrs. Margaret Deason, a teller; Miss Denola Aderholt, Mrs. Betty Hicks, Mrs. Catherine Angel, and Mrs. Margaret Blair.

They were all held under guard in a back room that is used as a lounge and kitchen.

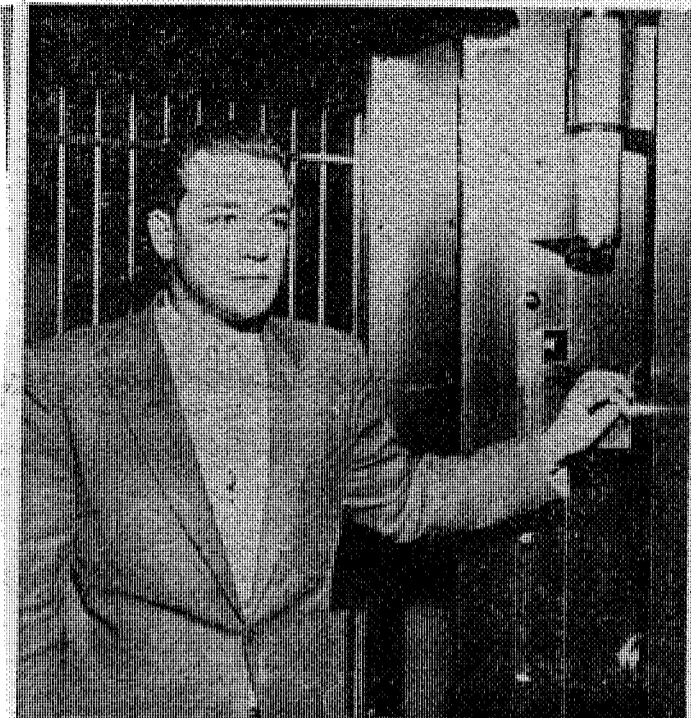
T. Weller Smith, vice president, walked into the bank as the hold-up was in progress. One of the robbers made ready to strike him.

(Turn to Page 2, Column 2)

The write up under
This picture is not correct.
This is not a picture of
Jesse Wood Reporting the
Robbery of the bank to
the Police.

Jesse Wood Reported the
Robbery to the Jacksonville
Police and the Alabama
Highway Patrol from
his home as soon as
he was able to free
himself from the
ropes the robbers had
tied him with.

Gadsden Times
Friday May 20, 1955



KIDNAPED—Jesse N. Wood, assistant vice president and cashier of the Jacksonville bank, who was kidnaped by robbers is shown above at the door of the vault from which a record state haul was taken.

Story Of The Holdup—

Banker Tells Of Harrowing Hours

BY MARTIN WALDRON
Post-Herald Staff Writer

JACKSONVILLE, May 20—Jesse N. Wood lived an hour and a half of hell here today.

He forced himself to help two professional bandits pull Alabama's biggest bank robbery to protect his wife and two young daughters who were being held as hostages.

"I knew they meant business," the 33-year-old cashier of the First National Bank said. "They had silencers on their pistols."

The four men forced themselves into Wood's small frame cottage at 7:30 a.m. today. Two of the men were wearing work clothes and had masks over their faces.

One man had a silk stocking pulled over his.

"The other man looked like he had a mosquito net over his face," Wood said.

The other two bandits were smooth-talking, well-dressed.

The leader of the quartet was quiet-talking but blunt.

"One outcry, one alarm and your wife and children die," he snapped. "Get that through your head."

The leader turned to his two masked confederates.

Back At 9

"We'll be back at 9 o'clock. If there is any alarm of any kind, any siren or anything, shoot that woman and those two children and get out," he said.

Wood said he was numb. The Jacksonville fire department could be heard all over town going to fires. The gas company has a big siren which blows whenever a leak occurs in a line.

"I told the man, what about those things. I told him I had no control over them. How could I keep the fire department from sounding its siren?" Wood said.

The gang leader turned to Wood and said softly:

"Let's you just hope none of those things happens between now and 9 o'clock, Jesse."

The two who stayed to guard Mrs. Wood and the two daughters, Dianne, 8, and Elaine, 3, pulled out their pistols and ordered them to sit on the living room couch.

Then Wood left to go to the bank with the others.

The two bandits rode with Wood in a 1932 Oldsmobile that the bank

had repossessed and which was parked at the Wood home.

"I just knew I was going on a one-way ride," Wood said. "I've been under pressure before. I was shot at during World War II.

"Pure Hell!"

"But this was something different. My whole family's existence based on whims. It was pure hell, if you'll pardon the expression."

Wood and the bandits drove to the bank. They insisted he park in his regular parking place.

They knew which it was, as they seemed to know everything about the bank.

It was 7:45 a.m.

Back at the Wood home, the two masked men were making themselves at home. While one guarded Mrs. Wood and the two little girls, the other roamed about.

Mrs. Wood and the oldest girl were tied.

The littlest girl was sitting quietly on a chair nearby.

"I thought they were doctors come to see Mama," the 3-year-old said afterwards.

The oldest knew what the men were.

"I had seen this on television,"

See **BANKER**, Page 13.

Story Of The Holdup—

Banker Tells Of Harrowing Hours

Continued from Page 1

he said. "But I never thought it would happen to us."

"I thought she was high-hating me for some reason," she explained later.

The bandits found a piggy-bank belonging to the girls. It contained their educational fund. One of the men tried to open it.

But it was the old-fashioned kind which can be opened only by a key, and the key was missing.

The bank was tossed aside in disgust by the robber. He began rumaging and found \$60 which he confiscated. He also took a pistol belonging to Wood.

"That money was some rent I had collected for a friend and was going to send to him in Gadsden," Wood said.

Down at the bank, the first employees were arriving. The janitor, who had been there when Wood and the unmasked robbers drove up, already was trussed up.

There were six women tellers to come.

The leader of the bandits told Wood:

"The lives of your wife and children depend on how you handle this."

Wood met each girl at the door. "Come into the back," Wood said. "There is something I want to tell you."

He led them to a back room and told each of them:

"Now don't be alarmed. This is a holdup. But if you'll be quiet, you won't get hurt."

As each girl arrived, one of the bandits tied her up, using six-foot lengths of cord which he took from a black cardboard suitcase.

"The first girl sat down and sobbed a little, and the second one did," said Wood. "But after more of them got together and they weren't being mistreated, their morale began to get a little better."

"It was about this time that I began to hope that maybe I could get out of it all right."

'Are You Married'

When all six girls had arrived and were tied up, it was still only 8:15. The bank vault didn't open until 8:30 so the bandits sat down to wait.

T. Weller Smith, vice president of the bank, hadn't arrived but he wasn't due until 8:45.

While waiting for the time lock to work on the vault, the bandit leader amused himself by asking the tellers if they were married.

He said he was married and had three kids.

Back at home, the Wood family was having a hard time.

One of the masked men was telling Mrs. Wood how tough he was.

"I've killed four men," he told Mrs. Wood, who felt like she was in the midst of a nightmare. "Killing you would be just like taking a drink of water."

Mrs. Wood had had to be released from her bonds twice. She had invited some friends over for coffee at 8.

And one of them called to say she couldn't make it.

The other came and knocked on the door.

With the bandit standing right behind her, Mrs. Wood went to the door, opened it a crack and told her friend to go home.

Angry and Puzzled

"Nicky (that's a family name for Elaine, the baby) is sick and is running a fever," Mrs. Wood said and closed the door.

The friend went away angry and puzzled. But not so puzzled that she called police.

At the bank, the time-vault had opened and the bandits had scooped together the \$86,000 and piled it into their black suitcase and in the briefcase of T. Weller Smith.

One of the girls told the bandit that the brief case was a Christmas gift from Smith's daughter.

"I'll send it back," he said. "There might even be a present in it."

The bandit told one of the tellers, Mrs. Kathryn Angel, a widow with four children:

"I'd give you a thousand dollars of this but I know they'd make you give it back."

With their bags full, the two men sat down to wait for Smith to arrive. When he hadn't showed up at 8:45, they told Wood to call him and tell him to hurry on down, that the bank examiners were there.

Wood called but Smith already had left.

Customers Soon

One of the tellers suggested that bank customers would soon be coming in.

She asked to be allowed to put out the "Bank Holiday" sign, knowing that most customers wouldn't know whether it was a bank holiday or not.

"Put anything out you want to," said the leader. "But remember, it is your funeral."

The sign turned away at least one customer.

Smith arrived. The bandits pulled out some more rope, and one said:

"Just sit down there."

It was 8:52 when they left the bank. They took Wood with them.

Nearly On Time

"They had said they would be back at 9 o'clock when they drove off with me," Wood said. "It was two minutes until 9 when we got back home."

The bandits took Wood into the house, tied him up and left him with his children and his wife. Mrs. Wood was hysterical.

"You think you could ever recognize me if you saw me again," the taller bandit asked, looking speculatively.

"No sir," said Wood.

The bandit seemed satisfied. He said no alarm was to be given for 30 minutes, and then he and his three cohorts left in the car belonging to the bank.

After a few moments, Wood worked his way free and called Jacksonville Police Chief D. E. Whiteside.

Whiteside went to the bank and cut the girls and Smith and the janitor loose.

Wood came on down to the bank and began his day's work after calling a doctor to his wife.

The older daughter wanted to go to school.

"Well, they did me out of two meals," Wood said after it was all over. "They got me before breakfast and I was too busy to eat lunch."

On top of that, he missed supper yesterday, too.

"But I was thankful my family and I were alive," he said.

*Birmingham Post Herald
May 20, 1955*

ANNISTON STAR
MAY 21-1955

Police Study Slim Clues In Robbery

Alert Sounded Over Southeast

Few Tangible Leads Left By Bandits Who Hit Jacksonville Bank

By CODY HALL

Determined agents of local, state and federal law agencies worked into the late hours last night running down meager clues to bandits who pulled Alabama's biggest and cleanest bank robbery.

Few tangible leads were left to the bandits who got \$86,727.12 from the First National Bank of Jacksonville 36 hours after they fled, leaving bank employes and officials trussed up Friday morning, officers said.

Agents of the FBI, the State Criminal Investigation Division and local officers studied plaster casts made of footprints left by the robbers, now believed to have numbered five or more.

The footprints were found where the bandits abandoned a bank-owned car at Germania Springs, just outside Jacksonville, and switched to one, possibly two, get-away cars.

Believed 'Holed Up'

James A. Robey, special agent in charge of the Birmingham FBI office, said officers believed the bandits were still "holed up" in this area.

"We have alerted all surrounding states, but the alarm has not been extended to other parts of the country," Robey said.

Another officer said last night that investigators had "several things that possibly could be worked out on the identification of the subjects."

Physical descriptions were broadcast throughout the Southeast of the two men who actually robbed the bank. The others who held the wife and children of bank officer Jesse N. Wood as hostages wore masks.

A fifth man was believed to have waited at Germania Springs with one or two cars in which the bandits fled.

Methods Compared

Officers compared the methods of the fast-striking and self-confident gunmen with those used in the record \$305,243 robbery of the Chase Manhattan Bank branch in Queens, New York, last month.

Both there and in the Jacksonville raid a bank official was kidnapped at his home and forced to admit the robbers to the bank just before it opened.

Four of the bandits invaded the home of Wood, assistant vice-president and cashier of the bank, early Friday morning, one identifying himself as a "Mr. Jackson of The Anniston Star."

Two remained with his wife and two daughters, Dianne, 8, and Elaine, 3, while the other two forced Wood to drive them to the bank.

There they greeted each employe as the staff reported for work, escorted them to a back room and tied them while they awaited the time clock to open the vault.

Wood said he lived through "pure hell" during his stay of over an hour at the bank, knowing that the chance blowing of a fire alarm or the passing of an ambulance might cause the bandits at his home to follow through on threats to kill his family if an alarm sounded.

Load Cash

After the last staff member had reported to the bank and the vault had opened, the desperadoes loaded the cash into a cheap black bag and a briefcase owned by Assistant Vice-President T. Weller Smith—they promised to mail back the briefcase—and left with Wood.

He was forced to drive the robbers back to his home, where he was also tied and threatened, and the four thieves left.

They apparently were seen only once again, Sheriff Snead said, by a farmer who saw them get out of the stolen car at Germania Springs from some distance away.

The Jacksonville holdup was the fourth bank raid in Alabama in the past year.

FBI Special Agent Robey said the other three have already been cleared by the arrest and identification of the robbers. These three cases—at Vina, Gordo and Gadsden—involved only small amounts of money.

The Jacksonville bank was insured against loss by robbery and the bonding company yesterday sent a check to cover the \$86,727.12.

Gadsden Times
MAY 21-1955

Elusive Bandits In Bank Robbery Still At Large

Jacksonville Holdup Brings Wide Search

JACKSONVILLE, Ala., May 21 (AP)—Four bank robbers who escaped with \$86,727 were the elusive objects of a hunt handicapped by lack of clues today.

Not a word as to their whereabouts or direction of flight was reported by state and federal officers more than 36 hours after they fled with a satchel and brief case full of their loot.

Officers compared the methods of the fast-striking gunmen with those used in the record \$305,243 robbery of the Chase Manhattan Bank branch in Queens, New York, last April 6.

Both there and in the raid on the First National Bank of Jacksonville yesterday, a bank official was kidnapped at his home and forced to admit the robbers to the bank just before it opened.

The Jacksonville bandits escaped in a bank car which they abandoned about two miles from this Northeast Alabama town of 4,750 population.

Officers were looking for two cars which were seen leaving town about the time of the robbery. They also have as possible clues a plaster cast of footprints where the robbers abandoned the car.

Birmingham Post Herald
MAY 22, 1955

Five Armed Men Take Over \$86,000

Two Cars Believed Used In Getaway

BY MARTIN WALDRON
Post-Herald Staff Writer

JACKSONVILLE, May 20

A Southwide alert was put out tonight for the two getaway cars believed used by five armed bandits who robbed the First National Bank here of \$86,727.12.

It was the largest robbery haul in Alabama history.

Calhoun County Sheriff Roy Snead said the robbers were believed to have fled in two automobiles—a 1955 Oldsmobile and a 1955 two-tone grey Buick which had either South Carolina or Virginia license plates.

Four of the bandits pulled the slick robbery in town while the fifth waited two miles away in one of the cars.

He drove the four into town and dropped them off at the house of Jesse N. Wood, assistant vice president and cashier of the bank whose wife and two daughters were held as hostages for almost two hours.

The bandits kidnaped the bank official from his home, forced him to open the bank shortly after 7 a. m., and then corralled the bank employees as they reported for

More Pictures on Page 13

work one at a time. They waited around them for the time-lock to open the vault, cleaned it out, drove Wood back to his home and made their get-away.

More than a score of law enforcement officers, including FBI men were on the scene little more than an hour after the robbers left.

But Highway Patrol Chief Tom Carlisle declared that investigators didn't have any idea as to which direction the four men went.

"We don't have any leads," he said. "This is one of the smoothest, if not the smoothest job ever pulled in Alabama in my 24 years as an enforcement officer."

Two of the men appeared at the home of Jesse Wood, shortly after 7 a. m. and knocked at the door. Mrs. Wood answered the knock and the men asked for Wood.

Drew Pistol

"One of them introduced himself as 'Mister Jackson of the Anniston Star,'" Wood said.

Then one drew a pistol and the other pulled a sawed-off shotgun from his pants leg. Two other men then joined the group.

The first two forced Wood to drive them to the bank and open up, while the other bandits stayed at the Wood home with Mrs. Wood and the two Wood children.

As the bank tellers—six of them, all women—reported for work, the bandits took them to a back room of the bank, used as a kitchen and snack bar for employees, and tied them up.

The bandits waited until the time-lock on the vault opened and then forced Wood to help them load the money into his car.

A few minutes later, T. Weller Smith, another assistant vice president, walked in and also was trussed up.

The two gunmen then returned with Wood to his home, tied him up, picked up the two bandits who had been left there, and drove off in Wood's auto.

Wood managed to free himself, untie his wife and oldest child, and called Jacksonville police.

Auto Found

Within a short while, law enforcement officers of all types descended on Jacksonville. In addition to Jacksonville police, Calhoun County deputies, others joining in the investigation included half a dozen FBI agents, several state investigators, and about 15 State Highway patrolmen.

Officers located Wood's auto abandoned about two miles outside of Jacksonville.

Bank employees described the two men who carried out the actual robbery as a tall man and a short one, although the taller was no more than about medium height. The taller was wearing a gray hat, yellow tie and crepe-See FIVE, Page 13

Five Armed Bandits Sought For Bank Jobs

Continued from Page 1

ently dangerous, cold-blooded professionals."

Two bonding men from Birmingham checked over bank records and set the official loss at \$86,727.12. They said about \$3000 was in \$100 bills, \$500 in brand new ones, still in the wrappers, \$18,749 in \$5 bills and the rest in tens and twenties.

In addition the robbers took about \$60 from the Wood home. But a "piggy-bank" made of metal, baffled the two professionals. They couldn't find the key, tried to open it without one and gave up.

The piggy-bank contained about \$50. The money is taken periodically as the bank fills up and deposited in an education fund for the two children.

FBI agents dusted the entire Wood home for fingerprints in belief that the two men had their gloves off at one time during their two-hour stay with Mrs. Wood and the children.

FBI agents dusted the entire Wood home for fingerprints in belief that the two men had their gloves off at one time during their two-hour stay with Mrs. Wood and the children.



TIED UP—Bank Vice President T. Weller Smith entered the bank at the peak of the robbery.

Dope using bandit may prove vital clue to Jax bank robbery

BY CLANCY LAKE
News staff writer

JACKSONVILLE, Ala., May 21 — One of the robbers who escaped with \$85,871 from their First National Bank here in the state's biggest holdup is a self-professed dope addict.

That was the best lead officers had Saturday in their search for the bandits who struck early Friday morning.

There was some confirmation to the robber's admission. The leader of the bandit group warned that one of his confederates was dangerous because he was a dope addict.

Otherwise, officers had little to work on. They were still amazed at the stop-watch precision of the robbers, who knew the intimate details of the bank operation before opening hours, the times employees reported to work, location of police officers and so on.

THE OFFICERS compared the methods of the fast-striking gunmen with those used in the record \$305,243 robbery of the Chase Manhattan Branch Bank in Queens, New York, last April 6.

Both there and in the raid on the bank here Friday a bank official was kidnaped at his home and forced to admit the robbers to the bank just before it opened.

The Jacksonville bandits fled town in a bank car which they abandoned about two miles from this Northeast Alabama town of 4750 population.

Officers kept up a search for two cars reported seen leaving town about the time of the robbery. Two deputy sheriffs, who had been en route to Anniston while the robbery was in progress, said they saw a man slumped over the wheel of an automobile at about the point where the abandoned car was found. The man they saw is believed to be a fifth man in on the holdup.

OFFICERS ALSO have as possible clues a plaster cast of footprints where the robbers abandoned the car. They were puzzled a bit over the fact that only three sets of footprints were found at the scene.

In addition, officers working on the case have good descriptions of two men who entered the bank, one of them having visited the bank Wednesday under the guise of business. Two others who remained at the home of Jesse N. Wood, 30-year-old cashier, while he was carried to the bank at gunpoint, masked their faces with silk stockings, which distort features.

THE ROBBERS told Wood they would kill his ailing wife and two small daughters if anything went wrong with the holdup. They threatened the bank employees whom they surprised and trussed up as they came to work, and also said they would kill Wood if these left the bank and gave the alarm too soon.

