

## “The Heist on the Dike”

*Employing tactics of Chicago’s gangland, and armed with a machine gun and large caliber automatics, two desperate bandits yesterday noon sent a stream of bullets into the Agua Caliente money car as it crossed the National City dike, killed the two occupants of the machine and escaped with \$85,000 in cash and checks.*

--San Diego Union, May 21, 1929

“Big time” crime hit San Diego in 1929 with the heist of gambling receipts from Tijuana’s Agua Caliente casino. News of the daring, daylight robbery by “machine gun bandits” would generate newspaper headlines across the country and enthrall San Diegans for weeks.

The crime occurred mid-day Monday, on May 20, 1929. A Cadillac coupe from the casino with two Mexican guards was traveling north on old Highway 101, carrying the Sunday revenue to banks in San Diego. Just above National City, a black Ford touring car without a windshield slipped in behind the money car.

Shooting straight ahead, two men in the Ford stopped the Cadillac by firing bullets into the tires. They jumped out of their auto and blazed away at the money car. The two guards, Nemesio Monroy and Jose Borrego, fought back but died in the gunfire. The killers opened the turtle-back trunk, removed bags of cash and checks, and then raced north in full view of stunned witnesses on the crowded highway.

The guards had been shot multiple times and their car riddled with bullets. The police immediately declared the crime had the earmarks of the “mob”—possibly Chicago gangsters. The county sheriff reported that a Thompson machine gun had recently been purchased by a resident of Tijuana. The police noted the killing marked the first use of a machine gun in a San Diego crime.

The suspects’ car was found quickly. In a quiet neighborhood at Edgemont and B streets, a man mowing his lawn watched as two men in coveralls parked the black Ford across the street. Another car pulled up alongside. The three men transferred several “large bundles which looked like pillows” to the second car and then drove off.

San Diego police found that the Ford was stolen. A cheap coat of black paint had been recently brushed on. But beyond the car and crude physical descriptions of three men, the police knew nothing about the suspects or where they were headed.



Police examine the bullet-riddled “money car.”

The killers were nearby. Marty Colson, 27, and Lee Cochran, 24, along with a third accomplice, Jerry Kearney, 28, were hiding at Kearney’s rented house on Villa Terrace near Balboa Park.

They had stolen nearly \$86,000 but to their shock, all but \$5,800 of the money was in checks—non-negotiable and worthless to them. Kearney and Cochrane burned the checks in the backyard.

Worse, Colson had a severe bullet wound in the shoulder, apparently from return fire from the money car guards. Kearney tried to remove the bullet with a pocket knife but when his home surgery nicked an artery, his panicked wife called a doctor. Knowing the doctor would likely file a report with the police, Kearney and Cochrane abandoned Colson and left town, leaving Mrs. Kearney to nurse Colson.

Hours later, the police raided the house and captured Colson and Kearney's wife. Police nabbed Kearney and Cochrane two days later in Los Angeles.

HOME EDITION THE ASSOCIATED PRESS THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS EVENING TRIBUNE OFFICIAL CITY NEWSPAPER ESTABLISHED 1886 THIRTY-TWO PAGES SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, MONDAY, MAY 20, 1935 THREE CENTS 65 CENTS PER MONTH

WEATHER FORECAST  
Forecast for San Diego and vicinity—Fair to clear and breezy with clouds or fog near the coast tonight; mild temperature.

Yesterday's Low and High  
San Diego... 67 78  
San Francisco... 52 62  
Los Angeles... 62 72  
Portland... 52 62  
Seattle... 52 62  
New York City... 52 62

# Stocks Soar, Tumble as Court Upsets U. S. Rail-Rate Control

# TWO KILLE IN HOLDUP OF TIJUANA MONEY CAR

## THUGS RIDDLE CAR WITH MACHINE GUN; CASH, CHECKS TAKEN

Two Agua Caliente special police officers were shot and killed without warning today by three machine gun handits who halted the Agua Caliente money car on the National City dike and stole approximately \$76,000 in money and checks.

The two victims, according to police, are: N. Monroy and A. Borroto, both in the employ of the Agua Caliente company.

The slaying and robbery, one of the most sensational in local police history, occurred while a steady stream of traffic flowed on the busy thoroughfare.

After obtaining the money, the bandits sped from the scene in a car and were chased several blocks by pursuing witnesses. Their first car was abandoned at Edgemoor and B streets, police said, where the two apparently transferred to a waiting automobile.

Although exact knowledge of the actual slaying and robbery by eye-witnesses differs, police say the best account of the incident is substantially as follows:

"When the money car was drawn near the bridge on Main street, a light turned out bearing two men about from the regular line of traffic. A shot burst out and a roar of fire followed.

"At least 53 persons were killed and 29 injured in northern Anatolia by a 6.25-megaton earthquake.

The latest report states that 20 persons were killed and 23 injured at Soudoukh, near Great Asia. Many were shot dead.

After the two officers had been shot and killed, one of the bandits grabbed a pistol from the car and fled, followed by the other two. The police are still searching for the four men who were shot.

## 800 Battle Raging Missouri Flood in Vain

### CAPTURE CANTON; FEAR DISORDER AT FUNERAL OF SUN

SIENHUALI, May 20 (AP)—Chinese and Japanese reports state that 8000 forces captured Canton at noon today. No counter-attacks were made.

CANTON, China, May 20 (AP)—A mysterious kill in the nighting dove mansion in the Shiang area today mystified observers here. Some official negotiations of some sort are under way between the Kuomintang leaders (Chiang) and the Kuomintang forces in the region.

