

FBI Has 'Outstanding Leads' But No Arrest Yet In Calabash Holdup

BY RAHN ADAMS

A suspect who robbed a Calabash bank at gunpoint and left behind a phony bomb last week remains on the loose, but federal authorities say they are getting closer to solving the crime.

"Obviously we don't have anybody yet... but we have a number of outstanding leads that we are pursuing," FBI Special Agent Terry Peters of Wilmington said Monday.

The armed robbery occurred Dec. 15 around 12:30 p.m. at United Carolina Bank on Ivey High Street in Calabash. An undisclosed amount of cash was taken.

The robber was armed with a small handgun and a package that kept investigators at bay for three hours until a Wilmington Police Department explosives team determined that the device was not a bomb.

None of the four bank employees was injured. No customers were inside the bank at the time of the robbery.

According to Peters, the suspect

was last seen "walking away from the bank toward the waterfront."

Roadblocks that were set up on highways leading out of Calabash immediately after the robbery and a general alert in North and South Carolina were unsuccessful in apprehending the suspect.

On the day of the robbery, Peters indicated that a video camera inside the bank might have photographed the suspect. However, he said Monday that no pictures were available.

But lawmen do have a composite picture of the suspect, who is described as a white male, 40 to 50 years old, with brown hair and of stocky build. He was wearing a tan jacket, brown trousers, glasses and a dark golf cap.

Peters Monday said the "bomb" also may help investigators track down the robber.

"Of course, anytime they (robbers) leave anything or touch anything or say anything, it can be helpful later on," Peters said.

He added that 80 to 90 percent of bank robberies are solved, probably

since they receive more publicity than most ordinary thefts, and because bank robbery investigations involve local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

Peters also pointed to a reward program established by the N.C. Bankers Association, which offers up to \$2,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of bank robbers.

There have been two attempted robberies at the branch, the first in October 1981. Neither UCB Area Executive Al Laughinghouse, the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department nor the FBI's Wilmington office could provide additional details on those attempts.

The Calabash UCB robbery last week was North Carolina's 115th bank robbery of the year—the highest number in the state's history, Peters said.

The second highest total was 109 in 1983, while 92 bank robberies occurred in both 1985 and 1986, he said.



THE SUSPECT in last week's armed bank robbery at the Calabash branch of United Carolina Bank is described as a white male, 40 to 50 years of age, with brown hair and of stocky build.

Santa May Need Rainwear

Santa Claus may have to "break out his umbrella and galoshes" if he lingers in the Shallotte area on Christmas Day, according to Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady.

The Christmas Day forecast calls for mild temperatures and a possibility of rain, Canady said.

Over the next several days, though, the area can expect both temperatures and rainfall to be near normal.

Canady said temperatures should range from the upper 30s at night to the upper 50s during the day. Rainfall should measure around one-half inch.

For the period of Dec. 15 through 21, the average daily temperature was 48 degrees, which was close to normal, Canady said.

The average daily high temperature was 59 degrees, and the average nightly low temperature was 38 degrees.

The maximum high temperature during the period was 69 degrees on Dec. 15, and the minimum low temperature was 25 degrees on Dec. 19.

Canady measured .48 of an inch of rainfall during the period.

Commissioners Ask County Dept. For Input On Septic System Project

BY RAHN ADAMS

Brunswick County Commissioners Monday night decided to consider using the county's Operations Services Department to construct a new septic system for the county government complex in Bolivia, in hopes of cutting the project's \$110,000 estimated cost.

Commissioners also heard a brief report that the county's annual audit is complete and that the county is in good financial shape.

The full board was present except for Commissioner Jim Poole, who was undergoing tests and treatment at Duke University Medical Center in Durham. Regina Alexander, clerk to the board of commissioners, said Poole was being treated for problems with a blood vessel in his leg.

At Monday night's regular board meeting, architect John Sawyer and engineer Phil Norris, both of Wilmington, answered commissioners' questions on plans and specifications for the septic system project which they said would solve present needs and handle future expansion at the complex.

Improvements must be made to the system within the next five months to allow the complex's cafeteria to continue serving the county jail. Sewage is not being absorbed properly by the existing system's drainage field.

At their Dec. 7 meeting, commissioners delayed action on the project because Sawyer told them several months ago that the problem could be fixed for approximately \$40,000.

Monday night Sawyer explained that his earlier estimate was based on a "quick fix" to solve the immediate problem, but that the \$110,000 project would "give the complex future room to grow."

"It's costing more because the pro-

ject is larger," Sawyer said.

He said the new system would include a grease trap outside the cafeteria and two large nitrification fields with a 14,000-gallon-per-day capacity. Construction would take no more than two months, he said.

Wilmington engineer Phil Norris told the board that the new system was "absolutely the best way and the quickest way to solve your problem."

Also, County Hydrologist Walter Marley said certain features of the proposed septic system—particularly the grease trap and a sand filter bed—would "greatly enhance and increase the system's life."

After the board reviewed a projected cost schedule, Commissioner Chris Chappell asked that Operations Services come up with a work estimate on the project that could be compared with contractors' bids. Sawyer said bids on the project would be available Jan. 7.

Operations Services employee Pearly Vereen said his department could have an estimate ready by noon Wednesday (Dec. 22), which would allow commissioners to review the estimate at their Jan. 4 regular meeting.

Also at Monday night's meeting, commissioners received copies of the county's recently-completed annual audit from Finance Director Lithia Hahn.

The audit was done by the Brock, Berry and Padgett certified public accounting firm.

Accountant Joan Chestnut said the audit showed the county in solid financial condition.

"Overall it's a very sound, very good picture," Ms. Chestnut said.