The ring-leader of the robber group was the man who had entered the bank Wednesday and identified himself as "Mr. Jackson."

During the course of the robbery, while the two bandits in the bank were waiting for the time-lock on the vault to open, "Jackson" told Wood he had left two men with his wife and children because one of them was a dangerous dope addict and had to be watched.

BACK AT Wood's home, one of the masked men told Mrs. Wood that she should never let her children become dope addicts.

He added that he was "hooked" — a term used by addicts of a person who continually craves dope.

After the bandits forced Wood to help them load the money in a bank car which they picked up at his home, they drove him back to his house, bound him up with his wife and 8-year-old daughter

and left. Wood quickly freed himself, and telephoned police.

Wood told officers that while the robbery was in progress, the bandits kept checking the time, and at one point told him their plans called for him to be returned to his home and tied up at 9 a.m., a full 90 minutes after they first called at his home posing as newspaper reporters from The Anniston Star.

THE ROBBERS returned Wood to his home at 8:58 a.m., officers said — two minutes ahead of schedule.

Officers said that after one bandit checked the time with his confederate in the bank he remarked that it was just time for a policeman to begin his duty down the street from the bank at a school crossing.

The robbers' plan called for all employees of the bank to be trussed up when they left with Wood, so no one could give an alarm if they "wanted to see Wood alive again." Asst. Vice President T. Weller Smith was about 15 minutes late for work at the bank, bringing the bandits off schedule.

ALTHOUGH THEY already had the money, they waited for Smith. When he failed to arrive, they forced Wood to call Smith's home and tell him to hurry down because "bank examiners" were waiting. However, Smith already had left home, and walked into the bank in a few minutes, to be-

come the final prisoner, along with seven other employees at the bank, Wood, his wife and two children.

Officers were making a house-to-house and store-to-store canvas throughout the city Saturday seeking word of any strangers who might have been seen here lately. They have been paying particular attention to anyone who might have been sitting in a parked car near the bank during the 90 minutes or so from the time Wood usually arrived at the bank until the opening hour.

THE ROBBERS had "cased" the bank so well they even directed Wood to his usual parking space. As a double check, one of the robbers called Wood at his home Wednesday night to make sure of the address at his home, where he was first informed at pistol point that he would either help them

rob the bank or be killed.

The Jacksonville holdup was the fourth bank raid in Alabama in the past year. James A. Robey, agent in charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation office at Birmingham, said the other three already have been cleared by the arrest and identification of the

robbers. These three cases, at Vina, Gordo and Gadsden, involved small amounts of money.

THE JACKSONVILLE bank was insured against the loss. The United State Fidelity and Guaranty Co., with whom the bank carried robbery insurance, delivered a check Saturday for the full amount taken by the robbers.

Earlier, the amount taken had been set slightly higher, but a re-check fixed the figure at \$85,871.50.

City, county, state and carloads of FBI agents are taking part in the search for the missing robbers.

JACKSONVILLE NEWS
MAY 25-1955

The Anniston Star Monday, May 23, 1955

Bank Thugs Still Elude Wide Search

Business Back To Normal After Sensational Friday Holdup

By CODY HALL

Authorities carrying descriptions, fingerprints and plaster casts of footprints today still pushed their search for bandits who raided the First National Bank of Jacksonville Friday.

Business at the bank was back to normal this morning, the approximately \$86,000 loot replaced by the bonding company which insured the bank.

State investigators, the sheriff's office and FBI agents are leading the search for the bandits with assistance from the Anniston and Birmingham Police Departments.

All Leads Traced

Agents spent the weekend running down all possible leads and questioning closely employees of the bank and residents of the neighborhood of the Jesse N. Wood.

Wood, assistant vice-president and cashier of the bank, was the focal point on which the bandits hinged their robbery.

Four of them surprised Wood at his home on Second Street early and two of them forced the bank official to accompany them downtown while the other two kept Mrs. Wood and their children as hostages under gunpoint.

Employees Bound

At the bank, the bandits forced Wood to meet each employe coming to work. The employes were herded into a back room where they were bound until the time clock opened the vault.

When the vault opened, the bandits helped themselves to the cash. They took Wood back to his residence, tied him up and then all four fled in a car stolen from the bank.

The car was found abandoned a short time later at Germania Springs, where the four got into one or two get-away cars waiting with a fifth confederate and fled.

First National Bank Robbed; Bonding Co. Restores Loss

Friday morning, May 20, seemed no different on the square in Jacksonville to other days. Men and women reported to work at their usual hours; business men made the regular morning trip to the post office; and the regular routine was begun as usual.

One thing was different! The First National Bank did not open—

the blinds were drawn and a small sign placed on the front door said: "Holiday—Closed". Depositors waited outside until the sign appeared; policemen made their regular rounds to inspect parking meters, and traffic moved around the bank without even questioning the fact that there is no bank holiday on May 20.

Shortly after 9 o'clock, the picture changed quickly. Chief of Police Emerson Whiteside received a call from Jesse Wood at his home to go to the bank and release the other employes who had been tied up by bank robbers. He also called the Highway Patrol and Sheriff Roy Snead. Then the story began to unfold.

Kidnap Official

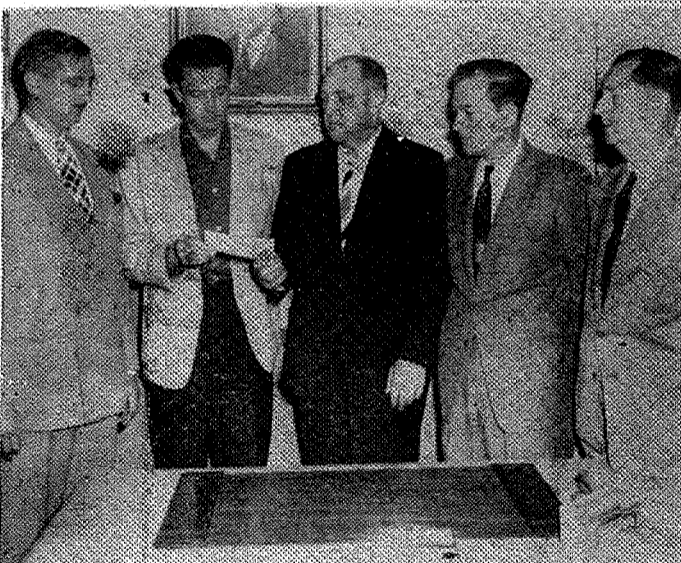
About 7:30 o'clock Friday morning, two men appeared at the Wood home and asked to speak to Mr. Wood, one of them saying he was a "Mr. Jackson from the Anniston Star". The first two men were unmasked but they were joined by two others who wore nylon socks over their heads. After they got into the house, they pulled out a pistol and shot gun, and two of them tied up Mrs. Wood and the oldest little girl, Diane, age 8.

The leader of the group told Mr. Wood that they would kill his wife and children if there was any outcry or alarm. He said that if any alarm, any siren of any kind went off, the men guarding his wife and children had orders to shoot to kill.

Employees Tied Up

They had Mr. Wood drive them to the bank in a car belonging to the bank. When they arrived there, they forced him to open the back door of the bank. Once inside, they waited for the time lock on the vault to go off and for the bank employes to arrive. As each arrived, she was bound and placed in a back room of the bank which is used for a lounge. The janitor, who was waiting at the bank for Mr. Wood, also was tied and placed in the back room.

The bandits went about the robbery in a very calm manner, it is reported. They emphasized that robbing banks was their business and if they received cooperation of the bank employes there would be no trouble; if they didn't they would kill them, and that was that.



LOSS RESTORED—The United States Fidelity and Guaranty Co. presented the First National Bank with a check for the amount which is used for a lounge. The stolen in the bank robbery on Saturday. Couriers bring the check janitor, who was waiting at the were, left to right, W. A. Barnes and T. J. West; the check is accepted by Col. C. W. Dugette, Jr., in the presence of Jesse Wood, bank for Mr. Wood, also was tied and placed in the back room. assistant vice-president and cashier; and Dan Gray vice-president.

\$6,000.00
REWARD FOR BANK
ROBBERS

\$6,000.00 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the 4 bank robbers who held up The First National Bank of Jacksonville, Alabama, Jacksonville, Alabama on May 20, 1955. (\$1,500.00 is offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any one of the robbers, or 10% of money recovered, whichever is greater, total amount to be paid not to exceed 10% of money recovered.)

This offer expires 60 days from this date, May 24, 1955.

Sole Arbiter to be
United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company
First National Building
Birmingham, Alabama

ANNISTON STAR
MAY 26-1955

\$6,000 Reward Offered For Capture Of Bandits

By SAM JONES

A reward of \$6,000 has been offered for the bandits who robbed Jacksonville's First National Bank last Friday, while the FBI and other agencies continue a quiet, methodical investigation.

The reward notice was posted by the United States Fidelity and Guaranty Co. of Birmingham, the firm which insured the bank and has already restored the loss.

Nearly \$86,000 was nabbed at the bank last Friday by at least four robbers who kidnapped Cashier Jesse N. Wood, held his family hostage and subdued the entire bank staff at gunpoint.

Sheriff Roy C. Snead and Anniston police said today they have no new leads to the identity or whereabouts of the gunmen, who left few clues.

The FBI and state investigators are sticking to the job tenaciously and have admitted gaining some headway but will release no details of the investigation.

The reward offer, which expires 60 days from May 24, is "for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the four bank robbers who held up the First National Bank of Jacksonville May 20."

The sum of \$1,500 is offered for information of "any one of the robbers," or 10 per cent of the money recovered, whichever is greater.

A notice of the reward has been posted on the bulletin board outside the sheriff's office here.

It was the first reward posted for the bandits, apparently professional. (See Reward, Page 16-A, Col. 5)

(Continued From Page One)

sionals, who planned the robbery with obvious skill and considerable knowledge of the bank's schedule and the community.

Wood was forced to open the bank to the robbers after they had kidnapped him at his home.

While waiting inside for the time lock to open the vault at 8:30, the gunmen admitted the bank's employes one by one, quietly led them to a back room and tied them up.

They made their getaway from the bank accompanied by Wood, but left him tied up at his home with his unharmed wife and two small daughters.

Birmingham News
MAY 26-1955

\$6000 reward for Jax bandits

A \$6000 reward has been posted for information leading to arrest and conviction of four robbers who held up the First National Bank of Jacksonville on May 20.

The offer was made by United States Fidelity and Guaranty Co. of Birmingham.

The company offered \$1500 for information leading to arrest and conviction of any one of the robbers who made off with \$85,871.50 or 10 per cent of the money recovered, whichever is greater.

The offer expires 60 days from May 24.

No trace of the men who pulled Alabama's biggest robbery has been found. One is believed to be a dope addict. They left in two cars.

JACKSONVILLE NEWS
JUNE 1-1955

F.B.I Arrest Suspect In Jacksonville Bank Robbery

Joe Paul Andrews Seized In Clearwater, Fla.

James A. Roby, Special Agent in Charge of Federal Bureau of Investigation, Birmingham, announced today that Joe Paul Andrews was arrested today for participating in the Jacksonville bank robbery.

The First National Bank was robbed on May 20 and clues were quite slim as to identity of the bold robbers who held the Wood family captives while committing the robbery.

Joe Paul Andrews was identified as white, male, 34 years old, born in Tennessee and now residing in Gadsden. He was arrested in Clearwater, Fla., Wednesday June 1, on a federal warrant which was issued on May 25 at Gadsden. The federal warrant charged that on May 20, Joe Paul Andrews had robbed the First National Bank of Jacksonville.

The money taken by the bandits was immediately replaced by the insurance company. It was the largest bank robbery ever staged in Alabama with \$86,712.12 taken from the bank vaults within thirty minutes of the opening hour.

Maximum penalty according to the Alabama Code of 1940 is at the discretion of the jury with either death or not less than 10 years imprisonment.

Suspect Is Captured

Gadsden Man Wanted In Jacksonville

Believed 'Brains' Of Daring Robbery

BY MARTIN WALDRON
A slippery ex-convict who twice has escaped from prison, yesterday was charged with being the leader of the four-man gang who robbed the Jacksonville, Ala., bank of \$86,700 on May 20.

Joe Paul Andrews, 34, of Gadsden, was arrested while eating lunch in a Clearwater, Fla., restaurant.

Andrews' foster mother, Mrs. O. B. Andrews of Gadsden, indignantly denied that her son had anything to do with the bank hold-up.

She said he had measles at the time and was "running a high fever" when he left her home the night before the robbery.

She said Andrews was on his way back to Clearwater when he left Gadsden on May 19.

"He had come up here to pick up his little girl," Mrs. Andrews said.

"He couldn't have had anything to do with it."

But FBI agents who arrested Andrews said he was the leader. "Andrews directed the whole operation and gave orders to the others," said C. E. Weeks, chief FBI agent in Florida.

Weeks said Andrews was arrested without resistance.

The FBI refused to comment about the other three men who were in on the holdup.

With the suspect at the restaurant were his wife, their 6-year-old daughter, Barbara, and two brothers-in-law from Gadsden.

The wife and the other two men were held for questioning but have not been charged.

The Jacksonville bank was robbed by four men who kidnaped the bank cashier, Jesse N. Wood, and held his family in hostage during the holdup.

Wood said in Jacksonville last night "we certainly are tickled that one suspect was caught."

"I hope they catch the rest of them."

Wood said Andrews, who was identified by photographs, was the man who gave the orders at the bank during the holdup.

"He appeared to be the leader," the cashier said.

Other than that, Wood said he could not comment. "The FBI asked us not to discuss it," he said.



QUESTIONED IN FLORIDA—Joe Paul Andrews (left) arrested as a suspect in the Jacksonville, Ala., First National Bank robbery, is questioned following his arrest in Clearwater, Fla. At right is Pinellas County Sheriff Sid M. Saunders and center is Charles E. Weeks, special agent of the FBI in charge of the Miami office. (United Press)

Officers in Florida said that an arrest order was filed on May 25 after bank employees identified Andrews from photographs.

The FBI was on the robbery scene in Jacksonville with many thousands of photographs of bank robbers just hours after the holdup.

Employes of the bank who were tied up by the robbers spent hours poring over the pictures trying to pick out the two unmasked men who were in the bank.

Andrews was born in Tennessee in April, 1921, and was reared by his foster mother in Gadsden.

He was arrested several times for burglary and grand larceny, one time in Birmingham in 1941.

FBI Agent J. A. Robey in Birmingham said Andrews' record included:

Sentenced in Montgomery in 1939 to 2½ years from burglary; sentenced in Birmingham in 1941 to 2½ years for grand larceny, escaped and recaptured the same year; sentenced in Gadsden in 1944 to 12 years for robbery, escaped in 1946 and recaptured the same year; paroled in 1952.

When arrested in Clearwater yesterday, Andrews had a 1955 Packard.

In a false bottom to the trunk of the car, officers found an undisclosed quantity of cash and two pistols which the FBI said resembled those used in the Jacksonville robbery.

When he left Gadsden on May 19, Andrews was driving a red

See GADSDEN, Page 2

At the bank, the two robbers waylaid seven employees, including six women tellers, as they arrived for work and tied them up. They waited an hour for the vault to open automatically by time-clock, looted it and fled in Wood's car after taking the cashier home and tying him.

The entire procedure clicked off with precision.

Women tellers later described the leader—the man the FBI said is Andrews—was very courteous and said he was talkative but firm.

He asked the women if they were married and told them he was and had three children.

He offered to give one of the tellers, Mrs. Kathryn Angel, a widow with four children, \$1000 of the loot.

"But I know they'd make you give it back," he said.

Mrs. Angel said she didn't want the money.

The bank tellers, who were with the robbers for more than an hour, described the leader as being medium tall, slender and well-dressed.

His sub-ordinate was short, fat and sloppy.

In Gadsden, U. S. Commissioner James F. Hinton said a warrant for Andrews' arrest was sworn out May 25.

"But of course I couldn't say anything about it until after he was arrested," Hinton said.

In Birmingham U. S. District Atty. Frank M. Johnson said he authorized the warrant.

Johnson said Andrews would be taken before the nearest U. S. Commissioner—who would be in Tampa—and then transferred to Birmingham.

"He will be incarcerated here," Johnson said.

He said the suspect should arrive in Birmingham in the next day or so.

"He will be tried in Anniston, probably in the Fall," the district attorney said.

When arrested, Andrews was working as a cook and as a dishwasher in Clearwater, but had not been seen on the job for several days.

Deputy Sheriff Donald Genung of Clearwater said not very much was known about Andrews in the Florida city.

"He came here about a year ago, but hadn't been seen since May 10," the deputy said.

In Gadsden, the foster mother said Andrews went to Florida "six or seven months ago," and returned with his wife about 10 days before the day of the robbery.

"He and his wife came up to get their little girl," she said.

The FBI said it was doubtful that Andrews had the measles at the time of the holdup.

"The little girl had had the chicken-pox and the measles but was well," an agent said.

It took a patient wait for officers to arrest Andrews.

After the warrant was sworn out against him on May 25, officers waited at the Clearwater restaurant for seven days before he appeared.

Gadsden Man Held As 'Brains' Of Bank Robbery

Continued from Page 1

Studebaker, his foster mother said.

The new Packard had a Texas license plate, and officers said Andrews bought the car in Texas the week after the holdup.

The arrest of the slippery Andrews is the first break in the Jacksonville bank holdup, generally recognized as one of the smoothest bank robberies ever staged.

The four bandits, apparently taking their plot from a movie, gained entrance into the home of Jesse N. Wood about 7 a.m. on the morning of the robbery.

Two of the men were masked, and remained masked with nylon stockings over their heads. The other two were bare-faced.

They forced Wood to drive them to the bank and open up. The two masked men stayed at the Wood home and held Mrs. Wood and the two Wood girls as hostages.

2 Arrested In Jacksonville Bank Holdup

Second Suspect Held In Nevada

Ex-Etowah Resident Seized In Cafe In Clearwater, Florida

By SAM JONES

Arrest of a second suspect in the Jacksonville bank robbery was announced in a terse statement by the FBI this morning. Alton D. Ellis, 41, an insurance salesman of Clearwater, Fla., was apprehended in a Las Vegas, Nev., motel and approximately \$9,600 was recovered at the time of his arrest.

The fast-breaking case saw the arrest in Clearwater yesterday afternoon of Joe Paul Andrews, suspected of being the ringleader of the four bandits who held up the First National Bank of Jacksonville May 20.

Andrews had been identified in photographs by Cashier Jesse N. Wood and women employes terrorized by the gunmen who snatched nearly \$86,000.

Seized In Nevada

The new arrest was revealed at 9:30 this morning in a statement to The Star by Mr. Robey.

Ellis was taken into custody by FBI agents and Clark County, Nevada, sheriff's deputies, the statement said.

A federal complaint was filed by FBI agents at Birmingham before U.S. Commissioner Louise O. Charlton charging Ellis with involvement of the robbery of the Jacksonville bank.

He will be arraigned before a U.S. commissioner at Las Vegas today.

Ellis is reported to be married and has a young daughter.

No other details regarding Ellis were revealed immediately by the FBI, nor would Mr. Robey make any comment about the two other men being sought in the robbery.

Nabbed At Restaurant

Andrews, who was taken into custody by FBI agents and sheriff's deputies at a restaurant in Clearwater while he ate lunch with members of his family early Wednesday afternoon, is a former resident of Gadsden and has a long prison record, agents said.

