



## Offbeat Oregon

### THE LAST "GREAT" TRAIN ROBBERY PT. II

BY FINN J.D. JOHN  
For the Sentinel

University of California Professor Edward O. Heinrich had helped the Southern Pacific out with a few minor robbery investigations before. Now, in late autumn of 1923, SP had a big one on its hands. Four of its employees had been murdered, at least two of them in cold blood, in a train robbery gone bad at the mouth of Tunnel 13.

Posses had formed and were busily combing the countryside, bolstered by Oregon National Guard soldiers and law-enforcement officers from all around. On clear days, aviators flew airplanes low over the mountains in grid patterns looking for signs of the robbers, possibly the first time in history that a manhunt was conducted from the air.

After a week or two of this, authorities had assembled an impressive collection of physical evidence. But they had not even glimpsed the fugitives, and they'd made no progress even in figuring out who the murderers were.

But that would change after they brought the 42-year-old Professor Heinrich into the case.

The railroad and the police laid out all the evidence, like a client briefing Sherlock Holmes: Left behind at the scene, and scattered at various campsites found in the manhunt, had been a discarded .45 automatic with the serial numbers filed off; a pair of Pay Day brand bib overalls; a scorched jacket; and an assortment of other stuff — a plunger-type detonator, some blasting caps, a union suit, camp garbage, and so forth.

From the bib overalls, Heinrich learned much. The pockets on the left showed more wear than on the right, and there was pitch on the right, as would be the case if a left-handed lumberjack was leaning against a tree to swing his ax. From some neatly trimmed fingernail clippings found in the pocket, he gathered that when in city clothes, the wearer was a meticulous dresser with small hands. And from some hairs found here and there, he learned that his man had brown hair and eyebrows.

But the real big score was wadded up in the bottom of the narrow pencil pocket of the overalls, which no one else had probed. It was a receipt for registered mail. And it led him directly to a name: Roy DeAutremont.

With that in hand, Heinrich was able to secure a sample of Roy's handwriting — and that's when the DeAutremont Brothers' doom was truly sealed. Because Heinrich was able to restore the serial number on the automatic and trace it back to its initial purchaser, who had signed his name "William Elliot" — in Roy's handwriting.

From there, it was as good as all over. Had they merely robbed a train, the brothers could probably have managed to disappear somewhere; but they had murdered four men — two of them in cold blood — and the entire country was outraged by their crime. The manhunt now went nationwide and even international. "WANTED" posters were printed and distributed everywhere, prominently displaying the DeAutremonts' faces; more than 2.25 million of them would be printed and distributed over the following several years while they were on the lam. There was nowhere the brothers could go where their faces would not be recognized.

Roy and Ray fled to Detroit and tried to change their hair color and personal appearance as best they could. Hugh joined the Army and was deployed to the Philippines. But all around them, pictures of themselves were staring out from those ubiquitous posters on the walls of post offices and police stations.

Eventually, one of Hugh's fellow soldiers was reassigned to Alcatraz and saw one of those posters, and the jig was up. The brothers were all arrested and extradited to Jackson County, where they were sentenced to life in prison.

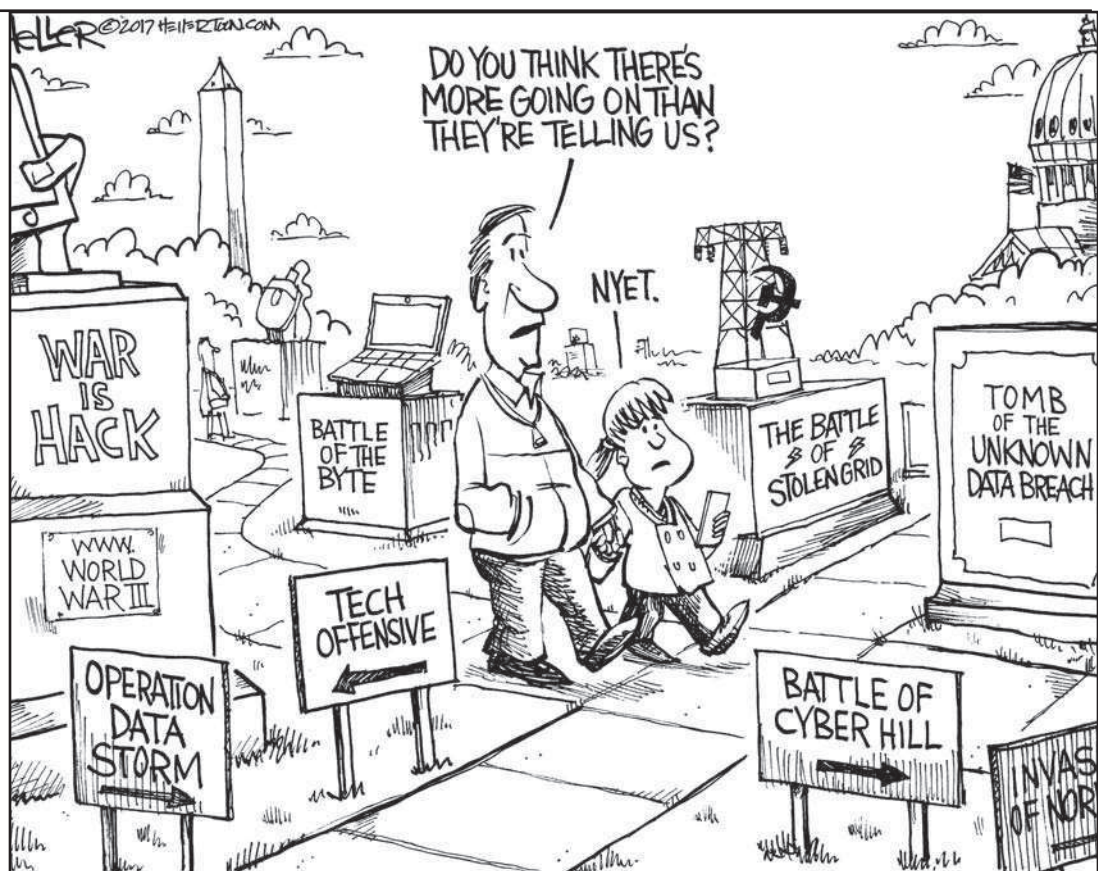
Hugh was paroled in 1958, but diagnosed with stomach cancer a few months later; he died the following year.

