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COLLECTOR

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It looks like fan month coming up in the Detroit area. First; I & Dean Mc Laughlin got invited to a whing ding in Chicago for the 6th of April, almost immediately after came a card from Lynn Hickman - seems he's going to be in the state for the month of April and wanted to know when he could come over for the weekend.

Next, a card from Jerry & Miriam Knight saying that they'd be in Ann Arbor between the 2nd & 6th and asking me to bring a carload to see them or give directions to my place. I sat down to answer them and the phone rang. It was Jim Caughran inviting me to another of his weddings ... according to various fanzines he's been married in Jan, Feb (& perhaps Mar), but he say's he's going to do it up formal on the morning of April 6th.

I'm slowly outfitting the cars, I sold the old Chevy just after Xmas and took possession of a '51 Hudson in quite good condition. It could stand a couple of better tires, and sure enough my step-mother had a pair of them in her garage and no car to fit them. It lacked a decent jack, so last week Dean sent me a card, saying he'd just sold another book. I fired off a postcard and last nite he brought me the jack out of the old car, it's never been out of the car.

Meanwhile the Packard is running low on tires ... luckily Jim wreacked his '55 Buick Tuesday night and tomorrow nite I'll go over and strip off the five 8:00 15's from it. Two weeks ago the Packard quit running, a check showed that the distributor cap was badly corroded. Did I take my trusty sandpaper and scour it out? I did not, I called Alger and told him to bring me another one, and he threw in a complete set of new wiring.

If my friends continue to acquire and dispose of cars I may never have to buy another one.

Alger has replaced the big sedan he junked last fall. He's back up to seven Packards again. Last summer he answered an adv to buy an almost new condition '48 Packard. It was beautiful but they wanted \$800 for it. He passed!

For last year's Midwestcon he took along a semi-fan who lives near me, the son of old time fan Jon Allen. We lost track of both of them after the con. It turned out that he bought this same Packard in July (for \$400). In December Billy Justice told me that Jon Allen had a Packard that he was going to junk, I had Alger call him.

It seems it was burning oil badly and he had torn up the transmission and rear end trying to start it. Alger agreed to buy odd parts from it when they got around to junking it. On March 15th the owner got a ticket. It was parked in front of the house without new license plates and due to the damaged rear end couldn't be moved.

He called Alger and sold it to him for \$10 if he'd remove it before he got another ticket. Alger has partially checked it out, finds nothing wrong with the rear end, suspects that the transmission is merely jammed and has a stock of extra rings and valves to cure the oil burning ... maybe the day of the ten dollar car is back!

It's been a l-o-n-g time since I saw one at that price that could be made to run.

"Would you like to buy some Girl Scout cookies, Mister ? "

It was March fifteen, the weather was nice, for a change, and the world was treating me well for a change. I came home from work and was told the plans for the evening. Sybil explained them to me, "This should be the biggest night of the Girl Scout cookie sale. June (Casey) is taking part of the troop to the National supermarket, you can drop me off at Safway market and then take Chery to East Dearborn

By spitting the girls up we can cover three stores in one evening. Come back and get me at 8:30. Take me and the girls home, then you'll go pick up Chery and deliver her girls."

I fulfilled the first orders, dropped everyone where they belonged, unloaded boxes of Girl Scout cookies and went home. Shortly before 8:30 I drove the six blocks to pick up Sybil. I parked and walked into the market, this is an average sized, privately owned supermarket, employing some 10 people on the average. None of the cashiers were at the checkout stands. Across the market, at the liquor counter someone wearing a red hat was moving rapidly behind the counter. A voice spoke beside me, "Go to the back of the store - this is a hold-up". I looked at him, he was in his mid twenties, some acne, a deep pockmark in one cheek, and had in his hand a .38 (my guess) revolver with a hole in the end the size of a sewer pipe. I didn't hesitate - I went to the back of the store!

Scene II Flashback

Things were proceeding nicely, the girl scouts had sold some 30 boxes of cookies and it was nearing closing time, it was about 8:25. Sybil was tired and ready to go home, she had with her, Suzanne (Suzy), my youngest daughter and her little friend, both of them 8 years old. Trade was fairly brisk as people gathered up last minute items, there were about 15 customers in the store. A man walked into the store and Suzy walked over to him, "Would you like to buy some Girl Scout Cookies", she asked, "What", he asked and reached into his pocket. Suzy repeated the question and he took a gun from his pocket, pointed it in their general direction and said, "This is a hold-up".

Sybil looked at his toy gun (grey metallic) and laughingly said, "Don't scare the kids". He pointed the toy gun at her and said, "Lady, I said this is a hold-up, take the kids and get to the back of the store". At the same time, three other supposed customers at corners of the store pulled guns and started herding people into the center of the store.

Meanwhile, back at the meat counter..... One of the stick-up artists had asked a meat cutter if he could use the restroom. The meat cutter took him behind the counter whereupon he took out a gun and herded the butchers (4) into the center of the store.