He is being returned to Birmingham by the FBI today to face arraignment on a charge of masterminding the daring holdup.

Andrews had been employed as a cook-dishwasher at the cafe where he was arrested and officers said they had watched the restaurant for days in hopes of nabbing him.

A federal warrant was issued in Gadsden for Andrews May 25 after Cashier Jesse N. Wood and other employes of Jacksonville's

(See Suspect, page 2-A, Col. 3.)



JOE PAUL ANDREWS
... leader of bank bandits?

First National Bank identified photographs of Andrews.

Wood Identifies Him

Wood told agents the suspect was the one who gave the orders when four gunmen kidnapped him, held his wife and two daughters as hostages at their home and then subdued all the bank employes while waiting for the vault to open.

The two bandits who actually pulled the robbery were unmasked. They got away with almost \$86,000 in one of the best-planned and smoothest robberies in Alabama crime history.

U.S. District Attorney Frank M. Johnson in Birmingham said Andrews would be held in the Birmingham jail for trial.

The trial will be held in Anniston, probably this fall, he said, since this court has jurisdiction in the case.

Meet Twice A Year

Federal criminal court is scheduled in Anniston twice each year—in the spring and fall. Andrews will be tried here unless he waives venue.

Meanwhile, in Gadsden Mrs. O. J. Andrews, foster mother of the arrested man, has protested that her son cannot be guilty.

She said Andrews was at her home May 19, the day before the holdup, and that he was running a high fever with measles.

Andrews, she said, left Gadsden that day on his way to Florida.

The suspect had a 1955 Packard automobile at the time of his arrest, and the FBI said they found an undisclosed quantity of cash and two pistols in the car.

Andrews' arrest was the first break in the case, described by enforcement officers as the biggest bank robbery in the history of the state.

The 34-year-old Andrews was born in Tennessee and was raised in Gadsden by his foster mother.

Moved To Florida

He lived in Gadsden until mid-1954, when he moved to Florida, agents said.

At Clearwater he had been employed as a cook and then as a dishwasher at the restaurant, but he had not been on the job for some time.

The FBI said Andrews' record included the following: sentenced in Montgomery in 1939 to 2½ years for burglary; sentenced in Birmingham in 1941 to 2½ years for grand larceny, escaped and recaptured the same year; sentenced in Gadsden in 1944 to 12 years for robbery, escaped in 1946 and recaptured the same year, paroled in 1952.

Bank Holdup Victims Get 'Happy News'

Looking Forward To Meeting, Jesse Wood Tells Star

By CODY HALL

Jesse Wood is looking forward to renewing an acquaintance, anticipating a meeting with Joe Paul Andrews.

Andrews is in jail in Clearwater, Fla., today and is expected to be brought back to Alabama this week to await trial for the robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville, where Wood is assistant vice president and cashier.

"I'm happy to hear it (news of Andrews' arrest)," Wood told The Star this morning.

"I'm looking forward to meeting him again under different circumstances."

He Talked A Lot

When Wood last saw the man identified as Andrews and one of the bank robbers, the latter was waving a pistol and talking a good bit.

Wood's ill wife and two young daughters had been held at gunpoint as hostages while two other bandits had forced him to accompany them to the bank.

Throughout the ordeal of more than an hour, Wood agonized over the chance that a fire alarm or passing ambulance would inadvertently give a signal which would result in the death of his family and bank employes.

"The last I saw of him was when he pulled our front door to as they left the house that morning," Wood said, adding that if Andrews is brought to Birmingham this week "I imagine I'll have the pleasure of seeing him under much better circumstances."

Claimed The Star

Elated over the capture, Wood joked with the Star's interviewer:

"You ought to put him on the payroll. He's the one who introduced himself as Mr. Jackson from The Anniston Star."

Wood said Andrews, identified from photos by bank personnel, appeared to be the leader of the quartet of bandits, and gave every indication of being capable of following through with his deadly threats.

"He wouldn't have been as successful as he was if he hadn't looked capable," Wood remarked, then added, "Of course that pistol he had was quite a persuader, too."

Birmingham News

BIRMINGHAM, ALA., FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 1955

☆☆☆

Andrews admits he bossed Jax bank holdup

The suspected leader of Alabama's biggest bank robbery is expected to be returned to Birmingham "in a few days" to await trial for his part in the slick Jacksonville, Ala., job, May 20.

He is Joe Paul Andrews, handsome, brown-haired, 34-year-old former Kilby Prison convict who once turned preacher.

Andrews freely admitted his guilt yesterday in his arraignment before U. S. Commissioner Paul Pinkerton in Tampa, Fla.

And another suspect in the gang which took \$86,700 from the Jacksonville bank was arrested yesterday in Las Vegas, Nev.

THE FBI said they picked up Alton D. Ellis, a Clearwater, Fla., insurance man yesterday in the Fabled Western gambling town. He had \$9645 on him.

Ellis was remanded to the custody of the U. S. marshal after appearing before a Las Vegas justice of the peace, who set bail at \$75,000.

Andrews did not appear con-

cerned about bank-robbing charges yesterday but it apparently worried him that his wife, Burma Nell, mother of a 6-year-old daughter, was charged with transporting \$25,000 in stolen bank funds from Jacksonville to Clearwater.

Andrews pleaded guilty to this charge. His wife pleaded not guilty.

ALSO BROUGHT before Commissioner Pinkerton were Mrs. Andrews' brothers, Preston Henderson, 26, and Etheron Henderson, 21.

The Hendersons pleaded not guilty to charges of concealing knowledge that Andrews and other identified men had robbed the bank.

Bond for the Hendersons and Mrs. Andrews was set at \$10,000. Bond for Andrews was set at \$85,000.

None could make bond immediately.

The commissioner instructed officers to allow Mrs. Andrews to telephone relatives in Alabama to come for the child, now in custody of juvenile authorities.

Andrews, his wife, and the Hendersons are all former residents of the Gadsden area.

Andrews, charged with being the leader of four men who brazenly cleaned out the Jacksonville bank, turned to preaching while serving a 12-year-sentence in Kilby for robbery.

He said he was converted by a Negro convict singing spirituals in Kilby.

He then conducted what was known as "The Church Behind Prison Walls" at Kilby.

He filled some pulpits around Gadsden following his parole

after serving eight years of a 12-year sentence in 1952.

He told congregations that he had "robbed and stole and I had no interests except to see how much I could steal. I wanted to be another John Dillinger or another Pretty Boy Floyd."

Dillinger and Floyd were notorious for bloody bank robberies in the early 1930s.

THE GADSDEN PAROLE officer released Andrews from supervision and he and his

wife went to Clearwater. He got a job there as a dishwasher.

Andrews protested mildly about the charge against the Hendersons yesterday. Of Etheron Henderson, on furlough from Walker Air Force Base, Roswell, N. M., Andrews said: "He was right there in the service when all this was committed."

Etheron only arrived in Florida this week, Andrews said. He added that he was on duty until he got an emergency furlough to attend the funeral of

Turn to Page 2, Column 1



Continued from Page 1
grandfather in Covington County.

THERE WAS LITTLE INFORMATION on the Ellis arrest. He was picked up in a parking lot outside one of Las Vegas' swanky hotels.

His wife, who was with him, was not arrested.

The Jacksonville robbery was staged early May 20. Four men entered Cashier Jess N. Wood's home about 7 a.m. and two remained on guard there until 9, guarding Mrs. Wood and two daughters.

Two of the gang forced Wood to accompany them to the bank. When the time clock opened the vault at 8:30, they grabbed up some \$86,700.

Meanwhile, seven bank employees had come to work and been tied up, one by one.

The two bandits who went to the bank were not masked. The two who remained at the Wood home wore stockings over their faces.

The FBI entered the case and broke it by showing bank employees thousands of pictures of known bank robbers.

A lookout was begun for Andrews seven days before he showed up again in Clearwater in a new Packard.

Anniston Star

"Your Home Newspaper Since 1882"

AP and UP News

ANNISTON, ALABAMA, FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 1955

Former Alabama Convict Admits Part In Robbery

Andrews' Bond Is Set At \$85,000 In Tampa

Other Suspect In Jacksonville Bank Stickup Still In Custody In Nevada

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — An ex-Alabama convict has admitted he was one of the gang which staged the well-planned \$86,727 robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville, Ala., on May 20.

Joe Paul Andrews, 34, freely admitted his guilt before U. S. Commissioner Paul Pinkerton here yesterday. Bond for him on the robbery charge was set at \$85,000 and he was placed in jail here, presumably to await transfer to Birmingham.

Meanwhile, another man charged with being one of the four men who held up the bank was held in lieu of \$75,000 bond in Las Vegas, Nev. He was identified as Alton D. Ellis, 41-year-old Clearwater, Fla., insurance man.

Money Found

Some \$27,000 was found in Andrews' car and another \$9,600 was taken from Ellis.

Andrews, termed the brains of the big robbery by the FBI, was arrested at Clearwater.

He seemed more concerned here with charges against his wife and her two brothers that they concealed knowledge that Andrews and others had robbed the bank.

Pinkerton set bond at \$10,000 for Mrs. Burma Henderson Andrews, 23, and Preston Henderson, 26, and Etherson Henderson, 21. Their preliminary hearing was delayed until next Wednesday to give them time to get a lawyer.

Andrews protested against the charge against the Hendersons.

Of Etherson Henderson, on furlough from Walker Air Force Base, Roswell, N. M., Andrews said: "He was right there in the service when all this was committed."

Nabbed Wednesday

The four were arrested Wednesday in Clearwater, where the Andrews had been living since last November. Andrews had worked there as a dishwasher and cook.

FBI Agent C. E. Weeks in Miami said \$27,000 was found in a false bottom to the trunk of Andrews' automobile.

Four men took active parts in the holdup and the FBI said possibility there was a fifth man to drive the getaway car.



Holdup suspect questioned—Joe Paul Andrews, 34, of Gadsden, left, was questioned by Charles E. Weeks, center, special agent in charge of the Miami, Fla., FBI office, and Pinellas County Sheriff Sid M. Saunders in the \$86,727 Jacksonville, Ala., bank robbery May 20. (Associated Press wirephoto.)

Mrs. Andrews told Commissioner Pinkerton she was most concerned about her 6-year-old daughter, Barbara, who had been in the care of juvenile authorities at Clearwater since the parents were arrested.

The commissioner said officers would be instructed to allow Mrs. Andrews to telephone relatives in Alabama to come for the child.

Andrews has served sentences in Alabama for grand larceny, burglary and robbery. He was paroled in 1952 after serving part of a 12-year sentence for robbery.

APPEARED IN MANY PULPITS

Andrews Led Church Behind Walls At Kilby

GADSDEN, Ala. (AP) — Joe Paul Andrews, now charged with the religion. His Sunday services at well-planned \$86,727 robbery of a Kilby were broadcast by radio station Jacksonville, Ala., bank last May (times in Birmingham and Montgomery, Ala., 20, is the convict who turned to gomery.

Andrews appeared in many Gadsden pulpits following his parole in May, 1952.

"Sinned A Lot"

He told congregations here he "sinned a lot and been mixed up in many crimes." before he turned to religion after hearing a Negro convict singing religious songs in Kilby.

"I robbed and I stole," he told audiences here. "I had no interests except to see how much I could steal. I wanted to be another John Dillinger, or another Pretty Boy Floyd."

For two years after his 1952 parole Andrews held various jobs here. Parole authorities dismissed him, saying he had made a fine adjustment and no longer needed supervision.

Shot By Detective

Andrews was one of four men who broke jail here in April, 1945. Two days later he was recaptured after Det. Lt. Ned Simmons shot him in the side when he resisted re-arrest.

Sentenced to 12 years on a robbery charge here in 1946, Andrews escaped again and was shot a second time in Biloxi, Miss., where he was recaptured.

It was shortly after the Biloxi

Bank Holdup

'Brains' Confesses

Admits Part In Robbery At Jacksonville

FBI Nabs Another At Las Vegas

BY MARTIN WALDRON
Joe Paul Andrews, former convict preacher turned bank robber, yesterday pleaded guilty of robbing the Jacksonville, Ala., bank of \$86,700 May 20.

Andrews, 34, a big, brown-haired Gadsden man with a broad smile, freely admitted his guilt in an arraignment before U. S. Commissioner Paul Pinkerton in Tampa, Fla.

He seemed most concerned with getting a lawyer for his wife, Burma Nell, 23.

Mrs. Andrews, mother of a six-year-old daughter, was charged with transporting \$25,000 in stolen money to Clearwater.

Andrews pleaded guilty on this charge also, but Mrs. Andrews pleaded innocent.

Approximately \$27,000 was found under the floor of the Andrews automobile after his arrest, the Miami FBI office said.

Meanwhile, a second of four suspects in the holdup was jailed in Las Vegas, yesterday.

Alton D. Ellis, 41, a Clearwater insurance salesman, was arrested in a parking lot outside a fancy Nevada hotel.

He had \$9645 on him, making a total of \$36,645 recovered from the \$86,700 stolen.

Andrews' guilty plea does not mean he will not stand trial.

A U. S. commissioner can hear a plea and set bonds but cannot sentence a defendant.

Others Charged

Charged with Andrews and his wife yesterday were her two brothers, Preston L. Henderson, 26, and Atherton Henderson, 21.

They were charged with concealing knowledge that Andrews and others had robbed the bank.

Bond for the Hendersons and Mrs. Andrews was set at \$10,000 each.

Andrews' bond was set at \$85,000.

None of them could make bond and all were held in custody.

Mrs. Andrews said she was most concerned about her 6-year-old daughter, who had been in the care of juvenile authorities at Clearwater since the parents were arrested.

The commissioner said officers would be instructed to allow Mrs. Andrews to telephone relatives in Alabama to come for the child.

The four were remanded to Hillsborough County jail there in default of bond.

Protests Mildly

Andrews protested mildly against the charges against his brothers-in-law.

Andrews pointed out that Atherton Henderson, an airman stationed at Walker Air Force Base, Roswell, N. M., was in that state until this week when he got an emergency leave to go to Covington, Ala., to attend the funeral of his grandfather.

He was right there in the service when all this was committed," Andrews said.

The FBI refused to say whether it had leads on the two masked men who held the family of a bank cashier captive while two unmasked men robbed the bank.

Andrews is charged with being the leader and brains behind the Jacksonville robbery.

More information came to light yesterday on Andrews, a slick 34-year-old burglar who twice has escaped from prison and was wounded in gun fights with police.

Turns To Religion

Andrews is the convict who turned to religion and conducted "The Church Behind Prison Walls," during his last stay in Kilby Prison.

He said he was saved after hearing a Negro convict sing religious songs at Kilby.

After being released on parole in 1952, he preached from many Gadsden pulpits and told congregations that he "sinned a lot and had been mixed up in many crimes."

"I robbed and I stole," he preached. "I had no interests except to see how much I could steal. I wanted to be another John Dillinger or another Pretty Boy Floyd."

Dillinger and Floyd were notorious bank robbers of the 1930's.

Given Full Freedom

So well did Andrews adjust that the parole board in Gadsden re-
See BANK, Page 5

Continued from Page 1

leased him from supervision last year, saying he no longer needed it.

Shortly after that Andrews went to Clearwater with his wife, Burma, where he got a job as a cook and a dishwasher.

There was little information available on the background of Ellis, the insurance salesman.

He was in Las Vegas with his wife when he was arrested.

But FBI Agent James A. Robey said in Birmingham that Mrs. Ellis was not arrested.

A stake-out had been placed on the parking lot where the suspect was arrested several hours in advance.

Officers Get Tip

The sheriff's office in Las Vegas said it had a "tip" that Ellis, who was charged in a complaint sworn out in Birmingham several days ago, would be at the parking lot.

Both of the Hendersons and their sister, Mrs. Andrews, originally came from near Gadsden, but now are listed as living in Clearwater.

Largest Ever Pulled

The Jacksonville bank robbery was the largest ever pulled in Alabama and was one of the smoothest bank jobs on record.

Four men forced their way into the home of the bank cashier, Jess N. Wood about 1 a.m. May 20 and two unmasked handits took him to the bank while two with stockings over their heads stayed and guarded Mrs. Wood and the two Wood daughters.

At the bank, seven employees were tied up as they reported for work.

When the bank vault opened by time-clock at 8:30, the two unmasked robbers grabbed up the \$86,700 and fled after taking Wood back to his home and tying him.

The FBI broke the robbery by showing thousands of photographs of known robbers and burglars to the bank employees.

Only five days after the holdup, a stakeout on the Clearwater restaurant where Andrews had worked was in place.

It was seven days before the cook showed up in a new 1955 Packard.

Third Jacksonville Bank Holdup Suspect Caught In Bismarck N. Dakota

Net spreads for No. 4—

Third Jax bank suspect nabbed

MINNEAPOLIS, June 6—(AP)—A nationwide manhunt yesterday netted a third man accused of an \$86,727 Alabama bank robbery and a "considerable" sum of money.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation said Thomas Navarro Pendley, 22, Clearwater, Fla., offered no resistance, although a pistol and shotgun were found in his room. Cal Howard, agent in charge of the FBI office here, reported discovery of the money after Pendley was seized in Bismarck, N. D.



Third man arrested—Thomas N. Pendley.

An FBI agent said bond of \$75,000 would be asked for Pendley on federal bank robbery charges filed at Birmingham, Ala., May 31. He was expected to be arraigned before a U. S. commissioner at Bismarck, probably today.

Six persons have been arrested since the May 20 holdup of the First National Bank of Jacksonville. Three are charged with the actual holdup, the biggest bank robbery in Alabama history, and the others are held on lesser charges.

LAW ENFORCEMENT officers commented on the careful planning shown by the bandit gang—but the arrest of the accused brains of the robbery came last Wednesday, only 12 days after the job was pulled. The others came in quick order.

Joe Paul Andrews, 34-year-old Alabama ex-convict, was nabbed at Clearwater, Fla., where he had been working as a cook. Andrews, who FBI agents said engineered the holdup, pleaded guilty when arraigned on federal bank robbery charges at Tampa, Fla., and is being held under \$85,000 bond.

Andrews' wife was accused of transporting \$25,000 in stolen funds from Jacksonville to Clearwater, and placed under \$10,000 bond. She pleaded innocent when arraigned.

Alton Ellis, Clearwater insurance man, was arrested on federal bank robbery charges at Las Vegas, and is being held under \$75,000 bond in Nevada.

About \$27,000 was taken from Andrews, and \$9600 from Ellis.

Preston Henderson, 26, and Etherton Henderson, 21, pleaded innocent to charges of concealing information about the robbery when arraigned at Tampa, and their were bonds set at \$10,000. They are brothers of Mrs. Andrews.

FOLLOWING THE latest arrest the far-flung hunt was confused Turn to Page 5, Column 2



ARRESTED—Thomas Navarro Pendley.

Florida Man Is Arrested In Apartment

Room Yields Gun, Considerable Money

A third suspect in the \$86,700 robbery of the Jacksonville, Ala., bank on May 20 has been arrested in Bismarck, N. D.

James A. Robey, special agent in charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Birmingham, identified the arrested man as Thomas Navarro Pendley, 22, of Clearwater, Fla.

Special Agent Robey said Pendley was arrested at 4:40 yesterday afternoon in an apartment in the residential section of Bismarck.

Pendley was described as a hotel and restaurant worker who has a previous record.

Robey said he made no resistance when arrested.

