

bank robber

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some money," he says matter-of-factly.

At first it was the same "thrill" of committing crime that he felt as a youth. "Then, of course, it became the money. It's like Willie Sutton when someone asked him why do you rob banks, he said: 'That's where the money's at.'"

Forsberg tells anecdotes about bank jobs with a wry smile. It's as if he is proud of the planning and execution of the job, though he admits "I was caught for almost every bank job I committed."

"We had this little bank cased," Forsberg doesn't say where this bank was. He may not remember. It really doesn't matter. "It was going to be \$100,000," he adds. The amount of money thought to be in the bank, or actually taken from the bank is the bank robber's method of ranking. The greater the amount of money the greater the status of the robbery and the more daring of the bank robber.

"We had everything planned... knew the teller's names. After weeks of studying, the best time to hit it was a Tuesday afternoon at 2:30. So, man, we zip in there. I jump out of the car and I got to run across three feet to get into the bank. I'm first, then the driver's coming in. There was only one customer and he looked up and saw me running in the door and he turns and yells: 'You're going to be robbed!'" Forsberg laughs.

"We run in. We're not even going to take the teller cages. We want the vault," he leans forward, explaining. The bank's vault had a safe in the wall with the \$100,000. One woman teller had the combination.

"We're looking for her and we can't find her. The bank's not that big. We know she's in there. So finally, we just scoop up the teller cages — \$20,000 — and leave."

Forsberg can't maintain a straight face when he says they found out later, through FBI reports, that the 60 year-old teller slid under her desk when he ran in. She was hiding under her desk throughout the entire robbery. Forsberg calls that "element X." Element X has proved to be his undoing many times.

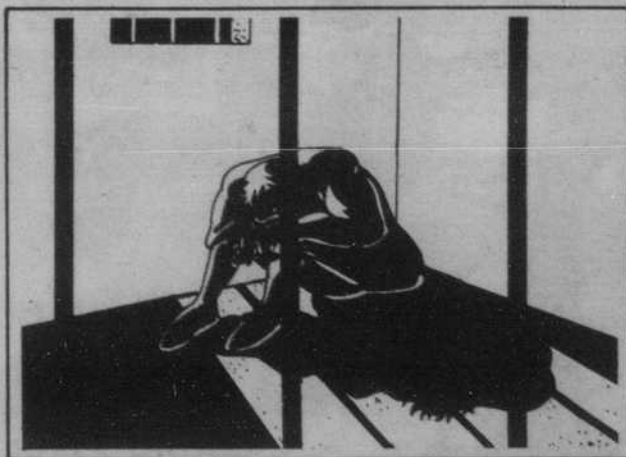
"It's funny... all these years and all these pros used to tell me: 'You got to figure element X.' I never knew what element X meant until I started taking algebra — the unknown variable," he pronounces deliberately, as if it were mystical.

*So we came to jazz it up.
We never loved the shovel.
Break your back to earn your pay,
and don't forget to grovel.*

"I'm one of the few guys in America that ever robbed a bank and the FBI watched me. They set it up as a publicity stunt," Forsberg says, pausing, hoping to convey a sense of incredibility.

"They knew we were going to rob the bank. They got authorization from J. Edgar Hoover (then director of the FBI) to film it.

"We did the perfect robbery, ski masks, everything. We're back at the house just counting the money up. Dick's wife (Dick Hedges, Forsberg's accomplice) comes running in and says: 'My God there's cops and people all over.' I look out the window. They



Graphic by Shawn Bird

start saying: 'FORSBERG AND HEDGES, THIS IS THE FBI.' They got TV cameras — it's a big publicity stunt. I didn't know that at the time. They start shooting tear gas in the house. There's a big picture of me in the Oregonian being drug out with a Portland State sweat-shirt on." He laughs loudly. "The next day Portland State said: 'He's not enrolled.'"

Forsberg learned his bank robbery lessons well from the pros in prison.

"There are different degrees of bank robbery. Some people think that casing a bank robbery is driving around the block and you don't see a highway patrol car so you run in and do it," he says derisively. "I can tell you the name of every teller I've ever robbed."

"Most people, they don't plan a job. They're not even going in the vault in the first place," scoffs Forsberg. "They just run in. They pass a note across the counter. 'Give me your money. This is a robbery.' So she (the teller) hands him that packet of dummy bills. They're all marked. Some will use the exploding dye one. Now they even got them with a little transmitter. If you don't break open that money until you get home, they're going to be right there — real quick."

More than technique, Forsberg disdains the strong-arm style of some bank robbers.

"Violence... that's another thing that separates the pros. I've never used any violence in a robbery. When you go in, like these guys go in and stick somebody up, they never have to shoot them or hit them," Forsberg's voice slows, lowering almost to a growl. "When you have to resort to violence you are showing that you weren't planned. What if a guy starts to do something? What're we going to do — shoot him? Hell, no, we ain't going to shoot him."

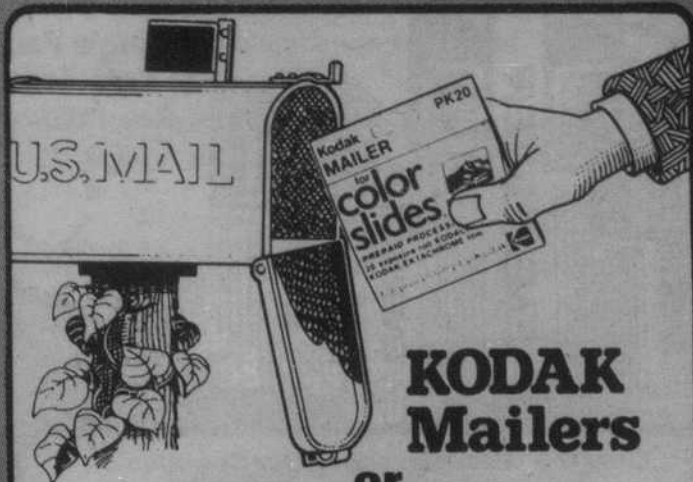
In the Reno robbery Forsberg carried a gun, but that wasn't his most effective weapon.

"I carried an iron bar about two feet long with a hole drilled in it with rawhide I had around my hand. I mean, you hit somebody across the knee with an iron bar they go down (snaps fingers) like that. That was in case anybody got out of line. We got guns of course, but we're not going to shoot anybody."

*Daddy was a bank robber,
but he never hurt nobody.
He just loved to live that way,
and he loved to steal your money.*

*Bankrobber Dub
Strummer, Jones, Campbell*

* SPRING * * PHOTO * * SPECTACULAR! *

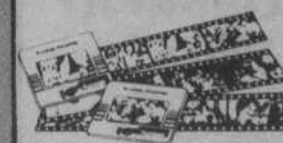


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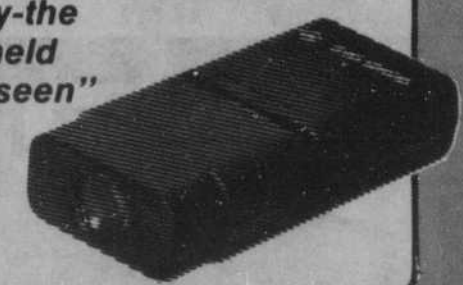
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