Roy was diagnosed with schizophrenia in 1949, and the prescribed cure — lobotomy — left him unable to care for himself. He died in a nursing home in Salem in 1983.

Ray was paroled in 1961 and moved to Eugene, where he worked for some years as a janitor in the Erb Memorial Union at the University of Oregon. He died in Eugene in 1984.

Now, most accounts of the DeAutremont robbery, over the years, have been drawn almost entirely from police statements and newspaper articles. But several years ago, Edgard Espinoza and Pepper Trail, two forensic scientists from the National Fish and Wildlife forensic lab in Ashland, decided to dig a little deeper into the records. They found some very interesting details.

For one thing, they found that the timeline of the robbery placed the robbers at the scene, with



everyone dead and the mail car torn open and burning, for a whole hour. What would they have been doing during that time? Could they have found something in there after all? Or was this merely a flaw in the record-keeping? (Remember, the train, still behind them in the tunnel, was full of passengers, and on the face of it it seems unlikely that the brothers would risk such a delay.)

The more intriguing discovery, though, is a description of a small, dark-colored man who, three hours after the robbery, knocked at the door of a remote camping cabin in the woods nearby. He asked the man who was staying in the cabin if he could retrieve some property he'd stashed in the loft — walnuts, he said, left there to dry and forgotten when he'd camped there several months before. The man had retrieved an oblong object wrapped tightly in a mackinaw coat, which did not look like walnuts, and left.

The mackinaw, or one like it, was found a few months after that in a nearby creek bed within a few hundred feet of Highway 99, near a spot where a pick and shovel had been stashed. It had knife cuts in it, as if whoever was wearing it had been stabbed in the back with a sharp knife. And there was no sign of the oblong object.

So: did the DeAutremont brothers have an accomplice? Did they actually recover something from the hold-up? (Southern Pacific always refused to disclose what was in the mail car that day, if anything.) Was there a double-cross, and a fifth murder done, and a secret kept by all three brothers and taken with them to their graves?

Or is there some other explanation — perhaps the mackinaw and shovel were evidence of some other crime, or maybe there's a completely innocent explanation?

It's almost certain that we'll never really know.

(Sources: Trail, Pepper & al. "Tunnel 13: How Forensic Science Helped Solve America's Last Great Train Robbery," Jefferson Public Radio, <http://ijpr.org>; Joers, Lawrence E.C. "The Siskiyou Train Robbery," Great Moments in Oregon History. Portland: New Oregon Publishers, 1987; <http://tunnel13.com>)

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# The word on calcium:

BY JOEL FUHRMAN, MD.  
For the Sentinel



for the cardiovascular system, in addition to questioning their value for preventing osteoporosis. This has huge public health implications, as 52 percent of American women take calcium supplements.<sup>1</sup>

The most recent study took data from the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA). At the start of the study, participants answered questions on their diet, medications, and supplements, and their coronary artery calcium was measured. Ten years later, coronary calcium was measured again.