Cal Howard, special agent in charge of the FBI office at Minneapolis, Minn. (the nearest FBI office to Bismarck) said the arresting officers found a .32 caliber automatic revolver and a .410 shotgun in Pendley's room.

Also found, Howard said, was a "considerable" sum of money.

In on the capture were agents of the FBI, officers of the Bismarck Police Department, the North Dakota Highway Patrol and the chief of the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Identification.

Pendley, unmarried, was charged with the robbery—in violation of the Federal Bank Robbery Statute—in a warrant issued by the U. S. Commissioner in Birmingham on May 31.

Robey said he probably will be arraigned before the U. S. Commissioner in Bismarck today, but is not expected to be returned to Birmingham within the next several days.

Robey said the U. S. Attorney here has asked that Pendley's bond be set at \$75,000.

Pendley is the second Clearwater man suspected to be a participant in the robbery who was apprehended far from his home town.

Continued from Page 1 on the fourth member of the bandit party, and a possible fifth person wanted as driver of a getaway car.

At Birmingham, FBI Agent in Charge James A. Robey said Pendley was the stocky robber armed with a shotgun who stood guard over the bound employees at the back of the bank building.

Andrews was described as the chatty gunman, who mixed politeness with deadly threats, that met the arriving workers at the door.

Though the gang made a fast getaway, employees of the Jacksonville bank identified photographs shown them by officers as those of possible participants in the holdup.

Andrews, his wife and the Hendersons were former residents of the Gadsden section.

He weighs 176 pounds, is five feet, six and a half inches tall, has a ruddy complexion, black hair and eyes.

Previously, Alton D. Ellis, 41, also of the Florida city, was arrested in Las Vegas, Nev.

The first suspect to be apprehended, Joe Paul Andrews, 34, who was picked up in a restaurant, is expected to be returned to Birmingham this week.

Others arrested and bonded in connection with the robbery are Andrews' wife, Burma Nell, 23; and his brothers-in-law Preston L. Henderson, 26, and Atherton Henderson, 21. They are charged with having known about the robbery and concealed their knowledge.

ANNISTON, ALABAMA, SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 1955



SUSPECT HELD — Alton B. Ellis, left, 41, Clearwater, Fla., insurance salesman, is guided from the county jail in Las Vegas, Nev., by Deputy U. S. Marshal Dennis Sampson enroute to court for arraignment on a charge of violation of the Federal Bank Robbery statute. Ellis, arrested in Las Vegas, is accused of being one of five men who robbed the First National Bank of Jacksonville, May 20.

Bank Robbery 'Leader' Due In Magic City

Wife, Two Brothers-In-Law Also To Be Returned To State

BIRMINGHAM — The confessed leader of the Jacksonville bank robbery, Joe Paul Andrews of Clearwater, Fla., is expected to await trial on the charges.

He is under \$85,000 bond. Andrews' wife and two brothers-in-law may also be placed in the Jefferson County Jail. Their bond is set at \$10,000 and thus far they have been unable to meet the figure.

Charges Outlined
The trio is accused with being accessories after the fact in the sensational robbery. They are charged with spending part of the stolen money and with possessing knowledge of the crime.

Meanwhile, the FBI was keeping silent about the possibility of the arrest of the other two robbers.

Andrews and Alton Ellis, 41, an insurance salesman from Clearwater, Fla., have been formally charged with being two members of the four-man gang.

A fifth member, who drove the getaway car, also is sought.

Andrews was the first suspect arrested.

Napped in Cafe
He was found eating lunch at a Clearwater restaurant with his wife, Burma Nell, and her two brothers, Preston Henderson and Etherton Henderson.

The well-executed bank robbery was broken by the FBI through the use of its big rogue's gallery. Employees of the Jacksonville bank recognized Andrews from pictures.

Ellis was arrested in Las Vegas a few hours after Andrews was picked up. He is being held under \$75,000 bond and probably will be flown to Birmingham, perhaps Monday.

Andrews pleaded guilty to the bank robbing charges in his arraignment in Florida Thursday.

Some \$37,000 of the almost \$86,000 stolen from the bank has been recovered.

ANNISTON, ALABAMA, MONDAY, JUNE 6, 1955

Third Arrest Is Made In Jacksonville Case At Hotel In Bismarck

Thomas Pendley Of Clearwater Nabbed With 'Considerable Sum'

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—A nation-wide manhunt yesterday netted a third man accused of an \$86,727 Alabama bank robbery and a "considerable" sum of money.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation said Thomas Navarro Pendley, 22, Clearwater, Fla., offered no resistance although a pistol and shotgun were found in his room. Cal Howard, agent in charge of the FBI office here, reported discovery of the money after Pendley was seized in Bismarck, N.D.

An FBI agent said bond of \$75,000 would be asked for Pendley on federal bank robbery charges filed at Birmingham, Ala., May 31. He was expected to be arraigned before a U.S. Commissioner at Bismarck probably today.

Six Now Arrested

Six persons have been arrested since the May 20 holdup of the First National Bank of Jacksonville in Northeast Alabama. Three are charged with the actual holdup, the biggest in Alabama history, and the others are held on lesser charges.

Law enforcement officers commented on the careful planning shown by the bandit gang—but the arrest of the accused brains of the robbery came last Wednesday, only 12 days after the job was pulled. The others came in quick order.

Joe Paul Andrews, 34-year-old Alabama ex-convict, was nabbed at Clearwater, Fla., where he had been working as a cook. Andrews, who FBI agents said engineered the holdup, pleaded guilty when arraigned on federal bank robbery charges at Tampa, Fla., and is being held under \$85,000 bond.

Andrews' wife was accused of transporting \$25,000 in stolen funds from Jacksonville to Clearwater, and placed under \$10,000 bond. She pleaded innocent when arraigned.

Nabbed In Las Vegas

Alton Ellis, Clearwater insurance man, was arrested on federal bank robbery charges at Las Vegas, and is being held under \$75,000 bond in Nevada.

About \$27,000 was taken from Andrews, and \$9,600 from Ellis.

Preston Henderson, 26, and Etherton Henderson, 21, pleaded innocent to charges of concealing information about the robbery when arraigned at Tampa, and their bonds were set at \$10,000. They are brothers of Mrs. Andrews.

Following the latest arrest the far-flung hunt was focussed on the fourth member of the bandit party, and a possible fifth person wanted as driver of a getaway car.

Four gunmen went to the Jacksonville home of bank cashier and vice president Jesse N. Wood early (See Arrest, Page 2, Col. 3)

(Continued From Page One)

the morning of Friday, May 20. Two forced Wood to take them to the bank while the others held Wood's wife and two small daughters hostage at his home. Wood was told that if anything went wrong his wife and children would be killed.

After Wood let them into the bank, the bandits surprised other employes as they arrived for work, and made them prisoners.

At Birmingham, FBI Agent in Charge James A. Roney said Pendley was the stocky robber armed with a shotgun who stood guard over the bound employes at the back of the building.

Andrews was described as the chatty gunman, who mixed politeness with deadly threats, that met the arriving workers at the door.

When a time clock opened the vault door, the robbers scooped up the big haul of cash and drove back to Wood's home for their confederates. Then they tied up Wood and disappeared.

But though the gang made a fast getaway, employes of the Jacksonville bank identified photographs shown them by officers as those of possible participants in the holdup.

Andrews had been paroled from Kilby Prison in 1952 after serving eight years of a 12-year robbery sentence. He preached in several Gadsden, Ala., area churches following his parole.

Third Suspect Arrested In Jacksonville Robbery

Thousands Of Dollars Recovered By Officers

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP)—A free-spending young suspect in an \$86,727 bank robbery at Jacksonville, Ala., surrendered to law enforcement officers here yesterday.

The prisoner identified himself as Thomas Navarre Pendley, 22, of Clearwater, Fla. He told officers the more than \$6,500 they found in a room he had rented represented gambling winnings.

Pendley, booked on vagrancy charges pending the arrival here of a federal warrant charging participation in the robbery of the First National Bank at Jacksonville on May 20, was expected to be taken before a United States Commissioner here later this week.

WARRANT ISSUED

A warrant charging him with a part in the Alabama holdup had been issued at Birmingham, Ala. Two other men already had been arrested in connection with the robbery. A fourth still is sought.

Pendley was taken into custody by 15 law enforcement officers who had surrounded the apartment of a night club waitress where he had taken refuge earlier yesterday after telling an acquaintance he was "wanted" and wished to get out of this vicinity.

Don E. Schoeneman, Bismarck police chief, said Pendley was unarmed but that a search of a room he had rented elsewhere in Bismarck disclosed a .32 caliber pistol, a rifle and a suitcase containing ammunition.

MONEY IS LOCATED

Schoeneman said a suitcase Pendley had taken with him to the apartment of the waitress, Dorothy Marsden, contained \$6,015 and that \$500 was found in a dresser drawer in Pendley's room.

Schoeneman said Pendley had been seen in Bismarck five or six days and had attracted notice because of his free spending in bars and night clubs, in one instance reportedly giving a waitress \$300 and telling her to "bet it on anything you want to bet on."

He had taken a room at the Bismarck residence of a couple he had met at a night club.

The police chief said a routine check was being made on Pendley and that authorities became convinced he was wanted in the Alabama robbery.

DETAILS ARE GIVEN

Schoeneman gave this account of events leading up to the arrest:

Saturday night, police made the rounds of the city to see if they could spot Pendley, who apparently had gone to his room early.

Sunday morning, Pendley contacted John Lantz of Mandan, owner of the club where Mrs. Marsden is a waitress, and asked him if he could get him some benzedrine.

When Lantz said he wouldn't be able to do so, Pendley asked that he meet him at a Mandan hotel at noon.

Lantz went to the hotel to see what Pendley wanted. The fugitive entered Lantz's car and told him to "get going", that he was "wanted" and wished to get out of the area.

DRIVES TO APARTMENT

Lantz, under threat of violence, Schoeneman said, drove Pendley to the apartment of Mrs. Marsden. Pendley kept Lantz there for about an hour, then told him to "go and arrange for me to get out of here."

Lantz was detained about 3 p.m. by police, who had been watching the apartment. Then two state highway patrolmen, a Burleigh County deputy sheriff, and FBI agent and about 10 Bismarck police officers, including Schoeneman joined the other officers who had been keeping watch on the apartment.

The officers were reluctant, Schoeneman said, to attempt to arrest the suspect while Mrs. Marsden and her two daughters, aged 3 and 9, were in the apartment since Lantz said Pendley had intimated he would use them as shields if an attempt were made to take him.

SENT OUT FOR GROCERIES

Schoeneman said, however, that Pendley apparently was unaware the building had been surrounded and let the woman and her children go out for groceries.

When the officers saw them emerge, they entered the building and called upon Pendley to come out of the apartment with his hands up. He obeyed.

Pendley is the third man charged with participation in the actual robbery, but three others are being held in Tampa, Fla., on charges arising from the bank holdup.

Joe Paul Andrews, 34-year-old Alabama ex-convict, was nabbed at Clearwater, Fla., where he had been working as a cook. Andrews, who FBI agents said engineered the holdup, pleaded guilty when arraigned on federal bank robbery charges at Tampa, Fla., and is being held under \$85,000 bond.

WIFE PLEAS INNOCENT

Andrews' wife was accused of transporting \$25,000 in stolen funds from Jacksonville to Clearwater, and placed under \$10,000 bond. She pleaded innocent when arraigned.

Alton Ellis, Clearwater insurance man, was arrested on federal bank robbery charges at Las Vegas, and is being held under \$75,000 bond in Nevada.

MONEY IS RECOVERED

About \$27,000 was taken from Andrews, and \$9,600 from Ellis. Preston Henderson, 26, and Eltheron Henderson, 21, pleaded innocent to charges of concealing information about the robbery when arraigned at Tampa, and their bonds were set at \$10,000. They are brothers of Mrs. Andrews.

Following the latest arrest the far-flung hunt was focussed on the fourth member of the bandit party,

and a possible fifth person wanted as driver of a getaway car.

ROBBERY ON MAY 20

Four gunmen went to the Jacksonville home of bank cashier and vice president Jesse N. Wood early the morning of Friday, May 20.

Two forced Wood to take them to the bank while the others held Wood's wife and two small daughters hostage at his home. Wood was told that if anything went wrong his wife and children would be killed.

After Wood let them into the bank, the bandits surprised other employees as they arrived for work, and made them prisoners.

At Birmingham, FBI Agent in Charge James A. Robey said Pendley was the stocky robber armed with a shotgun who stood guard over the bound employees at the back of the building.

ANDREWS TERMED CHATTY

Andrews was described as the chatty gunman, who mixed politeness with deadly threats, that met the arriving workers at the door.

CASH SCOOPED UP

When a time clock opened the vault door, the robbers scooped up the big haul of cash and drove back to Wood's home for their confederates. Then they tied up Wood and disappeared.

But though the gang made a fast getaway, employees of the Jacksonville bank identified photographs shown them by officers as those of possible participants in the holdup.

Andrews had been paroled from Kelly Prison in 1952 after serving eight years of a 12-year robbery sentence. He preached in several Gadsden, Ala., area churches following his parole.

Andrews, his wife and the Hendersons were former residents of the Gadsden section.

ANNISTON STAR
JUNE 7-1955

BIRMINGHAM NEWS
JUNE 7-1955

Pendley's Bond Placed At \$60,000

Waives Arraignment At Bismarck In Jack- sonville Case

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP)—Thomas N. Pendley, 22, Clearwater, Fla., was held on \$60,000 bond today after waiving arraignment on charges of taking part in an \$86,727 Alabama bank robbery.

U. S. Commissioner W. B. Falconer set bond for Pendley after he was arraigned yesterday. The Clearwater cook was identified by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as one of at least four men who staged the holdup of the First National Bank of Jacksonville, Ala., May 20.

Pendley surrendered Sunday at the home of a night club waitress. Police said \$6,015 was found in a suitcase Pendley carried to the apartment of the waitress, and \$500 was found in a dresser drawer in his room.

Two Others Charged

Two other men already arrested and charged in the bank robbery are Alton D. Ellis, Clearwater, Fla., insurance man, and Joe Paul Andrews, former Alabama convict who also worked as a cook at Clearwater. Andrews has pleaded guilty to taking part in the robbery.

Andrews is being held at Tampa, and Ellis at Las Vegas.

Charges of unlawfully receiving and possessing part of the \$86,727 were filed against Preston Henderson, 26, at Tampa yesterday.

Henderson will be given a preliminary hearing on the new charge tomorrow at the same time he and his brother, Etheron Henderson, 21, go before U. S. Commissioner Paul Pinkerton on a charge of concealing knowledge that Andrews had held up the bank. They pleaded innocent in that case.

Others In Custody

Also in custody at Tampa is Andrews' wife, Burma Nell, 23, sister of the Hendersons. She has pleaded innocent to a charge of transporting \$25,000 in stolen bank funds from Alabama to Clearwater, and also will have a preliminary hearing tomorrow.

Pendley and Andrews were cooks at the same Clearwater restaurant earlier this spring.

Meanwhile an insurance company seeking to recover the stolen bank funds filed suit against Ellis and four others, listed as John Does.

The action at Las Vegas was brought by the U. S. Fidelity & Guaranty Co. The insurance firm gave the bank a check for its loss soon after the holdup.

Federal agents said Ellis had \$9,500 in his possession when arrested Wednesday night.

New count filed against man in holdup probe

One of four persons held at Tampa, Fla., in investigation of the Jacksonville, Ala., bank robbery faced a second charge today—unlawfully receiving part of the \$86,727 loot.

The charge was placed against Preston Henderson, 26, who was previously charged with concealing knowledge of the robbery. He and his brother, Etheron Henderson, 21, have pleaded innocent to the concealment charge.

THEY AND THEIR SISTER, Mrs. Burma Nell Andrews, 23, who has pleaded innocent to a charge of transporting \$25,000 in stolen funds from Alabama to Florida, face preliminary hearing before U. S. Commissioner Paul Pinkerton at Tampa tomorrow.

Mrs. Andrews' husband, Joe Paul Andrews, 34, has pleaded guilty to the robbery at the First National Bank of Jacksonville and to transporting the \$25,000.

All four were arrested in Clearwater last week.

MEANWHILE at Bismarck, N. D., Thomas N. Pendley, 22, Clearwater, Fla., was held on \$60,000 bond after waiving arraignment on charges of taking part in the May 20 holdup.

U. S. Commissioner W. B. Fal-

coner set the bond for Pendley yesterday. The Clearwater cook was identified by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as one of at least four men who staged the holdup—largest on record in Alabama.

Pendley surrendered Sunday at the home of a night club waitress. Police said \$6,015 was found in a suitcase Pendley carried to the apartment of the waitress and \$500 was found in a dresser drawer in his room.

Another Clearwater man, Alton D. Ellis, 41, was arrested earlier

in Las Vegas, Nev., and charged with participating in the robbery.

BIRMINGHAM POST HERALD

JUNE 7-1955

Getting Bank Holdup Money Charged To Florida Suspect

TAMPA, Fla., June 6 (AP)—A charge of unlawfully receiving and possessing part of the \$86,727 stolen from the First National Bank of Jacksonville, Ala., was placed against Preston Henderson today.

Henderson, 26, was one of four persons arrested in Clearwater last week in connection with the robbery, including Joe Paul Andrews, alleged leader of the holdup gang. Andrews, 34, has pleaded guilty to participating in the robbery.

Henderson will be given a preliminary hearing on the new charge Wednesday at the same time he and his brother, Etheron Henderson, 21, come before U. S. Commissioner Paul Pinkerton in a charge of concealing knowledge that Andrews had held up the bank. They pleaded innocent in that case.

The fourth person in custody here is Andrews' wife, Burma Nell, 23, sister of the Hendersons. She has pleaded innocent to a charge of transporting \$25,000 in stolen bank funds from Alabama to Clearwater, and also will have a preliminary hearing Wednesday.

Two other Clearwater men have been arrested in charges of participating with Andrews in

the robbery. They are Alton D. Ellis, 41, an insurance man, picked up in Las Vegas, Nev., last week and Thomas Navarro Pendley, nabbed in Bismarck, N. D., yesterday.

Blond Nabbed As Key Suspect In Jacksonville Bank Holdup

Blonde Held Under Bond Of \$50,000

Net Fast Closing In On Suspects In Jackson- ville Holdup

A persistent search by FBI agents and law officers yesterday netted a fourth suspect in the \$86,000 robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville.

Agents arrested a "washed out" blonde, identified as Mrs. Ellen Marie Heyrend Martin, 46, a former waitress, in Roseburg, Ore.

Under \$50,000 Bond

She is held under \$50,000 bond, charged with "being with the others prior to and after the robbery" of the bank May 20.

"We do not know too much about her," FBI Agent - In - Charge James A. Robey of Birmingham said. "She is an itinerant and comes from Wyoming or Oregon or somewhere out there."

Robey said the FBI had been unable to locate a police record on the woman.

One man charged with actual participation in the robbery and three relatives were scheduled for arraignment before U.S. Commissioner Paul Pinkerton in Tampa, Fla., today.

Joe Paul Andrews, 34, pleaded guilty before Pinkerton last week to robbery and transporting stolen funds but a decision is expected today on when to return him to Alabama for trial.

Hearings Slated

The others have pleaded innocent to various accessory charges and will have a preliminary hearing to determine if they will be held for trial.

They are Andrews' wife, Burma Nell, 23, and her brothers, Preston L. Henderson, 26, and Ethern Henderson, 21.

