

Rising Trend of Crimes Against Banks Alarms Law Profession

Editor's note: There was an increase last year of 43 per cent in the number of bank robberies. The trend still is upward. The head of the FBI discusses in the following dispatch what the banks themselves and what eyewitnesses to robberies can do to help law enforcement agencies cope with the problem.

By JOHN EDGAR HOOVER
Written for UPI

Washington—UPI—America's law enforcement profession is becoming increasingly alarmed at the rising trend of crimes against banks and banking-type institutions.

Last year, more violations of the federal bank robbery statute were committed than ever before and, barring a reversal of the trend for January and February of 1959, another new record is in the making.

During 1958, there were 704 violations of the federal bank robbery statute—an increase of 43 per cent over the number reported in 1957. Included among these were 416 robberies, 206 burglaries and 82 larcenies of banks and savings and loan associations covered by federal law.

Robberies May Soar

The early weeks of 1959 have witnessed a continuation of the rise in these crimes. Barring a sharp reversal of the present trend, at least 800 assaults upon banking institutions will be reported to the FBI for investigation this year—and the figure may soar even higher than that.

The certainty of swift identification and apprehension remains one of the most effective deterrents of these crimes. In this regard, the law enforcement profession has demonstrated its effectiveness time and again. "Less-than-one-a-day" recovery of bank robberies—with recovery of the entire loot—have become common occurrences. Last year in federal courts alone, 411 convictions were returned under the federal bank robbery statute; and many other bank bandits were convicted in state courts.

Every person who entrusts his money to a bank or savings and loan association has the right to expect that:

1—The physical facilities of the institution do not "invite" assaults by thieves. In this regard, the mere presence of burglar alarms, armed guards, steel gratings and the like has discouraged many potential bank bandits.

2—The bank has a positive security program for preventing criminal assaults. For example, all doors and windows should be double checked before the bank is closed for the day; suspicious persons seen loitering in or near the bank should be reported; background inquiries should be made concerning all prospective bank employees; currency and securities should not be left in a place accessible to others when a teller leaves his post; the minimum amount of cash necessary for handling immediate transactions should be kept in tellers' cash drawers; and unnecessary routines should be avoided so that the actions of bank personnel do not follow the same predictable pattern.

In the vast majority of violations of the federal bank robbery statute there are eyewitnesses to the crime. These witnesses can be of help if they will:

1—Remain as calm as possible under the circumstances. "Cool-headed" persons are more observant and less likely to jeopardize their own lives

and the lives of others.

2—Be observant. Form a detailed mental picture of the criminal. Notice their mannerisms, peculiarities, clothing, scars or other unusual markings, and the like. If possible, without unnecessary risk, obtain a description of the getaway car or other mode of travel used by the bandits.

3—Telephone the FBI as soon as possible. The telephone number of the nearest FBI office is listed on the first page of each telephone directory across the nation.

4—Preserve the crime scene. Do not touch anything in the portions of the bank where the bandits have been. Valuable items of evidence—including some particles which are invisible to the naked eye—may accidentally be destroyed.

5—Until they have been interviewed by the investigating officers, eyewitnesses should refrain from "comparing notes" concerning the crime or discussing its details with other persons. Law enforcement officers prefer to have the independent recollection of each witness.

The Family Council

Editor's note: The Family Council consists of a judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, a newspaper editor, a women's editor and two writers. Each article is a summary of an actual report. The Family Council does not give advice; it merely reports on problems that have been dealt with by responsible agencies and counselors.

Edgar J.—She always has to have the last word.

June J.—He resents my thinking for myself.

Edgar J.—My wife and I are in our mid-20s and have been married nearly a year. We are quite happy, but we have one problem and I am afraid that it will give us trouble in time.

June always has to have the last word in everything. If we have a discussion about any subject under the sun, no matter what proof is put before her, June will always wind up either saying that the authorities don't really know what they are talking about or that she was misunderstood—she meant something just a little different from what I thought.

She is the same way with our friends and I feel that it hurts our social life. At times I have even provoked her into taking a silly position just

to see if she would stand by it—and she does!

June J.—It's true that I am quite argumentative, but then I really am usually right. I make a special point of getting the facts about things. Most people are willing to rush into discussions without having the real facts.