One of the gunmen at the corner containing the liquor counter herded his group to the center of the building. The market manager somehow passed behind the rest and out the rear door, into a neighboring house and called the police. The meat dept manager was standing at the far end of the meat counter and was missed, when the meat employees were herded forward he dodged behind the counter, hit the floor and raced to an office behind a store partition, calling the police almost immediately.

The gunman at the liquor screamed for the manager to come open the safe, knowing that he'd gone through the back door an assistant manager came forward, saying that he was the manager and opened the safe. They made him dump the money into a paper bag. At about this point I entered the store and was hustled to join the crowd.

My wife and the girls were in the crowd and I joined them while Suzy wound herself around my legs, the other girl already wrapped around Sybil. I stood there and waited silently. It was no time to make a sudden move!

A voice rang out, loud and clear, "Get a cashier up here". One of the cashiers, a middle-aged woman, broke into tears, another said, "I can't, I can't", whereupon the remaining cashier, a girl about 18 started walking forward. She opened the registers and put the money into the paper bag held by the gunman wearing a red hat.

The fourth man started through the crowd, "Get your money out, all of it, the store is insured and you'll get it back". People started putting money into the bag he held. A man directly in front of me seemed to hesitate, the gunman sort of turned his gun up, saying, "Don't get killed for a few bucks, put it all in", the hesitant one dropped his wallet in the bag and I followed suit.

BANG! Something boomed in the front of the store and there was another noise nearby. Any hesitation in peeling out wallets stopped, I looked sideways, there was no one on the floor where I thought the shot had hit, nobody screamed or groaned. I had the feeling the shot was fired to keep the crowd quiet and it worked. (It later developed that red-hat had fired into the meat counter some ten feet from me, no one really close to where it hit, and accidentally hit a balloon tied to the counter -this was the pop we heard) (When Sybil later insisted that "her" man had a toy gun I suggested that another of the "toys" had made quite a hole in the meat counter)

Meanwhile our collection agent passed in front of me with his back to me and started through the crowd in the next aisle. I looked longingly at the back of his head (some 18 inches from me) and a five pound bag of oranges beside me. I'm not much of a hero, his gun was still pointed in front of him, aimed at various people & my wife and two kids stood beside me. I restrained myself easily. He continued to work the rest of the crowd until the men in front finally yelled, "C'mon Davy, let's go". He collected two or three more wallets (men and women alike) and vanished into the front of the store.

Immediately after he vanished one of the meat clerks said to me, "Get the kids down on the floor, the police are on their way and there may be shooting". I got them at the end of a counter and sat them down with their backs to a shelf of canned goods, figuring that any bullets would have to go through a dozen or so cans before it reached them.

Less than a minute later two cops were in the front of the store, they asked a question or two and disappeared. Fifteen minutes later they came back, the boys had got away. I was more than slightly irritated, the robbery had taken over fifteen minutes all told & I saw no real sign that anything constructive had been done.

Since that time I've learned that an effort to catch them was made. We have two patrol cars on duty in this area, each with a single officer. There had been a major accident some three miles from the store and shortly before the accident they were dispatched to the accident. Normally this would not happen but our gunmen struck it lucky. Informed of the robbery they raced across the thoroughfare and got to the store, with the bare facts and description of the car ('63 Chevy, Ohio plates -both stolen two weeks earlier) they chased down main streets hunting.

In the meantime, all North township cars were heading for the scene, trying to close the area. Presumably the gunmen were heading toward the police cars when they saw the flashing red lights some blocks ahead, they dodged onto a side street that is largely composed of mud, gravel, & chuck holes. They took this 3/4 of a mile west to the nearest large thoroughfare, turned and continued south.

One of the police cars was approaching from the north and was close enough to identify the car, he gave chase. They went south 1/2 mile at up to 120 miles per hour, but he could not gain on them. At the intersection of the next main thoroughfare they happened to hit a green light and turned east. The cop, some seconds behind them hit the thoroughfare after the light changed and his siren could not clear the traffic for an instant.

It took him a few seconds to make the turn and head east, because of heavy traffic he could not catch them in the 3/4 mile. They had completed three sides of a square and were within a few blocks of the robbery scene. The chasing cop had already radioed and more cars were headed in that direction. By the time he reached this intersection he had lost sight of them in traffic and they could have gone in any of four directions. He headed off on one main street while the others cops, within blocks of there zoomed off on the other primary streets. There was no more sign of them and the car was found abandoned three miles away sometime Saturday.

The market lost \$4,500 and it's my estimate that customers and employees (total 28 people) lost probably another 1,500, (my loss \$100) although the newspaper reported a loss of \$2,500 market, \$500 customers. Obviously this was wrong, the man ahead of me lost \$160.