Mrs. Andrews is charged with transporting stolen funds. Preston Henderson is charged with receiving stolen funds. Both Henderson's are charged with concealing knowledge of the holdup.

All were arrested in nearby Clearwater June 1.

Two other Clearwater men have been charged with participating in the robbery. They are Alton D. Ellis, 41, arrested in Las Vegas, Nev., and Thomas Navarro Pendley, 22, nabbed in Bismark, N.D.

\$27,385 Held

The United States Fidelity and Guaranty Co., the bonding company which made good the loss to the bank, brought suit in federal court here yesterday to prevent Andrews, his wife or Preston Henderson from disposing of any of the proceeds.

The company said the marshal's office here holds \$27,385 of the stolen money and two new automobiles bought by Andrews since the holdup.



Bank case suspect — Mrs. Kathryn Ellis, 34, of Clearwater, Fla., is being held in Tampa on a charge of having taken part in the \$86,000 bank robbery May 20 at Jacksonville, Ala. Another woman suspect in the case is being held in Portland, Ore. She is Ellen M. Heyrend, alias Ellen M. Martin.

The arrest of Mrs. Martin brings to six the number of persons arrested by the FBI in the audacious holdup.

Andrews, a cook, was arrested first. Then his wife and her two brothers were arrested. After that Alton D. Ellis, an insurance salesman was arrested.

Next came another cook, Thomas N. Pendley.

Andrews and his wife and her brothers were arrested in Clearwater.

Ellis was arrested in Las Vegas, Nev.

Pendley was arrested in Bismarck, N. D.

And the FBI is looking for at least two more men and maybe three.

Robey declined to comment on this.

The bank was robbed May 20 by four men, two of whom were masked and held the wife and two daughters of a bank cashier in hostage while the other two got the money at the bank.

It was classified by Alabama officers as the biggest and slickest robbery in Alabama history.

The FBI said Mrs. Martin and the others arrested will be returned to Birmingham some time soon, but would not say when.

Agent Robey ruled out the possibility that Mrs. Martin was one of the masked "men" who held the bank cashier's family as hostages.

"I can't give out any more information on her at this time," Robey said. "If I do, I might give out some information which might have a bearing on another person."

There was an indication that See BLOND, Page 2

Seventh suspect—

Ex-waitress nabbed in Jax bank stickup

A 46-year-old itinerant woman arrested at Roseburg, Ore., brought to seven today the number of suspects nabbed by the FBI in the sensational \$86,700 Jacksonville bank robbery May 20.

Mrs. Ellen Marie Heyrend Martin, a former waitress, was accused of "being with the others prior to and after" the robbery.

The FBI indicated it was looking for two or possibly three additional persons believed to have knowledge of the robbery.

Four persons, including Joe Paul Andrews, who has described himself as the brains behind the robbery, Alabama's biggest, were to be arraigned before U. S. Commissioner Paul Pinkerton at Tampa, Fla., today.

ANDREWS HAS PLEADED guilty to robbery and transporting stolen funds. His wife, Burma Nell, 23, and her two brothers, Preston Henderson, 26, and Ethern Henderson, 21, are to have preliminary hearings to determine if they are to be held for trial.

Mrs. Andrews is accused of receiving stolen funds. Preston Henderson is accused of receiving stolen funds, and both brothers are accused of concealing knowledge of the holdup. All three have entered innocent pleas.

Andrews and his three companions were arrested at Clearwater Fla., June 1.

Shortly afterward, the FBI apprehended two other Clearwater men who were accused of participation in the robbery. They are Alton D. Ellis, 41, arrested at Las Vegas, Nev., and Thomas Navarro Pendley, 22, arrested at Bismarck, N. D.

Andrews, Ellis and Pendley are each being held under \$75,000 bond.

FOUR MEN, two of whom were masked, took part in the Jacksonville robbery, holding the wife and two daughters of the bank cashier in hostage.

The United States Fidelity and Guaranty Co., the bonding company which made good the loss to the bank, brought suit in Federal Court at Tampa yesterday to prevent Andrews, his wife, or Preston Henderson from disposing of any of the proceeds.

The company said the marshal's office at Tampa holds \$27,385 of the stolen money, and two new automobiles purchased by Andrews since the holdup. Ellis also was reported to have considerable money on him at the time of his arrest.

The woman arrested in Oregon yesterday was placed under \$50,000 bond. FBI agents described Mrs. Martin as a "washed-out blonde with bleached, stringy hair—not very attractive." De-

Blond Arrested In Bank Holdup

Continued from Page 1

Mrs. Martin was located because of an automobile parked in front of her house.

But the FBI would not release any details on this.

Andrews, a 34-year-old robber who escaped several times from prison, readily admitted planning and leading the gang when he was arrested in Florida.

JACKSONVILLE NEWS
July 8-1955

Bank Robbers To Face Grand Jury In Fall

Eight persons accused in the May 20 robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville are expected to face a federal grand jury on Sept. 1, according to an Associated Press release.

U. S. Atty. Frank W. Johnson said that they will face a grand jury on that date unless they plead guilty before then.

Joe Paul Andrews, 34, Gadsden, already has confessed at Tampa, Fla., that he planned and engineered the \$86,727 robbery, officers reported. Andrews now is being held in the Jefferson County jail along with six other persons.

Alton D. Ellis, 41, is being held in Las Vegas, Nev.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation said another man believed to have been one of the actual participants in the robbery still is being hunted. He was identified as R. O. Martin, formerly of Aniston.

Those in jail in Birmingham besides Andrews are Thomas N. Pendley, 22; Preston Henderson, 26, Gadsden; Etherton Henderson, 21, Gadsden; Mrs. Burma Bell Andrews, Gadsden; Mrs. Mary Evelyn Ellis, 34, and Marie Marie Martin.

FBI Records Show

Robbing Banks In Alabama Is Poor-Paying Profession

BY BILL MOBLEY

Robbing banks in Alabama is a poor paying profession, according to FBI records.

Bold bandits who have pulled what they thought at the time to be slick jobs have ended up in the federal pen before they got a chance to spend their fast bucks.

In a summary of recent bank stickups, FBI Agent in Charge James A. Robey said yesterday all have been cleared by the arrest and identification of the robbers except those participating in the Jacksonville job.

Mr. Robey said the robbery at Jacksonville yesterday is the third bank job in Alabama reported to the FBI this year.

Only one was reported in the state last year, Mr. Robey said.

The man in that case, convicted of robbing the Vina Bank, in Franklin County, of \$40 in pennies, is now serving a prison sentence.

Two men arrested after a \$200 robbery of a Gadsden bank two weeks ago are in jail awaiting trial.

Awaiting Trial

Another man arrested last week after a \$600 job at Gordo is in Pickens County Jail awaiting trial on federal charges.

One of the quickest solutions to an Alabama bank robbery occurred in 1951 following a \$17,000 robbery of the Bank of Hackleburg, in Marion County.

A lone bandit pulled the job and local FBI agents were waiting at his home in Homewood when he got out of his car.

He had about half the money under the seat of his car and had left the other in a Homewood drug store in a box covered with newspapers.

The man, posing as a salesman for aluminum windows, had aroused the suspicion of a banker in another small town and the banker had contacted the FBI office.

An agent had checked on the

"salesman," got his name, auto tag number and all other necessary information. As soon as they were informed of the Hackleburg robbery details they knew where to wait.

Tapped Him On Shoulder

They tapped the man on the shoulder as he got out of his car and his lawyer called later and told them where the rest of the money was cached.

Another budding bank robber went by the FBI office a few days before pulling a stick-up at the Mountain Brook Branch of Birmingham Trust to see how hot he was.

He was pretty hot stuff up in Kentucky at the time but the heat had not started generating in the Birmingham area until he robbed the Mountain Brook bank of \$9211 on Jan. 9, 1951.

The man was apprehended March 19, 1951, after Mountain Brook Police Chief Ray Tibbett recognized his picture on an FBI folder at Birmingham Police Headquarters.

Chief Tibbett was off duty and in the bank during the robbery.

One of the largest and most sensational bank robberies in the Birmingham district was the West End job.

On the morning of Jan. 23, 1953, four bandits robbed the suburban branch of The First National Bank of \$52,000.

One of the men was killed about a year and a half later in a gun battle with Florida police and another was sentenced to death in the electric chair for killing an officer during the gun fight.

One of the others was convicted here for participating in the West End robbery and the other pleaded guilty and turned state's evidence. Of all crimes that don't pay, it looks like bank robbery is one that doesn't pay the most, according to the record.

JACKSONVILLE NEWS
July 8-1955

COMMENDATION FOR THE F.B.I.

The efficiency of the F.B.I. has become very real to citizens of Jacksonville during the past week since the capture of three of the bandits who robbed the First National Bank on May 20. It appears to be only a matter of time until they will have all the men involved behind bars.

Although the robbery was regarded by most local citizens as the best planned in the history of the state, closely resembling the unsolved robbery of the Chase Manhattan Branch in New York City, it took the F.B.I. only 10 days to apprehend the leader of the gang, and two assistants followed in close order. While the newspapers stated that there were practically no clues for authorities to work on, the F.B.I., with its efficient methods, knew within a few days or hours, the most likely suspects.

Television has demonstrated to the average viewer some of the means by which criminals are traced and brought to justice. Many of the most popular programs are based on actual crimes with the names changed. By means of fingerprints, photographs and many other proved methods, law

enforcement officers have perfected a system by which few criminals can escape detection.

The old saying that "crime does not pay" surely applies in the case of the Jacksonville robbery. The bandits, now in jail under bonds they will not be able to make, will probably draw long sentences, and most of the money they took will probably be recovered.

The News is glad the bonding company has been able to recover much of the \$86,000 stolen. The fact that banks can be insured against robbery or losses of various kinds assures bank employes of greater safety in the event of a robbery. The custom has become one of placing the safety and lives of employes ahead of the protection of money, which is right. There was a time when bank employes protected bank funds with their lives, if necessary.

Jacksonville citizens have had the bank robbery for the chief topic of conversation for several weeks now, and will probably find the going dull when all of the bandits are captured, as they surely will be—thanks to the F.B.I.

Henderson Named As Band Member

**Arrests Now Total Eight
In Jacksonville Bank Case**

By CODY HALL

Increasing arrests by the FBI in the Jacksonville bank robbery had netted eight persons today — three of them women — and the holdup was beginning to look like a family affair.

Latest to be charged was Mrs. Katherine Ellis, 34, who was picked up in Clearwater, Fla., and booked for complicity in the plot.

Agent Charles E. Weeks of the Miami FBI office identified her as the wife of Alton Ellis, 41, the second man arrested for participating in the holdup May 20.

Other Arrests Listed

FBI agents yesterday charged Preston Henderson, 26, brother-in-law of Joe Paul Andrews, the alleged leader of the bandits, and charged him with being a member of the robbery gang.

Henderson previously had been charged only with concealing knowledge of the holdup and receiving stolen funds.

Joe Paul Andrews and sister of with the robbery and Etheron is held as an accessory. The eighth is Mrs. Ellis. She was scheduled to be given a preliminary hearing in Tampa today. The warrant for her arrest was issued in Birmingham Monday, the FBI announced.

*Birmingham News
JUNE 22-1955*

*Birmingham Post Herald
JUNE 21-1955*

**Bank Robbery Suspect
Brought To Birmingham**

A 22-year-old cook charged with taking part in the \$86,727 robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville, Ala., was brought here yesterday.

Six of the eight persons arrested since the biggest bank holdup in Alabama history are now being held in the Jefferson County Jail.

Thomas N. Pendley, 22-year-old Clearwater, Fla., cook, was brought here from Bismarck, N. D., where he was arrested June 5. Five men and three women now are in custody.

The FBI said Pendley was one of four armed men who robbed the bank last May 20 after kidnapping Cashier Jessie N. Wood from his home and forcing him to admit them to the bank.

Pendley was the last of the gunmen to be captured, according to the FBI.

Pendley was arrested at Bismarck when he attracted suspicion by flashing large amounts of money.

With the others Pendley is being held in heavy bail pending prosecution in Federal Court.

The others already in jail here were Joe Paul Andrews, 34-year-old former Alabama convict, whom the FBI called the brains of the robbery; his wife, Burma Nell Andrews, 21; Mrs. Kathryn Ellis, 34; Preston Henderson, 26; and Etheron Henderson, 21, brother of Mrs. Andrews.

All were residents of Clearwater when arrested, and Andrews had worked as a cook in the same restaurant with Pendley.

Andrews pleaded guilty to federal bank robbery charges at his arraignment in Tampa, Fla. Mrs. Andrews is charged with aiding and abetting the robbery; Mrs. Ellis is charged with aiding and abetting; Preston Henderson is charged with robbery and Etheron Henderson is held as an accessory.

In custody elsewhere are Alton D. Ellis, former Clearwater insurance man arrested at Las Vegas, Nev., on bank robbery charges; and Mrs. Ellen Marie Martin, Clearwater waitress arrested in Roseburg, Ore., on a charge of aiding and abetting the bandits.

Arrests made in the \$86,000 robbery so far include:

Joe Paul Andrews, 34, who has pleaded guilty to robbery charges. He was arrested in Clearwater, Fla., the first to be charged in the case.

Alton D. Ellis, 41, who was arrested in Las Vegas, Nev., last week and is awaiting extradition.

Andrews' Wife Held

Mrs. Ellen Marie Heyrend Martin, 46, who was arrested in a four-room house in the little logging town of Roseburg, Ore., where FBI agents traced her. She is accused of being with the others "prior to and after the robbery."

Thomas Navarro Pendley, 22, of Clearwater, who was apprehended in Bismarck, N. D.

Mrs. Burma Nell Andrews, wife

of Joe Paul Andrews and sister of Preston Henderson, who was arrested in Clearwater with Andrews and her two brothers and charged with being an accessory. Preston Henderson and Etheron Henderson, brothers of Mrs. Andrews. Preston is now charged

with the robbery and Etheron is held as an accessory.

The eighth is Mrs. Ellis. She was scheduled to be given a preliminary hearing in Tampa today. The warrant for her arrest was issued in Birmingham Monday, the FBI announced.

**Fifth man accused
in Jax bank holdup**

A fifth man has been charged with robbery in the May 20 hold-up of the bank at Jacksonville, Ala.

James A. Robey, special agent in charge of the Birmingham office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said a complaint charging R. C. Martin, alias Richard C.

Martin, with bank robbery has been filed with U. S. Commissioner Louise O. Charlton.

MARTIN, 35, was born at Mansfield and has lived at Anniston. He was described as being five feet, 11 1/2 inches tall, weighing 165 pounds, of medium build. He is being sought.

Meanwhile, six of eight others arrested in connection with the

\$86,727 robbery are now in custody here.

The FBI identified Pendley as one of four men accused of starting the May 20 raid, the biggest bank holdup in Alabama history. The FBI said all are behind bars.

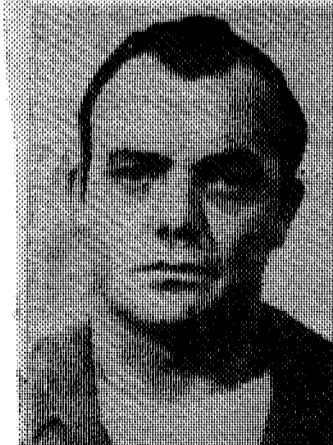
THESE FOUR, the FBI said, are Joe Paul Andrews, 34, former Alabama convict called the brains of the robbery; Preston Henderson, 26; Alton D. Ellis, and Pendley.

Federal officers said the others in custody and charges against them are Etheron Henderson, 21, held as an accessory; Mrs. Burma Nell Andrews, wife of the ex-convict and sister of the Hendersons; Mrs. Kathryn Ellis, 34, wife of Ellis, and Mrs. Ellen Marie Martin, all charged with aiding and abetting the crime.

All were residents of former residents of Clearwater at the time of their arrests. Only Ellis, who was arrested in Las Vegas, and Mrs. Martin, who was picked up at Roseburg, Ore., have not yet been brought to Birmingham to face Federal Court prosecution.

Andrews pleaded guilty when arraigned at Tampa, Fla.

PENDLEY WAS arrested June 5 by officers who became suspicious because he was flashing large sums of money.



Fifth man accused—R. C. Martin

EIGHT NOW IN JAIL

'At Least One' More Sought In Bank Case

JACKSONVILLE, Ala. (AP)—Little more than a month after Alabama's biggest bank robbery, eight persons are in jails on charges connected with the \$86,727 holdup.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is still looking for at least one more man. The FBI says R. C. Martin, 35, is the only one of five known actual participants in the carefully planned May 20 raid who is still at large.

Officers have recovered about \$46,000 of the loot, leaving a little more than \$40,000 still unaccounted for. Four cars in possession of the accused gunmen also have been impounded.

The bank's bonding company offered a \$6,000 reward for arrest and conviction of the robbers, and already has received several claims for the money. The hopeful officers must wait until final disposition in the cases in court before the award will be made.

'Carefully Planned'

Officers called the holdup of the First National Bank of Jacksonville the most carefully planned in their experience. Armed bandits kidnaped cashier Jesse N. Wood from his home and forced him to admit them to the bank before other employees began arriving.

They met arriving workers at the door of the bank, and kept them bound and under guard while the robbery was in progress.

The bandits seemed to know the exact schedule of every bank worker and official, as well as the 8:30 a. m. (CST) opening time of the bank vault.

They made a clean getaway although a Southwide alarm was broadcast within a few minutes after they left Wood at his home.

But within two weeks the accused brains of the bandit gang, Alabama ex-convict Joe Paul Andrews, 34, was captured at Clearwater, Fla. Other arrests followed in Florida, Nevada, Oregon and North Dakota.

Andrews pleaded guilty to the robbery when arraigned at Tampa, Fla.

Others charged with actual participation in the bank robbery and now in custody are Thomas N. Pendley, 22; Preston Henderson, 26, and Alton D. Ellis, 41.

Others In Group

Etheron Henderson, 21, is being held as an accessory. Mrs. Burma Nell Andrews, wife of the ex-convict, Mrs. Kathryn Ellis, 34, wife of Ellis, and Mrs. Ellen Marie Martin are in jail charged with aiding and abetting the robbery.

All except Mrs. Martin and Ellis are being held at Birmingham, Ala., for federal court action.

All the eight were residents or former residents of Clearwater, Fla., where Andrews and Pendley had worked together as cooks. Mrs. Martin also was Clearwater waitress for a time.

The FBI said that after the robbery, Ellis drove through North Dakota and left Pendley there before going on to Las Vegas, Nev., where officers were waiting for him on his arrival.

Martin, the fugitive, is a former resident of Anniston, Ala., near Jacksonville. The Andrews and the

Hendersons, brothers of Mrs. Andrews, also came from this same area.

Pendley was picked up in Bismarck, N.D., June 5 after he attracted attention of officers by flashing large sums of money. Like the others he offered no resistance to arrest.

ANNISTON STAR
JUNE 24-1955



ANNISTON STAR
July 15-1955

Ninth Person Held In Bank Holdup Case

Itinerant Cowboy Nabbed, Charged With Aiding Suspect In Crime

BIRMINGHAM (AP)—A ninth person—a 44-year-old itinerant cowboy—has been jailed in connection with the \$86,727 robbery of a Jacksonville, Ala., bank May 20.

He is Milford Garrett (Tex) Henderson, who is being held in the El Paso County jail at Colorado Springs, Colorado, under bond of \$2,000.