Participants were broken into five groups (quintiles) based on their typical total daily calcium intake (food plus supplements). In the highest quintile of total calcium intake, the risk of coronary artery calcification at 10

years was reduced by 27 percent, suggesting that calcium is protective. However, the use of calcium supplements was also associated with an increased risk (12-22 percent) of coronary artery calcification, suggesting that dietary calcium and supplemental calcium may have contradictory effects.

Each quintile was then split into users and non-users of calcium supplements. Out of those 10 groups, the greatest risk of coronary artery calcification was in supplement users in quintile 1, meaning the group that had the lowest food calcium intake but took calcium supplements.<sup>2</sup> This study suggests that dietary calcium is protective, and supplemental calcium may not be and may even be harmful.

If calcium supplements are harmful, but food calcium isn't, why?

The primary difference seems to be the dose. Many calcium supplements contain 1000 mg or more, which is much more than would be found in a typical meal.

Blood calcium is very tightly regulated, always kept in a narrow range. However, after a large dose (such as a high-dose calcium supplement), the usual regulatory mechanisms are temporarily overwhelmed, there is a transient increase in blood calcium,<sup>3</sup> and this could be a problem. Observational studies suggest that elevations in blood calcium contribute to

carotid atherosclerotic plaque thickness, calcified plaque, and cardiovascular events.<sup>4,5</sup> This is presumably because elevated blood calcium promotes blood coagulation and deposits of calcium (calcification) in the arteries.

Calcification stiffens the arteries, increases the vulnerability of atherosclerotic plaques, and increases cardiovascular risk.<sup>6,7</sup> Only high dose supplemental calcium can raise blood calcium significantly.

Are we sacrificing our bones to save our arteries?

Are women more prone to osteoporosis if they don't take high-dose calcium supplements? The research says no. Calcium deficiency can cause osteoporosis, however the evidence suggests that calcium supplementation is helpful only when someone is vitamin D-deficient. Vitamin D adequacy allows for increased absorption of calcium when intake is low. The risk of fracture due to low calcium intake is increased if vitamin D intake is also low.<sup>8</sup>

When calcium and vitamin D were supplemented together, vitamin D plus a smaller amount of calcium (less than 1000 mg) better prevented fractures than vitamin D plus larger amounts of calcium (1000 mg or more).<sup>9</sup> High-dose calcium supplementation was even found to increase hip fracture risk in a meta-analysis of 4 clinical trials.<sup>10</sup> The take-home message from these studies is that high-dose calcium is not necessary for

protecting bones, and may even make things worse, but vitamin D adequacy is important.

Not every study has detected a harmful effect of calcium supplements. Two meta-analyses pooling many calcium supplementation trials determined that regularly using calcium supplements (1000 mg or more calcium/day in most studies) was associated with a 20-30 percent increase in the risk of heart attack and/or stroke.<sup>11,12</sup> However, two other meta-analyses did not find any increase or decrease in the risk of cardiovascular events in the groups taking calcium supplements compared to control groups.<sup>13-15</sup>

The major difference between the meta-analyses coming to different conclusions was the data included from one trial in particular, the Women's Health Initiative. The Women's Health Initiative allowed women to continue taking their personal calcium supplements during the trial. Some argue that this could have masked the risk associated with calcium supplements.<sup>12,16</sup> Others argue that the data is still conflicting, and the evidence doesn't support a beneficial or harmful effect of calcium supplements, yet.<sup>17,18</sup> My conclusion: I advocate a cautious, conservative approach to calcium supplementation. Despite this disagreement, and in light of the new study on arterial calcification, there is enough evidence to be cautious about high-dose calcium

supplements. The wise focus should still be on obtaining adequate calcium primarily with food, especially since high-dose calcium supplements provide minimal (if any) benefit for osteoporosis prevention.

For many people, green vegetables, beans, nuts and seeds most likely provide enough calcium without the need for supplements. Certain groups — such as pregnant, nursing, and postmenopausal women, as well as those with osteopenia or osteoporosis and those with small appetite for green vegetables — may want to consider adding a small dose of supplemental calcium, spaced throughout the day to assure optimal calcium intake, along with their Vitamin D3 supplements. For these groups, I recommend using lower dose, whole food calcium supplements (whole powdered seaweed, for example) to more closely replicate getting calcium from foods.

Dr. Fuhrman is a #1 New York Times best-selling author and a board certified family physician specializing in lifestyle and nutritional medicine. *The Eat To Live Cookbook* offers over 200 unique disease-fighting delicious recipes and his newest book, *The End of Heart Disease*, offers a detailed plan to prevent and reverse heart disease using a nutrient-dense, plant-rich eating style. Visit his informative website at [DrFuhrman.com](http://DrFuhrman.com). Submit your questions and comments about this column directly to [newsquestions@drfuhrman.com](mailto:newsquestions@drfuhrman.com). The full reference list for this article can be found at [DrFuhrman.com](http://DrFuhrman.com).

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