The local Detective bureau is working on the case, yesterday they came by and asked Sybil to look over mug shots of the man at the door. She picked two (out of about 100) that seemed to be the man. Today she saw the same detectives at the store and they tell her 6 people have identified the same picture. They have not picked the man up but are watching him. They fear if they grab him the others will run for it and hope he'll lead them to the rest. The only conflict is that he has a group of cronies, they would expect him to pull the job with them and nobody has identified their shots of his friends.

Meanwhile back at Girl Scout Headquarters -----

Sybil was using one of the check-out stands and a cash register to keep her money in. This register was cleaned out along with the rest. Headquarters, informed of this (\$6 in bills taken, change left) tells us that they carry insurance on the cookies and that the insurance company will make good their loss. Since I lost my money while assisting at the cookie sale and working (volunteer) for the Girl Scouts they think the insurance may even cover my loss. I have strong doubts of this myself but if it works out that way I certainly won't refuse the money.

Martin Alger, hearing of the robbery, informed me that even if I'd had the carbine along I probably wouldn't have foiled the robbery. He'd only sold me five shells for it and we never did find a clip, meaning that I'd have had to hand load the thing for each shot. I think I'll take the loss and be a live coward.

Three of the four (not five) gunmen were captured Mar 21st & 22nd. These are local talent. On the evening of Mar 21st a local cop stopped one of them driving a stolen car, he matched the description of the scared face boy and they seem to have put the pressure on him. He named the others, one, the missing man, flew back to Phoenix, Arizona the following day. The driver was picked up at home and they found that "Davey" had been in the hospital for a couple of days. Three days after the robbery "Davey" was being chased for speeding and missed his turn at 100 miles per hour.

On Mar 22nd Sybil & I along with other store employees and customers identified the man who guarded the door and later that afternoon the meat cutters identified the driver. It appears I'll get at least part of my money back, recovered sum is still uncertain.

On the other hand it appears unlikely that the gunmen will be spending anything but time for awhile. Some of them are wanted in three states. Our man in Arizona is wanted for rape in California, arson somewhere, the local hold-up, and I understand the FBI are now hunting him for crossing state lines to escape. Since starting these stencils I've also learned that someone, probably him, emptied a carbine into the front end of a pursuing police car I'd suggest they also try him for attempted murder!

I find the strangest things in the oddest places

Some weeks ago I was passing a local Goodwill store and had time to spare. I parked the car and entered. Three book cases lined one wall, I ran my eye down them rapidly and spotted a title that must be Science fiction, Venus In Furs. I pulled it out, saying to myself, "It's not sciencefiction but it's valuable". I opened it and knew why. It's a cheap (or was) reprint of the novel by Von Sach Masch, that led to coining of the word "masochism".

A week ago I stopped at a place and found a selection of the Detective Book Club, this includes three complete (?) detective novels and lurking beneath the covers one finds "Man In My Grave" by Wilson Tucker. The really odd thing is that I never look at detective novels but had the feeling I should check this one. I've been hunting the novel for a year or so, since Tucker mentioned it to me.

Last week I also found four selections labeled as "bound books", not the familiar "hard bound", but the tight corset, leather bra junk. This isn't exactly my field - the last time I met a customer for this type I got rid of him as quick as I could.

Told him I didn't handle the stuff and he said that he'd drop by from time to time and if I found any I could save them for him, whereupon I told him I was moving to St Louis in two weeks.

I ran into another of these, via mail order some years ago. He bought the sexy issues of the old Marvel Science from me, then wrote asking if I could find similar but stronger material for him. Seems he was going to be in Chicago for the holidays (he lived in Tenn) and would be glad to drive to Detroit if I could tell him where to find such material. There's only one type that'll drive 600 miles to pick up that type of books, so I simply told him it would be a waste of time and forgot him.

Buz mentions the rise and fall of SAPS waiting lists. If I recall properly I joined in 1952 and there may have been no waiting list at that time. I definately did not wait more than one mailing before joining. I took over as O.E. in 1956 and as Buz notes he and Elinor were members #22 & #23. Note! We were just barely over 50% strength when he joined, I definately remember GM Carr, Toskey, & Nancy coming in that year and I doubt that we've been that low since then.

I don't hold with making membership any more difficult, neither do I feel any obligation to make it easier for would-be members. Applicants can either wait patiently or go way far away.

FRED PATTEN: The last word on the Day Index was "Washington-Sept". I question this and repeat my offer to return your money any time, on request. I sold about a dozen of the early (mint) Weird's @ \$3 and still think it was a good price.

JOHN FOYSTER: I'm sure Bob Smith will be delighted with his \$3.50 Proceedings.

A few people have complained that they don't get anything for their membership money and wanted a full report of the convention. They've completely ignored the fact that a con committee is half dead when it's over. Sure, it's easy to complain and ask for more, but in this as in many things you'll find that at least some of the complainers never joined the convention to begin with just as the people who complain loudly about TAFF may not contribute a penny.

BALLARD : Don't worry, all of your friends are sticking up for you. We'll have a con in Blanchard yet and as a parting gift maybe we'll burn the town again