J. A. Robey, special agent in charge of the Birmingham office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said Henderson is charged with aiding another suspect being sought in the robbery.

Henderson was arrested Wednesday at a ranch near Colorado Springs, and arraigned yesterday before the federal commissioner at Colorado Springs, at which time he demanded a hearing. Federal authorities said a hearing would be scheduled.

Robey said that although Henderson is not accused of participating in the robbery, he is charged with hindering the arrest of R. C. Martin, one of the five actually charged with the robbery.

Robey said Henderson, the tenth person connected with the well-planned robbery, was with Martin for about two weeks following the robbery.

Martin, 35, has not been apprehended.

Alton D. Ellis, 41, one of those charged with the actual robbery, yesterday was transferred to the Jefferson County jail from Las Vegas, Nev., where he had been held since his arrest about a month ago.

Others being held in Jefferson County jail here include Alabama ex-convict Joe Paul Andrews, 34, who pleaded guilty to the robbery when arraigned at Tampa, Fla.

Thomas N. Pendley, 22, and Preston Henderson, 26, are the other two charged with the actual robbery.

Etheron Henderson, 21, is being held as an accessory. Mrs. Burma Nell Andrews, wife of the ex-convict, Mrs. Kathryn Ellis, 34, wife of Ellis, and Mrs. Ellen Marie Martin are in jail charged with aiding and abetting.

BIRMINGHAM NEWS
July 29-1955

Nine already arrested

Jacksonville bank robbery investigation narrows to a hunt for an Anniston man

The Jacksonville, Ala., bank robbery investigation has narrowed down to a hunt for an Anniston man who probably has money to spend.

The object of a nationwide hunt is R. C. Martin, 33, who has worked as a truck driver, automobile mechanic with actually having taken part in the bank holdup.

Wanted circulars describe him as 5-11 and weighing 165 pounds, having dark brown hair, brown eyes and a medium complexion. He has a small scar on his upper lip and a sunken scar above his right eye. Tattooed on his right forearm are crossed guns and "U. S. Army, Co. G, 22, INF."

MARTIN IS THE 10th person wanted in connection with the \$86,727 bank robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville. About \$40,000 of the loot still is missing, according to a bonding company official.

The robbery was the largest bank hold-up in Alabama history.

Eight of the nine persons already arrested are in the Jefferson County jail.

The ninth, Milford Garrett Henderson, about 35, a former resident of Oklahoma, was arrested near Colorado Springs, Colo., several weeks ago. He is being held at Denver. Hender-

son is charged with being an accessory in the case, according to James A. Robey, agent in charge of the FBI in Birmingham.

Bond for \$5000 was set for Henderson, much lighter than that set for the others.

U. S. ATTY. FRANK M. JOHNSON in Birmingham is preparing to present charges against the eight held here to a Federal Grand Jury next September.

Four of them are charged with actual participation in the hold-up. They are Joe Paul Andrews, 34; Thomas N. Pendley, 22; Preston Henderson, 26, and Alton D. Ellis, 41.

Preston Henderson is a brother of Milford Garrett Henderson.

ACCUSED of being accessories are Etheron Henderson, 21, a brother of Preston; Mrs. Burma Nell Andrews, young wife of Andrews and sister of the Henderson brothers; Mrs. Kathryn Ellis, 34, wife of Ellis, and Mrs. Ellen Marie Martin, a waitress about 40 years old.

Andrews is described as "the brains" of the hold-up. He pleaded guilty when arraigned at Tampa, Fla.

One Mistake Flaw In States Biggest Bank Holdup

Gadsden Detective Chief J. H. Snyder Credited With First Tip Breaking Jacksonville Robbery

(Second of two articles on Alabama's biggest bank robbery).
By JAMES W. SMITH, JR.
Times Staff Writer
The bandits who got \$86,000 in a holdup of the First National Bank of Jacksonville last May 30



CHIEF J. H. SNYDER
... he supplied the clue

made one mistake, and a veteran Gadsden police officer spotted it, starting a chain of events which led to the arrest of nine persons by the FBI.

Detective Chief J. H. Snyder, now in his 19th year with the police department, supplied the FBI with the tip which broke Alabama's biggest bank robbery case. Oddly enough, the mistake was made by the man the FBI has identified as the "brains" of the robbery.

When news of the holdup broke, the story carried a description of the two men who pulled the stick-up in the bank. Snyder got a "grapevine" report that Joe Paul Andrews had been in town the night before the robbery. The description of one of the bandits fit him. Andrews was a good suspect because Snyder had helped send him to prison once on a robbery charge.

Officers have said the robbery was planned in Gadsden and Attalla, where those charged with the crime lodged in a hotel and motels. Snyder said Andrews "was somewhere he wasn't supposed to be and I found out about it."

As a result of this mistake, Andrews, his wife, Burma Nell; A. D. Ellis, his wife, Katheryn; R. C. Martin, his wife, Ellen; Preston and Etheron Henderson and Thomas N. Pendley are now in jail awaiting trial on charges of robbing the bank, aiding and abetting the robbery and transporting stolen money. The U.S. will contend that the following events occurred in connection with the case.

Two days before the robbery, Andrews went into the bank to obtain money wrappers. He inquired about bank officials and then telephoned the Wood home from a drugstore to make sure he had the right address. He was accompanied by Preston Henderson and Ellis. Before returning to Attalla, the three went over the escape route, a trip which was repeated the following day.

On the morning of the robbery the five men ate breakfast in a Gadsden restaurant, where Ellis "told off a waitress" because he didn't get an extra helping of jelly for his toast.

In Jacksonville, they went to Wood's home, explained the reason for the visit and those well-laid plans were being executed. Several persons saw Wood walking down the street with Andrews and Pendley, but they said they thought they were businessmen. Ellis was seen sitting in the getaway car at Germania Springs by two motorists, but they said he appeared to be taking a nap.

Three-year-old Elaine Wood was the only person who saw the faces of Martin and Henderson. Officers met a stone wall in looking for clues to the identity of the bandits, who had forethought enough to dodge the main highways. Using a country road, they crossed the Coosa River on the Hokes Bluff Ferry and arrived in Attalla in a jovial mood.

A description of the two bandits in the bank was carried in The Times Friday afternoon. Snyder got a tip that Andrews had been in town and the case was in the first stages of solution. Andrews' picture was taken from police files, turned over to the FBI and he was identified by bank employes as the bandit "who did all the talking."

While working as a cook-dish-washer in a Clearwater restaurant, Andrews visited Gadsden and traded his old truck for a car. He returned here from Florida a few days later. About the same time, Pendley and the Ellis couple registered in a Gadsden hotel.

where they were visited by Andrews.

Martin was sent a telegram, advising him that his presence here was desired and the eight registered at two Attalla motels, using their right names and giving correct numbers from automobile license plates. Everything was so well-planned they made no attempt to use phony names, nor did the two who got the cash make any attempt to hide their faces.

Snyder has the answer that Andrews wanted from the FBI: "Where did I slip? Who saw me that wasn't supposed to?" Andrews was quoted as saying he knew he had made a mistake somewhere and that he would figure it out.

The chief of detectives never reveals the source of his information and has, on occasions, refused to divulge such confidential

matter to mayors and over-eager police commissioners. Contending that he is paid to solve crimes, Snyder said "where I get my information is nobody's business."

During the early days of the case, a Times reporter decided "something was up" when Snyder, Police Chief C. Fay Boman and FBI agents kept huddling in the police department. When asked about the robbery, Snyder told the reporter, in confidence, the whole story as it had developed to that point.

The reporter agreed to hold the story until all the suspects had been captured, admitting a break in the news might hinder the case.

Snyder received thanks from the FBI for his work and praise from Police Commissioner Cecil Weatherbee, who termed the break in the case "one of the best jobs any police officer ever did in solving a case."

IDENTIFICATION
ORDER NO. 2830
June 15, 1955

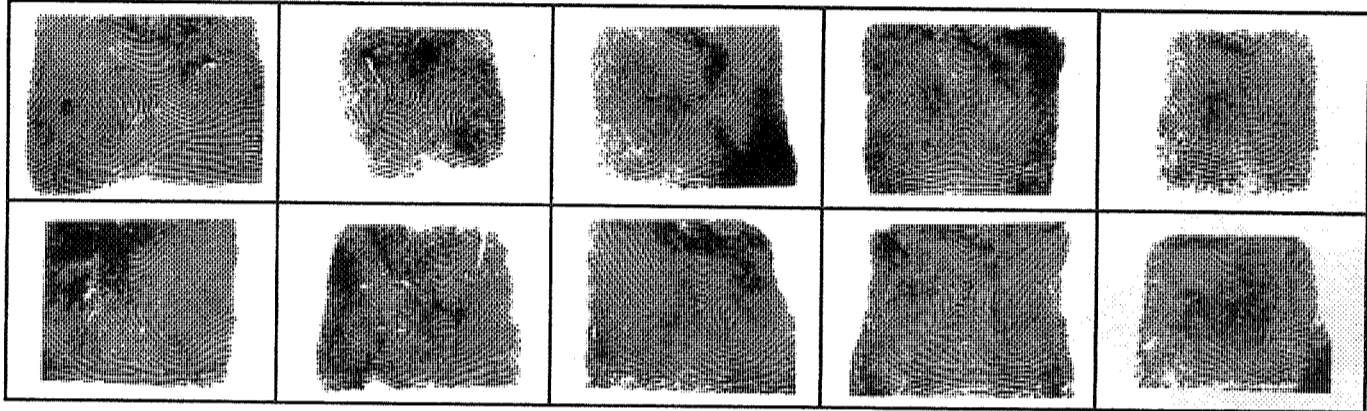
WANTED BY THE FBI

F.P.C. 14 M 26 W IOM
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FBI No. 4,281,056

R. C. MARTIN,
with alias: RICHARD C. MARTIN

BANK ROBBERY



Photographs taken April, 1954

R. C. Martin

DESCRIPTION

Age 33, born June 4, 1922, Munford, Alabama (not verified); Height, 5'11½"; Weight, 165 pounds; Build, medium; Hair, dark brown; Eyes, brown; Complexion, medium; Race, white; Nationality, American; Occupations, auto mechanic, truck driver, farmer; Scars and marks, tattoo of crossed guns and "U.S. Army Co. G 22nd INF" on right forearm, small cut scar upper lip, sunken scar above right eye.

CRIMINAL RECORD

Martin has been convicted for receiving stolen property.

CAUTION

MARTIN MAY BE ARMED AND SHOULD BE CONSIDERED EXTREMELY DANGEROUS.

A complaint was filed before a U. S. Commissioner at Birmingham, Alabama, on June 2, 1955, charging Martin with violating Title 18, U. S. Code, Section 2113, the Federal Bank Robbery Statute.

PLEASE FURNISH ANY INFORMATION WHICH MAY ASSIST IN LOCATING THIS INDIVIDUAL TO THE DIRECTOR, FBI OR TO THE NEAREST DIVISION OF THE FBI AS LISTED ON THE BACK OF THIS NOTICE. FOR READY REFERENCE, THE TELEPHONE NUMBER OF THE FBI OFFICE COVERING THIS TERRITORY IS LISTED BELOW:

IDENTIFICATION
ORDER NO. 2830

CALL BIRMINGHAM 4-7711

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER, DIRECTOR
Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington 25, D. C.



The Birmingham News
Sept 17, 1955

At least nine persons indicted in Jax robbery

A federal Grand Jury has indicted at least nine persons in connection with the sensational \$86,000 Jacksonville bank robbery last May 20.

Only the names of persons already in custody can be made public at the time the indictments are returned.

U. S. Atty. Frank M. Johnson Jr. said that true bills were returned against each of the nine persons being held in Jefferson County Jail on charges growing out of the robbery. Seven were indicted for bank robbery and two on charges resulting from the hold-up.

INDICTED FOR bank robbery were Joe Paul Andrews, Thomas N. Pendley, Preston Henderson, Alton Ellis, Burma Nell Andrews, Catherine Ellis, Ellen Heyrend.

Milford G. Henderson was indicted for being an accessory after the fact and an indictment was returned against Ethron Henderson for transportation of the securities and failure to notify authorities.

The Federal Grand Jury reported to Federal Judge Hobart H. Grooms at 2 p.m. Friday that it had completed investigation of 109 cases. The Grand Jury returned 99 true bills and 10 no bills.

OTHER CASES which had been scheduled for investigation by this Grand Jury were charges against former City Police Officers Paul Hubert Brandenburg and Ralph S. Watson for allegedly furnishing bootleggers with non-taxpaid whisky, and federal income tax violation charges against Dr. Robert Clark Prather, Phenix City physician, and Flora Mae Tyson, Dothan Negro school teacher.

A 10th person, R. M. Martin, is still being sought by the FBI in connection with the Jacksonville robbery.

The Birmingham News
September 17, 1955

Last of Jacksonville bank suspects taken by FBI in Texas

The 10th and last suspect sought by the FBI in the Hollywood-like \$86,000 Jacksonville bank robbery has been arrested in Houston, Tex.

James A. Robey, special agent in charge of the FBI office here, said Saturday that R. C. Martin of Anniston, though armed, surrendered quietly Friday night when FBI agents tracked him to a residential section of Houston.

Martin had only \$21 on his person when arrested.

"He was the last person sought" in the clockwork holdup last May 20, Agent Robey said.

NINE OTHER MEN ARE already in County Jail here awaiting arraignment following Federal Grand Jury indictments.

Martin, between 35 and 40 years old, was specifically named in the federal indictments here. He is expected to be allowed to make bond today. The recommended bond is \$75,000.

Should he be unable to make bond, Martin will be transferred to Birmingham's County Jail.

Martin has a long criminal record, said Robey, and has served time at Kilby Prison. It was at Kilby that he and Joe Paul Andrews—presumed to be the "brains" of the robbery operation—escaped together. Both Andrews, of Gadsden, and Martin were recaptured late in Mississippi.

September 17, 1955

Local Man Seized In Texas

Martin Arrested In Bank Robbery

By SAM JONES

FBI agents in Houston, Tex., last night arrested Richard C. Martin, 34, the last of 10 persons sought in the \$86,000 robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville last May 20.

Martin, a former resident of Anniston, was taken at the home of a relative of a "female friend" according to George C. Burton, special agent in charge of the Houston FBI office.

He offered no resistance, although he had a .38 calibre Colt automatic with him.

"I've been expecting you fellows," the agents quoted Martin as saying.

Believed Holdup Man

Martin is believed by the FBI to be one of the actual holdup men who held Cashier Jesse Wood's family as hostages and subdued the entire bank staff in executing the biggest bank robbery in Alabama history.

Nine persons arrested at scattered points over the country less than a month after the robbery were indicted by a federal grand jury in Birmingham last week on federal bank robbery and accessory charges.

Martin had only about \$21 in his possession on his arrest.

Of the approximately \$86,000 taken in the holdup, some \$46,000 has been recovered and about \$40,000 remains to be found.

Martin, according to the agents, had traveled extensively in the months since the robbery. He returned to Houston about a week ago from Mexico.

\$75,000 Bond Urged

U. S. Attorney Frank M. Johnson in Birmingham has recommended that bond of \$75,000 be set for Martin. He will be taken before a U. S. commissioner today for arraignment.

All nine of the persons indicted in the robbery last week lived or worked in the Clearwater, Fla., area at the time of the crime.

Indicted for violation of the federal bank robbery act and held under heavy bonds in Birmingham are:

Joe Paul Andrews, 34, called the ringleader of the holdup gang; his wife Burma Nell Andrews; Thomas Pendley, 22; Preston Henderson, 26; Alton Ellis, 41; his wife, Catherine Ellis, 34; and Ellen Heyrend, 40.

Indicted as accomplices were Milford G. Henderson, 46, and Ethron Henderson, 21.

Crime Stirred State

Jacksonville and the entire state was stirred by the daring, well-planned robbery early in the morning of May 20.

Four gunmen gained entry to

the home of Cashier Wood in the college town and two of them forced Wood to accompany them to the bank while the other pair tied up Mrs. Wood and their two small daughters and held them at home under threat of death.

Wood was compelled to open the bank and wait with the two robbers until the main vault's time lock opened at 8:30 a. m. Bank employes were quietly ushered into the building as they came to work and tied up by the thugs so that no alarm was given, and a holiday notice was posted on the bank's front door. The robbers escaped by automobile after warning Wood and his family to keep quiet for 30 minutes.

ALABAMA BANK ROBBERIES

Case of the bandits who fled by ferry

EDITOR'S NOTE: Joe Paul Andrews was handsome, intelligent, persuasive. He master-minded the \$86,476 holdup of the First National Bank of Jacksonville, Alabama's largest bank robbery. But Andrews and the nine who listened to him had little time to enjoy their haul. This is another in a series of articles on Alabama bank robberies of the past decade.

BY JAMES SPOTSWOOD, News staff writer

The May 20, 1955, holdup of the First National Bank of Jacksonville rates a big No. 1 for two reasons.

The armed theft of \$86,476 is Alabama's largest bank robbery.

As far as FBI records show, the 10 people who were convicted in the case are the largest number ever involved in such a crime in the United States.

Five men took part in the actual holdup. This involved kidnaping banker Jesse Wood from his home, seizing employees as they entered the bank, and looting the vault when it opened.

The operation required approximately 97 minutes. The 10 persons convicted received 159 years and two days in federal penitentiaries.

Five in prison

THE FIVE principals are still behind bars. The others are trying to forget or atone for their fearful mistake.

At least two of these minor participants are hard-working

model members of their communities.

These people live with the knowledge of their past, and the knowledge of what exposure might cost. This is the added price that amateurs are charged in a crime that FBI records show doesn't pay off for professionals, either.

Joe Paul Andrews, formerly of Gadsden, planned and led the holdup.

Joe Paul could have been a banker, instead of a bank robber. He was intelligent, handsome and persuasive, qualities banks like in their front offices.

He drove a truck as a route salesman and he rose to assistant manager of a shoe store. But the money didn't roll in fast enough, and he turned to an unsuccessful career as a criminal.

Plotted behind bars

HIS RECORDED career in FBI records began in 1939 when he was 18 years old. At the time of the Jacksonville holdup, he was out of prison on parole, and his body was scarred by bullet wounds received in an earlier brush with law enforcement officers.

Andrews, who always is a model prisoner, was paroled after he began reading the Bible and preaching to fellow inmates. He said later that he had begun plotting the robbery before the gates to freedom opened.

Andrews went to Clearwater, Fla., where he worked in a combination restaurant-bakery as a dishwasher. It was here that he met Thomas Novarro Pendley, a young

punk who worshipped him, and Alton Dale Ellis, whose big, fast car made him valuable later.

Preparations for the crime began several months before that fateful May 20 when Andrews was visited by R. C. Martin, a fellow graduate of the state prison system.

Andrews and Martin were the leaders in the planning, but Andrews did the recruiting and decided who would perform what jobs in the holdup. He wanted a tough, steady-nerved gunman with him in the bank, and favored Martin.

But when he and Martin robbed a drive-in theater he said Martin "shook like a leaf," and scratched him for the assignment. Instead he chose Pendley after observing the coolness with which the young hoodlum robbed a drug store.

Plan at picnic

ANDREWS RECRUITED Ellis, a debt-ridden insurance agent, as driver and supplier of the getaway car. He rounded out the top five with the selection of Preston Leroy Henderson, another Alabamian.