Commissioners Chairman Grace Beasley said the board would review the audit at its Jan. 4 meeting.

Also Monday night, commissioners accepted the county's 1987 property tax valuations and levys, and charged the county tax collector to collect those taxes.

According to Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson, the total county tax levy is \$19,831,189.48 and the Doshier Hospital District levy is \$717,684.03.

The amended 1987 grand total levy

is \$20,548,873.51.

Ms. Hahn said last year's levy was \$18,447,024, based on a 95.6 percent collection.

As a result of the apparent increase in levies, Commissioner Benny Ludlum said the board should consider cutting the county tax rate by at least three cents next year.

In other business, commissioners: • Heard a request from Boyce Mann of Southport Marina to assist in the establishment of a no-wake zone from American Fish Company to Doshers Creek on the Intracoastal Waterway. Ms. Beasley suggested that Mann contact N.C. Rep. David Redwine about the status of a study being done on no-wake zones by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers before action is taken by commissioners.

• Set a public hearing for Jan. 4 at 6 p.m. in commissioners' chambers, on the authorization of \$28.9 million in water bond refunding.

• Approved 53 tax releases and refunds to local businesses, as recommended by Williamson.

• Approved bid specifications for a forklift to be purchased by Operation Services.

• Amended the Health Department budget to allow the purchase of a \$6,000 cholesterol testing machine with state funds.

• Approved first reading of a proposed cable television franchise agreement with CTVS Inc. of Calabash.

• Accepted dedication of the Hidden Valley subdivision water system into the county's water system.

• Recommended addition of three roads to the state's secondary road system: Southern Boulevard in Town Creek Estates; Evans Circle in Pine Haven; and Bo-Tuc Road in Seaside.

• Tabled appointments to the Brunswick County Airport Commission, Aging Advisory Council and The Brunswick Hospital Authority until the Jan. 4 meeting.

• Took no action following two executive sessions to discuss "personnel." One secret session lasted 40 minutes, while the other took only five minutes immediately prior to adjournment.

Law Has Countywide Impact

(Continued From Page 1-A)

of these filled lots, we will be enforcing this rule as it reads, meaning regardless of how deep the fill is or when it was installed, the original 12 inches of soil will be evaluated."

During last Wednesday's meeting, planning board member Alan Holden emphasized that the health department's new interpretation has countywide impact, although attention lately has been focused mainly on problems at Holden Beach.

"Oftentimes people forget that there are developments on the mainland that this is going to affect equally," Holden said. "It's just going to take a little longer for the yells to be heard."

Harvey agreed, pointing out that property owners in Sea Pines subdivision—a mainland development in the Long Beach area—complained about local enforcement of septic tank laws at a recent Utility Operations Board public hearing Dec. 2.

Several Sea Pines property owners said they couldn't obtain septic tank permits because their lots didn't meet health department standards, with drainage being a major problem.

Both Holden and Planning Board Chairman Ed Gore questioned the propriety of the septic tank regulations, especially in terms of the health department's current position on filled lots.

"Either they (the regulations) are improper or they're being interpreted and applied improperly," Gore said, "because there's no justification when you examine the materials..."

At Holden's suggestion the board asked Harvey to survey other counties about their health departments' interpretations of the septic tank laws.

Harvey last Thursday said he intended to contact "a smattering" of selected counties across the state, including both rural and metropolitan counties in coastal and piedmont sections.

He said he hoped to have a report on his findings ready for the planning board's January meeting.

In other action at last Wednesday's

meeting, the planning board approved preliminary plats for four proposed subdivisions including:

• The Moorings at Bent Tree Plantation, 82 lots averaging 60 feet by 150 feet for patio home development, in Shallotte Township within the existing Bent Tree Plantation subdivision, owner D.C.S. Limited Inc.;

• Phase I, Windward Village of Lockwood Folly, 15 lots averaging 65 feet by 140 feet for patio homes, in Lockwood Folly Township within the existing Lockwood Folly subdivision, owner Channel Side Corporation Inc.;

• Gate Three, Seaside North, 50 lots averaging 70 feet by 150 feet, in Shallotte Township on the eastern side of the existing Seaside North subdivision, owner Long Bay Developers Inc. and William D. Benton;

• Section One, Shingletree Estates, 117 lots averaging 60 feet by 150 feet, in Shallotte Township on the south side of Hickman Road NW, owner Grand Strand Gateway Inc. and Ignatius A. Montforte.

Also, the planning board remanded a preliminary plat for the proposed Forest Landing subdivision owned by Russell B. Kennedy and located in Town Creek Township on the north side of U.S. 17 near Green Hill Road.

Board members asked that the developer redesign the plat due to concerns about a proposed subdivision street with a greater than 90-degree turn and about alternate access to adjacent property.

The planning board also approved the alignment of roads in a proposed development located between N.C. 211 and the Intracoastal Waterway in the Long Beach area. Homer Wright of Eden showed board members a conceptual plan of the development.

In another matter, the planning board tabled a request by surveyor Jimmy Cain of Bladenboro for a right-of-way variance for a proposed subdivision located in the Shallotte Point area between the Shallotte River and Saucan Creek. The board instructed Harvey to study the developer's options involving access to the landlocked property.

Quick Action—

(Continued From Page 1-A)

teen-age drivers' accident rates statewide. North Carolina had been operating under a long-time exemption to an earlier federal ruling.

But Turner said the local school system is in the final year of a three-year plan to phase out student drivers anyway.

"I have supported student drivers," Turner said, "but, on the

other hand, statistics show that the majority of accidents are by student drivers."

Last week, school officials reported that approximately 25 student bus drivers were employed in the school system, with the number to be reduced after the holidays when another eight or nine adult drivers are assigned buses.

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