Foreign correspondents considered that whatever might happen there in event of the city's capture, the situation of the foreign consular district would not be affected. The district has been under heavy shore bombardment and navigation had been stopped.

ALL STORES CLOSED

PEKING, May 20 (AP)—Extraordinary demonstrations during the disinterment of the body of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Chinese republic, have broken out here. Sun's body is to be moved from the ancient capital, Peking, to the new Chinese capital, Nanking, Sunday.

A number of arrests already have been made, among them 12 Russians now being held at Tientsin. Police warned that provocateurs will use the occasion of the funeral here for disturbances, but ordered all shops closed in the streets through which

## BIG VICTORY FOR ROADS IN NEW RULING

WASHINGTON, May 20 (AP)—The Federal cabinet on Monday approved a ruling that will allow the Federal Government to raise up to \$4 to \$10 per share following the publication of the United States supreme court decision in the St. Louis & O'Fallon case, was followed late this afternoon by a sweeping ruling, which carried over and added to it 112 more than 100 high levels and sent a wide assortment of industrial cradling to \$10 per share before their week's final quotations.

The announcement of the supreme court's decision at this time heralded an extraordinary "bullish" movement.

A block of 5000 shares of Chesapeake & Ohio was sold at \$20 a share, a jump of \$2.50 from Saturday's closing price. Norfolk & Western mounted quickly \$12.75 to \$20.50, a record price for this stock.

New York closed at \$11.50. Atlantic Coast Pacific \$9, and St. Louis-San Francisco, Delaware & Hudson and Rock Island about \$5 each.

Among those selling up from \$4 to \$5, were Erie, Westinghouse, Jersey Central, and Great Northern preferred.

More Movement Strong

NEW YORK, May 20 (AP)—A dramatic outbreak of buying of rail stocks which followed the announcement that the Federal Government had decided to raise up to \$4 to \$10 per share following the publication of the United States supreme court decision in the St. Louis & O'Fallon case, was followed late this afternoon by a sweeping ruling, which carried over and added to it 112 more than 100 high levels and sent a wide assortment of industrial cradling to \$10 per share before their week's final quotations.

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More Movement Strong

## LEVEE GOES WITH ROAR HEARD FOR 10 MILES

KENNETT, Mo., May 20 (AP)—An army of workmen led a hard fight with flood waters of the St. Francis river when the levee crumpled about seven miles northwest of Kennett. The break is inundating approximately 45,000 acres of farm land and will cover highway 84 to a depth of several feet. No towns are endangered.

Farmers warned in time that about 800 men had been working for miles long to prevent a crevasse. While they still were working at Millhouse levee, considered the weakest point, there was a rumbling sound and a roar as flood waters swept away the dirt barrier and poured into fertile farms, ruining all

## MANY DELEGATES COMING TO S. D. AS CONVENTIONS HELD THIS SUMMER, FALL

Between 35,000 and 50,000 delegates to various conventions will arrive in San Diego beginning next Friday, according to arrangements today by the chamber of commerce.

The Panama-Pacific liner California is due to reach here from New York Friday morning with 500 Shriners from eastern temples enroute to the

The suspects were arraigned on May 27 in San Diego, pleading not guilty to charges of murder and robbery. A large crowd milled about the courthouse, excited over rumors that "underworld characters" would attempt to rescue the defendants.

But after hearing testimony from the defendants, the police and public fascination over a "gangland" aspect of the heist began to fade. Cochran and Colson admitted to carrying a machine gun but it was never used. They had killed the guards with .38 caliber handguns. A stolen

machine gun and “other artillery” had been dumped in the ocean off San Pedro by Cochran and Kearney after they fled San Diego.

Nor was there any connection to the “mob” or organized crime. The murder defendants were career criminals with long track records of burglary, arson, and grand larceny. Kearny—not implicated in the heist itself—was a small-time “bootlegger.”

Colson and Cochran appeared “eager to get it over with” and pleaded guilty to first-degree murder—apparently to avoid hanging at San Quentin. But as sentencing day approached, Martin Colson attempted suicide by slashing his wrists. He recovered and then, appearing in Superior Court, he shouldered the blame for the crime, tried to exonerate his partner, and begged for a death on the gallows.

On August 6, Judge Charles N. Andrews pronounced sentence on Colson and Cochran. A moment of drama occurred when the judge addressed Colson: “Yesterday you asked me to sentence you to death. Do you now desire that I impose the death sentence?” Colson was silent at first then stammered that he left his fate in the hands of the court. The judge “smiled faintly before sentencing him to life imprisonment.” Cochran also received life in prison.

In a separate trial Jerry Kearney was convicted of being an accessory to the money car robbery and slayings and sentenced to one year in county jail. His wife Agnes—never tried in court—was released from jail after a few weeks.

Robert Lee Cochran would serve twelve years in prison before being paroled. But his partner in the Agua Caliente heist lasted only four years behind bars.

Martin Colson, who had once begged for a death sentence, tried repeatedly to escape from Folsom State Prison. His most spectacular attempt was an effort to cross a prison moat by swimming underwater using homemade diving equipment. His apparatus failed and guards pulled him out, half-drowned.

In July 1933, Colson’s brother Emil tried to smuggle guns and ammunition into Folsom, hidden in a kegs of nails. The brother was caught and arrested. One year later, Colson made a last futile attempt to break out using a gun fashioned from prison shop materials. Cornered in the warden’s office, Colson killed himself with his homemade pistol.

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Published as the “The Heist on the Dike,” in Richard W. Crawford, *San Diego Yesterday* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013).

Originally published as “Gangland ties initially suspected in deadly 1929 heist,” in the San Diego *Union-Tribune*, Dec. 13, 2009, p. NZ.1