Some time before D-Day, Andrews was host to a gay family picnic on a sunny West Florida beach. Between swimming and



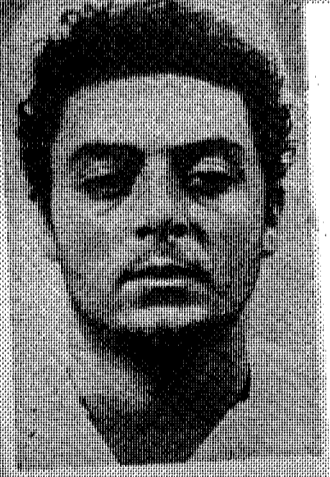
R. C. MARTIN
... Shook like a leaf



PRESTON HENDERSON
... Robbed piggy bank



JOE PAUL ANDREWS
... Wouldn't look outside



THOMAS NOVARRO
PENDLEY
... Hero worshipper

Article continued on next page

munching on sandwiches, the plotters mapped details of the robbery.

The growing group, which now included three women and an innocent child, now went north to Gadsden in two cars. Andrews and Martin cased the bank at Jacksonville.

One of the bank's officials was T. Weller Smith, who was Alabama's first public safety director after the department was modernized.

Smith later remembered that he had seen Andrews in the bank two days before the holdup. "I may forget a name but I always remember a face," he said.

Smith's identification of a picture as that of the robbery leader helped link Andrews to the holdup. The FBI was tracking

Turn to Page 1

Robbery

Continued from Page 1

him and his associates across the nation while he was still congratulating himself on a perfect crime.

Wear masks

ON THE DAY of the holdup, Andrews and Pendley went to the Jesse Wood home about 7:15 a.m. Andrews knocked on the door and when Mrs. Wood came to the door said he was "Mr. Jackson." When she turned to call the bank official the criminals forced their way inside.

They were joined by Preston Henderson and Martin, who wore stocking masks which had been fashioned by the women. These two men guarded Mrs. Wood and her two daughters while the other men took Wood to the bank in his car. While killing time at the house the latter pair robbed the children's piggy bank.

Under Andrews' direction, the holdup went smoothly. He forced Wood to meet other workers as they entered the bank, and ask that they not make trouble as his family was being held hostage. The good-looking ex-con calmed the women employes, two of whom were pregnant, with pleasant talk.

Pendley, sweating profusely, held a sawed-off shotgun on the workers.

Have to use ferry

AFTER THE HOLDUP the robbers drove to Wood's house in his car, picked up Martin and Preston Henderson, and drove to where Ellis was waiting in his 1954 Lincoln Capri.

In their successful getaway the gunmen added another possible first to modern bank robbery. In taking a circuitous route they were forced to use a ferry at Hokes Bluff, one of the last ferries in Alabama.

Once in the clear, the men met their waiting women and scattered westward, flinging money left and right in their giddy career.

All were in custody within three weeks except for Martin, who was free for four months until captured in Houston, Tex. His arrest was delayed because he relaxed for some weeks in Mexico, where he said he spent most of his share of the loot.

Two others nabbed

TWO OTHER MEN in addition to the original five men and

three women involved were taken in custody during the investigation that followed the robbery.

Andrews returned to Clearwater 12 days after the holdup, driving a new Packard and wearing tight Texas blue jeans. His pants were so tight, in fact, that when he went into a restaurant he had to leave his pistol in the Packard.

FBI agents arrested Andrews and his companions there.

Andrews and Martin each was sentenced to 30 years in prison. The faithful Pendley, nabbed when his gambling and lavish spending attracted attention, drew 25 years, and Henderson 20. The others were sentenced to terms ranging from a year and a day to 12 years.

The FBI recovered \$47,564 or 55 per cent of the stolen money, plus two new automobiles and a used car bought with loot from the robbery.

Andrews is now an inmate of the federal penitentiary at Atlanta. If he has had his wish he has a cell on a lower floor. He once told an officer he does not like to see over the wall when he is in prison. The sight of freedom while he is a convict disturbs him.



ALTON D. ELLIS
Hard-pressed salesman



PHOTOGRAPHER THREATENED—Preston L. Henderson, 26, one of the men accused in the Jacksonville Bank holdup, curses local Photographer Ed Casper as he takes a picture after the arraignment in Federal Court here yesterday. Also shown are, from left to right, one of the guards (wearing a dark suit), Thomas N. Pendley, 23; Joe Paul Andrews, 33, hiding his head in the crook of his elbow; Henderson, and R. C. Martin, 34, hiding behind his arraignment papers. The four pleaded not guilty to bank robbery charges and will be brought here from Birmingham with the other three men and three women to stand trial on Oct. 31.



WOMEN ARRAIGNED—Leaving Federal court here yesterday following arraignment are, left to right: Ellen M. Heyrend, 47, charged in the Jacksonville Bank robbery; Elicia M. A. Kramck, 30, accused of mail theft, and Burma Nell Andrews, 31, also charged in the bank robbery. Mrs. Andrews is the wife of Joe Paul Andrews, called the "brains" of the bank robbery by law officers.

The Anniston Star

AP and UP News

ANNISTON, ALABAMA, MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1955



Eight Enter Pleas Of Guilty In Jacksonville Holdup Case

One Defendant Slated To Plead Later Today

Move Comes As Surprise To Packed Federal Courtroom; Other Cases To Be Heard

By CODY HALL

Eight persons charged in the \$86,000 robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville last May entered pleas of guilty in Federal court here today.

The exception was Milford G. (Tex) Henderson, 35, who is accused of hindering the arrest of R. C. Martin, authorities said. All had entered pleas of not guilty upon arraignment.

Four men in the case changed their pleas to guilty with the exception of one count and it was dismissed by Judge Hobart Grooms upon motion of U. S. Attorney Frank M. Johnson, Jr.

They were Joe Paul Andrews, 34, described by officers as the ring-leader of the holdup; Thomas N. Pendley, 23; Preston Henderson, 26; and R. C. Martin, 34.

Count Dismissed

The dismissed charge was that of forcing bank official Jesse N. Wood to accompany them to the bank. The count was a capital offense.

Others pleading guilty were Alton D. Ellis, 41; Mrs. Ellis, 34; Mrs. Andrews, 24; and Mrs. Ellen M. Heyrends, 47.

All eight were expected to be sentenced later.

The case of Milford Henderson was expected to come up this afternoon following a recess lasting until 1:30 o'clock.

Also due for trial, court officials said, are liquor conspiracy charges against J. B. Stovall, James L. (Buddy) Barnett, Willie Lee Carr, Earl D. Stone and Wallace Jemison.

Enter Guilty Pleas

Entering guilty pleas to liquor charges today were Anderson Lollar, Elmo Green, Joe Benny Green, William B. Giles and Hugh F. Robinson.

Andrews, Preston Henderson, Pendley, Ellis and Martin were charged with the bank robbery and interstate transportation of stolen money.

Charged As Accessories

The others are held on accessory charges. A tenth person arrested, Etheron Henderson, brother of Mrs. Andrews and Preston Henderson, is slated for trial in Gadsden.

The daring holdup of the bank started early on the morning of May 20 when four men appeared at the home of an official of the bank, Jesse N. Wood.

While two men held Mrs. Wood and their children as hostages, the other two accompanied Wood to the bank where employees were halted and held as they reported for work.

When the time clock opened the bank vault, the bandits scooped up the cash, returned Wood to his home and fled with their accomplices.

Arrests started about 10 days later with the apprehension of Andrews and his wife and her two brothers, Preston and Etheron Henderson, at Clearwater, Fla.

Arrested In Nevada

Ellis was arrested almost simultaneously in Las Vegas, Nev. Pendley was picked up in Bismarck, N. D.; Mrs. Heyrend in Roseburg, Ore.; Mrs. Ellis in Clearwater; M. G. Henderson, not believed related to the other Hendersons, in Colorado Springs, Col.; and Martin in Houston, Texas.

The defendants are to be represented by Attorney Walter Merrill, who was appointed by Judge Grooms.

Prosecuting will be U. S. Attorney Frank M. Johnson, Jr., who delayed taking his new office as U. S. Judge of the middle district of Alabama to wind up the cases.

Birmingham News
October 31-1955

Jacksonville bank holdup defendants go on trial

ANNISTON, Ala., Oct. 31—(AP)—Nine persons arrested after Alabama's biggest bank robbery—the \$86,727 Jacksonville holdup—were called to trial in federal court today. A 10th defendant is scheduled for trial later at Gadsden, Ala.

The First National Bank of Jacksonville was robbed last May 20. Gunmen held the wife and two children of a bank official hostage while the holdup was in progress.

Five of the defendants are charged with staging the bank robbery, while the others—including wives of two of the accused gunmen—were indicted on lesser counts.

THE CASES ARE being prosecuted by U. S. Atty. Frank M. Johnson Jr., newly appointed federal judge who put off beginning his judicial duties at Montgomery to handle them.

Johnson explained that since he worked up the cases he felt that he should prosecute them.

The five men accused of staging the Jacksonville robbery are

Joe Paul Andrews, 34; Alton D. Ellis, 41; Preston Henderson, 26; Thomas N. Pendley, 23; and R. C. Martin, 34.

Others facing trial are Burma Nell Andrews, 24, wife of the ac-

cused brains of the holdup; Erine Ellis, 34, wife of Ellis; M. Heyrend, 47; Milford G. Henderson, 35; and Etheron Henderson, 21.

Etheron Henderson is tried later at Gadsden.

Gadsden Times' Writer Fills In On Robbery

James W. Smith, Jr., a staff writer for the Gadsden Times, this week wrote a series of two articles for his paper on the planning and execution of the robbery, said to be the best-planned and executed in the U. S. For the first time it was revealed what the robbers did immediately after they left Jacksonville.

At first glance, the robbery looked like the perfect crime. The robbers simply vanished into thin air after leaving the bank's car near Germania Springs and getting away in their own car, which nobody saw or could give a description of.

But the FBI was too sharp for them. It was only a short time until arrests were made, and the last member of the group was apprehended late in the summer.

Mr. Smith gave an account of what happened after that fateful morning when the bandits went to the home of Jesse Wood, assistant vice-president and cashier, held his family hostage while two of them accompanied him to the bank. There they waited for the time-lock to open the vault and tied up the bank's employees as they arrived for work. After they had scooped up about \$87,000 they left the bank in the bank's car, picked up their accomplices at the Wood home, drove to Germania Springs and abandoned the bank's car for their own.

Smith completes the story, telling how the alarm was sounded, all roads and highways blocked. Although the bandits eluded the law eleven days later four of the nine involved in the robbery were arrested in Clearwater, Fla.

The robbery was planned in Gadsden and Attalla and the bandits returned to an Attalla motel and divided the loot five ways. They appeared to be in no hurry and consumed a great deal of time laughing and talking, Smith says.

Martin and his wife delayed their departure until the following day and by that time were subjects of a three-state search.

Ellis, his wife and Pendley were the first to leave. They were followed by Andrews, his wife and Henderson. They stopped in Huntsville for lunch, but ate at separate tables and gave no indication of acquaintance in the restaurant.

The two groups were scheduled to meet again at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville on Saturday night, but this meeting did not take place. After a short visit in Tennessee, Andrews, his wife, and Henderson went to Texas via Michigan. At a Texas Air Force base, the three visited Etherton Henderson, brother of Preston and Mrs. Andrews.

While there, a telegram came advising Henderson of a death in the family. The four left Texas and came back to Alabama, Andrews and his wife to Gadsden and the Hendersons to DeKalb County. FBI agents were waiting in DeKalb so the Hendersons did not attend the funeral.

The Andrews stayed in Gadsden for a short time and departed for Clearwater, Fla., where FBI agents had been waiting almost a week. A gun and \$500 were recovered by officers after Andrews left the house in Gadsden.

Andrews and his wife were arrested in Clearwater, with her brothers.

In the meantime, Ellis, his wife and Pendley, went to Minot, N. D., where Ellis had lived for seven years. He wanted to pay a few bills. They left Pendley there and they went on to Las Vegas, where they were arrested upon their arrival.

Pendley stayed in North Dakota and made the mistake of tipping a waitress \$300, which brought about his arrest.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin took separate ways in New Orleans. He promised to meet her but headed east after officers closed in on his wife. He was reported to be traveling on a motorcycle, his part of the loot in "saddlebags". In Oklahoma City, the trail got "hot" again. Martin was now driving a green car. To Knoxville, Little Rock, Wyoming and finally Texas, officers followed relentlessly. He was arrested in Houston. Mrs. Martin had already been arrested in Roseburg, Ore.

All are now in jail in Birmingham awaiting trial.

F. Johnson To Prosecute Holdup Case

Defendants Due For Trial Soon

Jasper Attorney To Take Federal Judgeship On Nov. 7

The 10 defendants accused in the robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville last May will be prosecuted in Federal Court here next week by U. S. Attorney Frank M. Johnson, Jr., who has prepared the case against them.

The district attorney made this explanation in Birmingham yesterday in view of his weekend appointment as a United States judge for the middle district of Alabama.

Federal court begins at the Post Office Building Monday and the robbery suspects are scheduled for trial at that time.

Assumes Post Nov. 7

Attorney Johnson, a native of Jasper, and a Republican, said he will not assume his new duties on the bench until Nov. 7, in order to complete the bank robbery prosecution.

Johnson was named late last week by President Eisenhower to succeed the late Judge C. B. Keasler in the post at Montgomery. The replacement to the lifetime job (\$22,500 a year) must be approved by the U. S. Senate.

Six of the defendants to be tried entered pleas of guilty at their arraignment in Anniston Oct. 11. The other four were arraigned earlier in Birmingham and also pleaded innocent.

Accused are Joe Paul Andrews, 33, described by the FBI as the brains of the \$86,000 holdup; Thomas L. Henderson, 23, Preston L. Henderson, 26, Richard C. Martin, 34, Burma Nell Andrews, 24, Alton Dale Ellis, 41, Ellen M. Heyrend, Milford G. Henderson, 35, Kathryn Ellis, 24, and Etherton Henderson.

Robbed On May 20

The Jacksonville bank was looted May 20 in a smooth, well-planned robbery that has been called the biggest bank haul in Alabama history.

The FBI had rounded up all but one of the suspects in less than a month.

W. L. Longshore, Birmingham, vice chairman of the Alabama Republican Executive Committee, said that he intends "at the present" to seek the post of U. S. attorney being vacated by Johnson. He said he would make a definite decision later.

Longshore is a former assistant district attorney.

Ralph Kennamer, Montgomery attorney and son of the late judge, also has been mentioned for the North Alabama post.

Johnson, who will be 37 Sunday, is a wounded veteran of World War I.

JUDGE HOBART GROOMS TO PRESIDE

Nine Charged In Bank Holdup Case Go On Trial In U. S. Court Tomorrow

By CODY HALL

Less than seven months after it happened, nine persons charged in connection with the \$86,000 robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville go on trial here tomorrow.

Five men are charged with the actual robbery. Three women and a sixth man are accused of aiding them before or after the robbery.

A member of the U. S. attorney's office said the bank robbery trials will lead off the session of Federal court opening here. Judge Hobart Grooms is scheduled to preside.

Charged with bank robbery and interstate transportation of stolen money are Joe Paul Andrews, 34, alias Joe Edley Paul and alias Mr. Jackson, tabbed as the ring-leader; Alton D. Ellis, 41; Preston Henderson, 26; Thomas N. Pendley, 25; and R. C. Martin, 34, the only one from Anniston and the last to be arrested.

Conspiracy Charged

Charged with conspiracy to rob a bank, receiving money from the robbery and interstate transportation of stolen money are Ellen M. Heyrend, 47, alias Ellen M. Martin and alias Mrs. R. C. Martin; Burma Nell Henderson Andrews, 24, alias Mrs. Joe Paul Andrews; and Katherine Ellis, 34, alias Mrs. Alton D. Ellis.

Milford Garrett (Tex.) Henderson, 35, is charged with aiding and assisting a bank robber, Martin, as an accessory after the fact. Described as an itinerant cowboy, he is not believed related to the other Hendersons in the case.

Last May 20 four men drove to the home of Jesse N. Wood, cashier and assistant vice-president of the Jacksonville bank, about 7:30 a. m.

Gaining entrance to Wood's home, the robbers entered and stayed in the house holding Mrs.

Wood and their two children as hostages while the others forced Wood to accompany them to the bank.

They waited patiently there while the employees reported for work that Friday morning and as they entered they were led to a back room where most were tied with cords brought along for the purpose.

Patience the robbers waited until the time lock opened the bank vault. Packing up the cash, they drove Wood back to his home where they let him out and picked up their accomplices and fled.

Turns In Alarm

Wood turned in an alarm immediately and local, state and federal officers flocked to the scene to launch a nationwide manhunt for the men who pulled what has been termed Alabama's biggest bank robbery.

Employees of the bank were questioned extensively for descriptions of the bandits and were asked to look at photographs of known robbers.

The search began to pay off almost immediately. Within two weeks the first arrests had been made.

Joe Paul Andrews, ex-convict and onetime preacher, was arrested in Clearwater, Fla., with his wife, Preston and Etherton Henderson were also charged.

Almost simultaneously, officers arrested Ellis, a former insurance salesman, in Las Vegas, Nev.

Pendley, although armed, was picked up in early June by agents at Bismarck, N. D. The next day Mrs. Heyrend was arrested in Roseburg, Ore. Mrs. Ellis was charged in Clearwater June 8.

In mid-July, authorities arrested Milford Henderson in Colorado Springs, Colo., for hindering the arrest of Martin and in Septem-

ber the net closed on Martin in Houston, Texas.

Merrill Appointed

Four were arraigned in Birmingham and on Oct. 11 Andrews and his wife, Pendley, Preston Henderson, Martin and Mrs. Heyrend were arraigned here, pleading not guilty to the charges.

Attorney Walter Merrill of Anniston was appointed by Judge Grooms to represent the defendants.

U. S. Attorney Frank M. Johnson, Jr., recently named U. S. judge for the middle district of Alabama by President Eisenhower, will prosecute, delaying taking up his new office to carry through the case he has prepared against the accused nine.

The tenth, Etherton Henderson, 21, brother of Preston and Burma Nell Henderson Andrews, is charged with interstate transportation of stolen money and failing to disclose knowledge of the felony, is to be tried in Gadsden.

ANNISTON STAR
OCTOBER 30-1955



ANNISTON STAR
NOVEMBER 1 - 1955

Nine In Bank Case Get Sentences Of 158 Years

Andrews And Martin Each Given 30 Years By Judge Grooms As Jacksonville Affair Is Closed

By CODY HALL

Nine persons who yesterday pleaded guilty to charges arising from the May 20 robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville face sentences today totaling 158 years.

The sentences ranged from 30 years for two men to one year and one day for another.

Given 30 years by Judge Hobart Grooms were Joe Paul Andrews, 33, and R. C. Martin, 34.

Others were Thomas N. Pendley, 23, 25 years; Preston Henderson, 26, and Alton D. Ellis, 31, 20 years each; Mrs. Burma Nell Henderson Andrews, 24, and Mrs. Katherine Ellis, 34, 10 years each; Mrs. Ellen M. Heyrend, 47, 12 years.

Milford (Tex) Henderson, 44, was sentenced to one year and a day for aiding Martin following the robbery.

Sentenced yesterday on liquor conspiracy charges were J. B. Stovall, 29, 18 months; James L. Barnett, 26, 18 months; Willie Lee Carr, 19, one day; Earl D. Stone, 21, one year and one day; and Wallace Jemison, 72, four years on probation.