If I do say so myself, I read quite a lot, and always very informative things. I don't waste time on junk. Even with TV programs, I always select the best, the most educational.

The fact is that I am really more serious-minded than Eddie and he resents it when I "show off" what I know. But I wish he would show off too and get in the habit of doing some reading. He thinks all discussion is just nonsense and never wants to take anything seriously. He resents my thinking for myself. He won't think at all.

The Council: We sympathize with both parties here. We are all for more thinking, reading, serious discussion and getting the facts straight, but we believe June may have terrorized her husband by going at it hammer and tongs and by her refusal to admit any possibility of error or weakness on her side. She has made the art of discussion a contest-to-the-death with her husband. The goal is to win the argument rather than to gain more insight and knowledge.

It is true that some individuals insist upon that "last word." Underneath such people have a great lack of self-confidence and feel that their ego stands or falls on their ability to come out "right" in an argument. The fact that June seeks the arguments indicates that she has constant need for this reassurance to her ego.

We think that June can develop a genuine self-confidence by learning to discuss issues properly. It will take discipline and self-control for her at first, for she will have to really listen to and weigh the other side. When she has developed the ability to confess error and to learn from her opponent she will gain strength based in reality and will lose her need for a false blowing up of her ego.

Edgar can probably help in this process by showing that he is interested in serious discussion—but only with a fair-minded partner.

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Anti-Inflation Study Fund Voted

Washington—UPI—The Senate Monday voted \$200,000 for a sweeping study of anti-inflation measures after Democratic Leader Lyndon B. Johnson (Tex.) termed inflation a problem "second only to the issue of national survival."

Approval was by voice vote with no audible opposition. In urging the funds, Johnson attacked the Eisenhower administration's high interest rate policy as a "surrender without a struggle."

The money will be used by the House-Senate Economic Committee, headed by Sen. Paul H. Douglas D-Ill., to finance a study—already underway—of interest rates, money supply and government financing programs.

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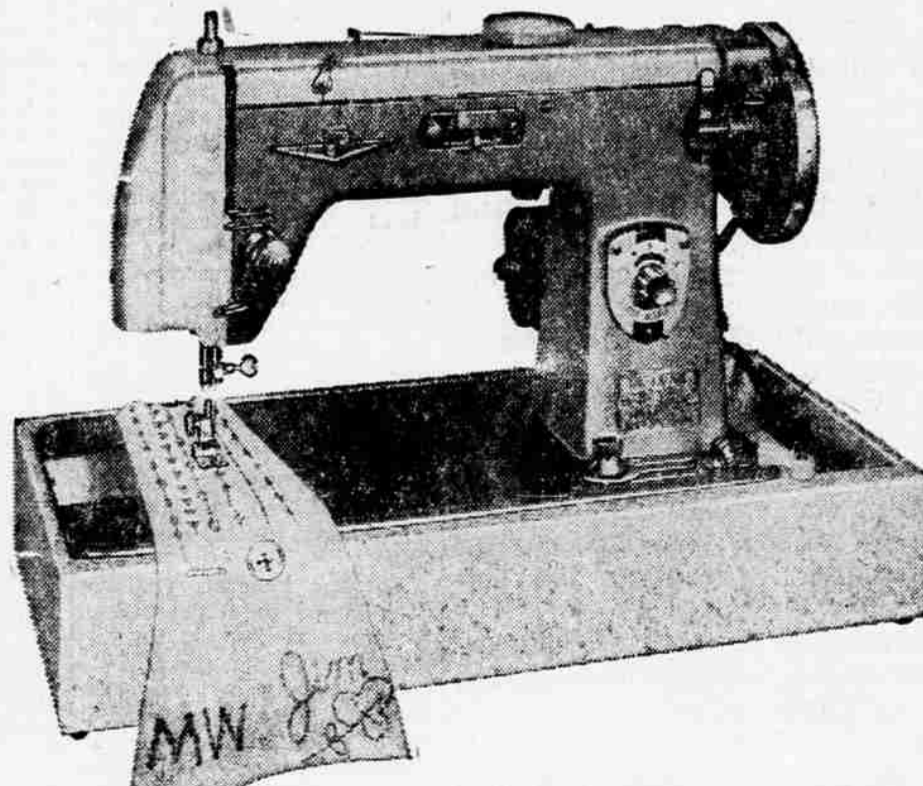
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