Mrs. Elicia M. A. Kramek, 30, was sentenced to two years for theft of mail.

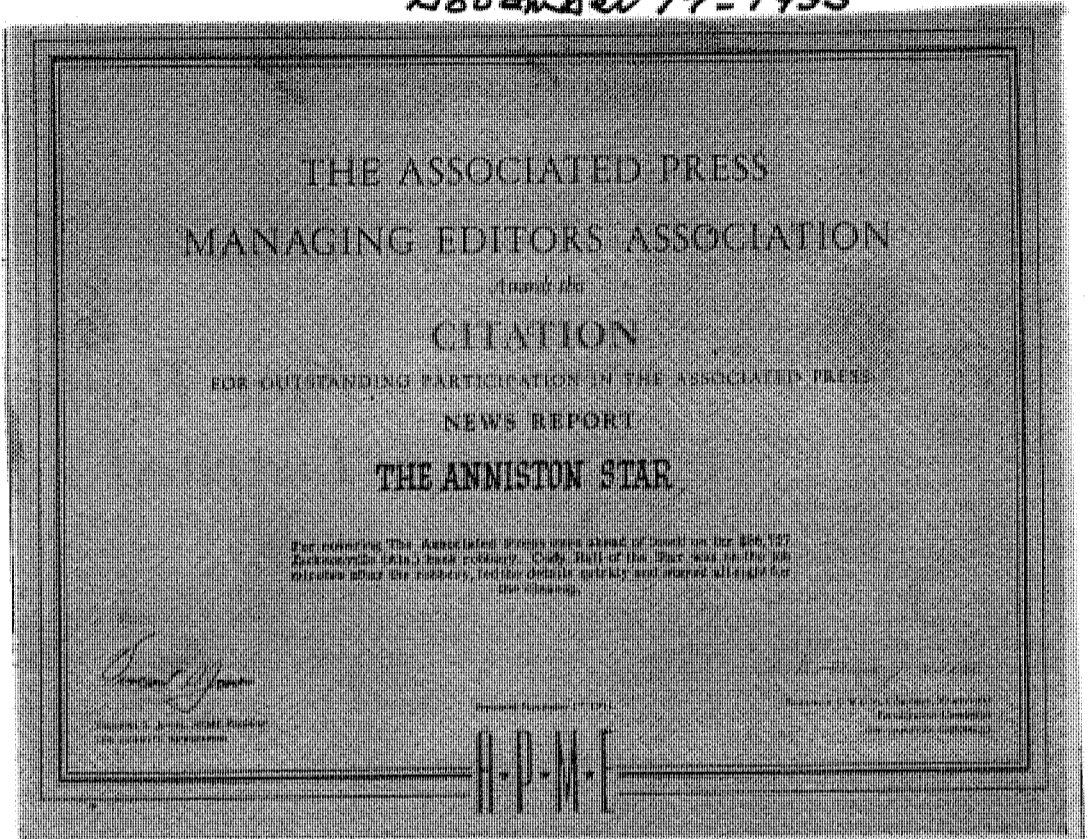
Other whisky case sentences included Anderson Lollar, 41, one year; Elmo Green, 43, two concurrent two-year terms; Joe Bennie Green, 40, two 18-months concurrent terms; William Bert Giles, 29, one year; Hugh Frank Robinson, 24, one year; Thomas Harden Lewis, 35, four years probation; Preston Lee Robinson, 36, four years probation; and Floyd Laminack, 35, two years.

Daisy Lee Cleghorn, 39, was placed on probation for four years on a check forgery charge, court records showed.

ANNISTON STAR
NOVEMBER 2 - 1955

FIVE CONVICTED
Five men convicted of the Jacksonville bank robbery were transferred to the Atlanta Federal penitentiary yesterday. They were Joe Paul Andrews, R. C. Martin, Thomas N. Pendley, Alton D. Ellis, and Preston Henderson. Mrs. Ellis, Mrs. Andrews, Mrs. Ellen Heyrend and M. G. Henderson were taken to Birmingham.

ANNISTON STAR
NOVEMBER 17 - 1955



STAR CITED AGAIN BY ASSOCIATED PRESS—For the second time in the three years official awards have been made, The Associated Press Managing Editors' Association has cited The Anniston Star and Reporter Cody Hall for outstanding news coverage for the AP. The certificate pictured above was presented today for unusually good work in reporting the May 20 robbery of the Jacksonville First National Bank, the largest holdup in Alabama history. Only one other Alabama newspaper, The Deatur Daily, received a 1955 citation.

Star Gets High Honor From AP's Top Editors

Paper And Staffer Hall Given News Reporting Citation Second Time In Three Years

The Anniston Star today was honored by The Associated Press Managing Editors' Association for outstanding news coverage during 1955.

Announcement of the award, "For covering The Associated Press even ahead of itself on the \$86,727 Jacksonville bank robbery," was made at the annual APME convention at Colorado Springs, Colo.

Reporter Cody Hall was named in the citation for his promptness in telephoning colorful details to the AP from the scene of the holdup and for staying on the job past The Star's deadline to clean up the story.

In the letter to the publisher, notifying him of the latest honor, Executive Editor Alastair J. Gould of The Associated Press wrote:

"It is a great pleasure to inform you that The Associated Press Managing Editors, for the second time in the three years it has been making official awards, has cited your newspaper for outstanding participation in the AP report."

"Your newspaper's consistent cooperation and contribution is unusual even in The Associated Press, and the AP staff joins me in extending thanks and congratulations."

Flashes News Quickly
In the May 20 robbery of Jacksonville's First National Bank, Hall reached the scene shortly after the news was flashed by police radio stations and supplied the AP Bureau at Birmingham with the fascinating story.

Of 10 persons later apprehended by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in connection with the holdup, nine pleaded guilty and were sentenced here Oct. 31 to a total of 158 years in federal prison.

The tenth defendant is awaiting trial at Gadsden.

Jax bank bandits all plead guilty, get up to 30 years

ANNISTON, Ala., Nov. 1.—(AP)—Trial of nine persons indicted in the \$86,727 robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville, Ala., last May 20, came to an abrupt end yesterday. All pleaded guilty.

Sentences of up to 30 years were handed out by Federal Judge Hobart Grooms.

ONE OTHER PERSON still must face trial in connection with the robbery. She is Etheon Henderson, 21, accused of being an accomplice. She will face trial at Gadsden. No date has been set.

Joe Paul Andrews, 33-year-old ex-convict called the "brains" of the robbery by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, was sentenced to 30 years, along with R. C. Martin, 34.

Thomas N. Pendley was sentenced to 25 years, while Preston Henderson, 26, and Alton D. Ellis, 31, each got 20 years.

ANDREWS, MARTIN, Pendley and Henderson were accused in the actual robbery. Ellis also was charged with forcing a bank official to accompany them to the bank while his wife and children were held as hostages. But this was dropped following the guilty pleas.

B'ham News
NOV. 1 - 1955

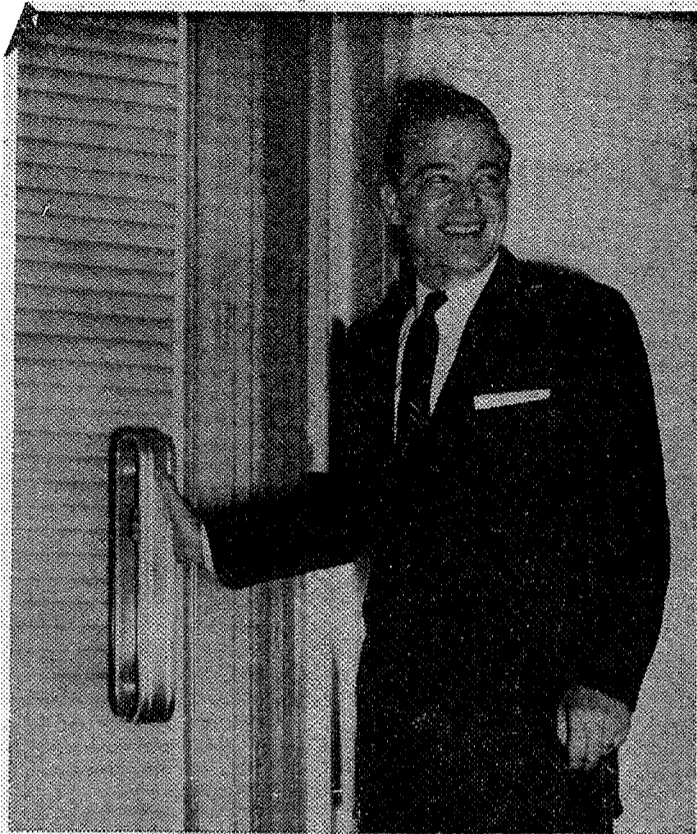


Mrs. Burma Nell Henderson Andrews, 24, and Mrs. Katherine Ellis, 34, were sentenced to 10 years each as accomplices.

Mrs. Elen M. Heyrend, alias Mrs. R. G. Martin, was sentenced to 12 years on a similar charge.

MILTON G. HENDERSON, charged with hindering the arrest of Martin, was sentenced to a year and a day.

Officials of the U. S. Fidelity & Guaranty Co., Birmingham, said authorities have recovered a total of \$44,043.35, including two late-model automobiles.



ALL OVER NOW—Jesse N. Wood of the First National Bank of Jacksonville smiles (above) following the sentencing of the robbers who raided the bank last May. Things are normal again in the Wood household now, but it will be a long time before that hectic day is forgotten. That's not the door behind Wood where the robbers awaited employees that day. It has been closed and bricked up.

After Bandits Get Sentences

Bit Disappointed, Bank Cashier Says

By CODY HALL

JACKSONVILLE — Gone but not nearly forgotten by Jesse N. Wood and his family are most of the robbers who raided the First National Bank here last May 20.

Nine persons implicated in the robbery pleaded guilty before Judge Hobart Grooms in Federal Court at Anniston last Monday and were sentenced to terms totaling 158 years. A 10th is still awaiting trial in Gadsden.

Wood is the assistant vice president and cashier of the bank who, with his family, bore the brunt of the pressure during the holdup when the thieves got about \$86,000.

"I've got no sympathy for any of them," Wood said Friday. "They all knew what was going to happen when they started. The people I do have the deepest sympathy for are the parents—the innocent victims who are suffering the most."

'Little Disappointed'

Wood was a little disappointed in the sentences. He had thought they would get more. The sentences ranged from 10 to 30 years for those directly involved in the robbery.

Mrs. Wood answered the door of their home here last May when two men knocked and asked for her husband, Jesse said.

"She called to me that two men were here to see me and I came into the living room, he recalled. "One of them said 'Mr. Wood, I'm Mr. Jackson from The Star. Could we see you in private for a minute?'"

Wood said he later identified Joe Paul Andrews as 'Jackson.' Pendley was the second man. Neither was masked.

"My wife was getting our oldest girl ready for school and when they asked to speak in private I took them into our den. The door was closed and I walked over and opened the window blinds. When I turned and asked 'What can I do for you?'"

The young bank official said Andrews, who was seated, unfolded his arms and revealed a pistol in his hand.

Shows Shotgun

"He said, 'Mr. Wood, we're robbing the bank,' and I said 'What?' Then he kind of grinned and said 'That's right.'"

Pendley then showed a sawed-off shotgun swinging under his coat, Wood said, and threats against himself and his family were made. When the three emerged from the den, two masked accomplices had entered the living room and the

drama of the robbery unfolded. The masked man remained with Mrs. Wood and the two girls while the first pair accompanied Wood to the bank.

The bank was scheduled to present a rifle at the college's ROTC armory that same morning, Wood recalled, and he therefore wasn't surprised that a man "from The Star" was at his door, taking him for someone dropping by to check the time of the presentation.

Diane, 8, told one of the waiting robbers "I've seen it on television and in the movies, but I never thought it would happen to me."

Seven minutes after the robbers had returned Wood to his home and left him and his family bound, he had freed himself and called Jacksonville Police and the Highway Patrol.

Wood stayed at the bank with officers and FBI agents until that evening and a number of them talked with him at his home until late that night. During the search for the robbers he followed the chase through the papers and through bits of information officers gave him.

Sees Them Again

The next time Wood saw them was at the arraignment in Anniston when he caught glimpses of them in the corridor of the Post Office building.

"Joe Paul appeared to recognize me and kept staring at me. A little later someone opened a door down at the end of the hall and I looked down and saw them (Andrews and Pendley) peeping out at me."

The incident is still greatly in the minds of the Wood family and is the subject of a number of jokes. Recently little Elaine, 3, called Mickey by the family, was caught running around the house without her slippers during a recent cold spell.

"Mickey, Jack Frost is going to get your toes," Wood chided.

"Daddy, the bank robbers is gon' get you," she shot back.

Wood's career has resulted in a number of experiences, but none as unique as the robbery.

"I don't believe I was ever more worried than I was when they had me at the bank and my family at home under those threats."

And if the bank is ever robbed again, it will be by a door other than the one at which employees coming to work that morning were greeted.

"We bricked it up," Wood laughed.

ANNISTON STAR - NOV. 4 - 1955

Bank Robbers Here To Ask Cut In Terms

Two convicted Jacksonville bank robbers were scheduled to re-appear in Federal Court here today to ask that their prison terms be reduced.

R. C. (Rickey) Martin, 36, and Preston Leroy Henderson, 28, both sentenced to long prison terms for their part in the 1955 Jacksonville bank robbery, were scheduled to appear before U. S. District Judge H. H. Grooms here this morning to ask that their terms "be corrected".

Judge Grooms opened the annual session of U. S. District court here this morning in the Post Office Building.

A motion was filed in U. S. Court in Birmingham on Oct. 3 requesting a new hearing on the sentences imposed on Martin and Henderson.

The motion set forth a number of allegations contending that the original sentence, imposed here on Oct. 31, 1955, by Judge Grooms, was too stiff, that the defendants were not given a fair representation by attorney and that the sentences should "be corrected".

Martin, along with Joe Paul Andrews, was sentenced to 30 years in the Federal penitentiary for his part in the May 20, 1955, robbery of First National Bank of Jackson-

ville. The robbery netted bandits approximately \$86,000.

Henderson was given a 20-year prison term. Seven other defendants, all of whom pleaded guilty in court here, were sentenced to terms ranging from a year and a day to 20 years.

ANNISTON STAR
December 7-1955



E. Henderson Gets A Year In Bank Case

Convicted Of Aiding In Jacksonville Holdup Last May

The tenth defendant in the robbery of the First National Bank of Jacksonville has been sentenced to a year and a day in prison.

Etheron Henderson, 21, was convicted yesterday in Gadsden of aiding in the robbery last May 20.

Henderson is a brother of Preston Henderson, 26, and Mrs. Burma Nell Henderson Andrews, 24, who were sentenced here in Anniston with seven other defendants some weeks ago.

Others Entered Guilty Pleas
All of the defendants except Etheron Henderson pleaded guilty to the charges against them and drew terms ranging up to 30 years.

Those sentenced earlier and their terms were Joe Paul Andrews and R. C. Martin, 30 years; Thomas N. Pendley, 25 years; Preston Henderson and Alton D. Ellis, 20 years; Mrs. Burma Nell Henderson Andrews and Mrs. Katherine Ellis, 10 years; and Mrs. Ellen M. Heyrend, 12 years.

The nine persons were charged with participating directly or indirectly in the robbery or, in the case of Milford (Tex) Henderson, who got a year and a day, with aiding them.

Got \$86,727

The Jacksonville bank was robbed of \$86,727 dollars by four men who appeared early in the morning at the home of bank official Jesse Woods.

While two held Wood's family as hostages, the other two forced him to accompany them to the bank where employes were held until the vault was opened by the time clock. They fled after returning Wood to his home and picking up the two accomplices there.

ANNISTON STAR
JANUARY 1-1956

Bank Theft Top News In Jayville

Review Of Year Reveals Year Was Big One For Reporters

By CODY HALL
JACKSONVILLE — The robbery of the First National Bank and the slaying of Police Chief D. E. Whiteside topped all Jacksonville headlines during 1955.

When four men took some \$86,000 from the bank on May 20, it returned Jacksonville to the front pages across the nation in a manner similar to that of the Nannie Doss stories of only a few months before.

The robbery, the search, the capture and the trial of the four bandits and six others connected with the case continued over a period of time lasting into the fall.

Abducted Wood
Jesse Wood, an official of the bank, was taken from his home by the men and forced to accompany them to the bank where they looted the vault after tying up employes as they arrived.

When the case was finally wound up, Joe Paul Andrews, 33, and R. C. Martin, 34, drew sentences of 30 years each; Thomas N. Pendley, 23, 25 years; Preston Henderson, 26, and Alton D. Ellis, 31, 20 years each; Mrs. Burma Nell Henderson Andrews, 24, and Mrs. Katherine Ellis, 34, 10 years each; Mrs. Ellen M. Heyrend, 47, 12 years; Etheron Henderson, one year and one day; and Milford G. (Tex) Henderson, one year and one day.

We had a request from the Minot, Daily News of Minot, North Dakota, for copies of the Jacksonville News containing accounts of the bank robbery. It seems that Alton Ellis, one of the men arrested in connection with the robbery, lived there seven years and the people are curious there to know the details.

We also had a request for copies of these same papers from a man who writes for "True Detective."

CARD OF THANKS

We wish to take this opportunity to thank our many wonderful friends both white and colored, for your many expressions of concern, sympathy and affection following our recent ordeal.

It warms our hearts with comfort and gratitude to know there are so many wonderful people in our town. We shall always cherish memories of your kindness to us and shall reverently thank God for each and every one of you.

Mr. and Mrs. Jessie N. Wood, Diane and Elaine

Letter Written Mayor By Bank President

The letter below was written to Mayor J. B. Ryan by Col. C. W. Dauge, president of the First National Bank of Jacksonville:

Hon. J. B. Ryan
Mayor City of Jacksonville,
Jacksonville, Ala.

Dear Mayor Ryan:
Since the recent bank robbery in our city on May 20, this bank is making every effort to further safeguard our employes and property against any future possible recurrence.

Due largely to the courage and coolness of our assistant vice-president and cashier, Jesse Wood, and the composure and self-control of the entire staff, no one was harmed in any way and for this we are most thankful.

The bank suffered no financial loss since the amount stolen was fully and completely covered by our bonding company and was promptly settled. Within a few hours after the robbery the bank had resumed normal operations.

I have asked Weller Smith, one of our officials, who is a former chief of the Alabama Highway Patrol, to confer with you in regard to plans for perfecting a system of guard protection for the personnel and physical property of the bank. I am sure you are as interested as I in the protection of our city and this financial institution which is rendering a valuable service to the public in the Jacksonville trade area.

With appreciation for your past services and with kindest regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,
C. W. Dauge, Jr.
President

Mrs. L. F. Ingram took her two grandsons with her to the bank Monday and she was surprised when one of them asked, "Which one is Jessie, Grandmother". She didn't know that they knew anything about the bank robbery, but they had heard about it and Jesse was their hero. Mrs. Ingram introduced them to "Jesse" Wood, and the boys were shown the vault, the room where the employes were tied up and other details which thrilled the two youngsters.

After the robbery Friday, the children in Miss Mary McCorkle's room in the Elementary School were talking about it and Phyllis Boozer said, "Just like Phenix City."

Mrs. John Oldham has the secret to the bank robbery. She says the robbers would never have seen the bank if the trees in the park had not been cut down.