

Secrets of the Secret Service

Shooting His Victims In the Heels Was "Sport" for Tennessee Bad Man

By JOHN JAY DALY

LONNIE TAYLOR, bad man of the mountains, sat on the stoop of his hillside home above the little town of Newport, Tenn., and watched a stranger walk along a pathway.

"Who might that be?" one of Lonnie's women-folk asked.

"Could be a revenoor," Lonnie said. "Believe I'll shoot him in the heel."

"Which heel?" the woman asked, as Lonnie raised his rifle. "Which one you say, gal?"

"Th' right heel," she ordered. Lonnie picked off his man at 500 yards—winged him as he walked.

Lonnie Taylor, wildest man who ever came in contact with the Secret Service, was a good shot. Only three days before this exhibition of his marksmanship he had shot his way out of the Tennessee State Penitentiary after killing a trusty guard in the break for freedom. They had Lonnie serving twenty years for robbery and he didn't like confinement.

Tennessee's gift to crime made his break for freedom on the night of September 15, 1933. After he shot his way out of the prison he went back to his old haunts in the mountains. He put on a bit of gun play at a Saturday night dance where all hands were quick on the trigger, just for the fun of it.

Then Taylor began a wild rampage through three States, passing counterfeit money, robbing stores and holding up people when he felt so inclined.

When the law finally caught up with him two months after the jail break—he was arrested on November 19, 1933—Taylor had made such a record that he was sentenced to ninety-nine years in the penitentiary—enough to keep him out of action for a lifetime. All authorities hope Taylor doesn't connect with a gun somewhere behind the bars, for he's a dangerous man at large.

Though Taylor had never come afoot of the United States Secret Service until after his sensational jail-break, he was then to give the Treasury men, along with State and local officers, one of the hardest chases recorded in the archives of American criminology. Taylor, though he didn't know it at the time, was destined to become a dealer in counterfeit—of short but hectic reign. He flourished only for those two months—from September to November, 1933.

Flanked by several mountaineers, Taylor proved to be the spearhead in a sensational counterfeit conspiracy strung from New York to New Orleans and spread all over the Southern States. Always he remained the main actor—the principal character.

It all happened in a queer way. Taylor, after escaping from prison, made fast tracks to his mountain home to see an old sweetheart. They went to the dance the night of his arrival. Somebody said something Taylor didn't like. That was the touch-off. He held up the entire assembly.

Word got around about this piece of lawlessness, for the mountain men down there are sharpshooters. Some of Taylor's old friends thought they'd pay him a visit—since he was out of prison—and congratulate him. It seems that the



-THE TAYLOR CASE

"I think I'll shoot him in the heel," said Taylor. The girl named the left heel and Taylor fired, bringing down the counterfeiter

Padgett boys—Charlie and Romeo—had just got back from a sojourn in New Orleans. There they became acquainted with a man named Frank Grangroe, distributor of counterfeit \$5 New York Federal Reserve notes. The Padgett boys were disposing of these in the mountains.

Grangroe represented a counterfeiting ring in New York. When he met the mountaineers and they explained the life and manners of their own people—quiet country folks who seldom went to town—the New Orleans man saw this as a great virgin country for his nefarious trade. He started singing a song, "Tennessee, Here I Come."

The Padgett boys, pleased with their first success in getting rid of spurious currency, invited Grangroe to their home—to do a little business up that way with their help. He told them he'd drive up in his high-powered roadster and bring along about \$5000 worth of spurious bills. Also he would teach them how to get rid of it.

This was the news the Padgetts wanted to tell Taylor—for they figured that he would be a good man to string along with in such an enterprise, especially since he would probably be starting out on the road, now that the officers were after him. He could take a lot of counterfeit money along.

Taylor was just about to leave for other locations when Grangroe arrived with "a bundle of kale." Taylor had never seen anybody quite like this man—a flashy dresser with his hair oiled and a loud necktie. He wore tailor-made clothes and shoes instead of boots.

"State your proposition," Taylor said, and listened. When he heard all he wanted to hear, Taylor let fly a stream of tobacco juice. Then he said: "Now, boy, I'll take that gun, and all the cash you've got—and the car—and you get the hell out of this country fast as yo' legs can carry you or I'll shoot you full of holes."

The counterfeiter started running down the mountainside. When he got three or four hundred yards away, Taylor said: "I think I'll shoot him in the heel."

"Which heel?" Lonnie's woman asked as he raised his rifle.

"Which one you say, gal?"

"The left heel," she ordered, and Taylor put a stop to the running counterfeiter. Shot him in the left heel. It crippled him some and the Padgett boys took pity on him. They pleaded with Taylor to give Grangroe an old car in exchange for the handsome roadster.

Now Taylor had about everything he wanted—a satchel full of counterfeit

bills that looked like the real article, his favorite rifle, his sweetheart, a fast car and the open road before him. He started out.

Every town Taylor came to he managed to get rid of at least one \$5 Federal Reserve note. For good luck he usually stuck up a store of some sort and got away with good money.

Word went forth that a wild man was on the loose. The Secret Service picked up his trail—but it was a hard trail to follow because it led over mountains not frequently traveled. Sometimes Taylor would be lost for days. In the lonely places his counterfeit money remained too long to help establish a trail.

Taylor, in a fit of homesickness, doubled back on his trail. He had gone as far south as Mississippi and Louisiana and now he wanted to see the mountains of Tennessee, his native heath.

Secret Service men got word of Taylor's return. They had kept watch on his old pals—bad men in one way or another—Luther Vineyard, Jim Sexton and the Padgett boys. Another character of the mountains, John Harbin, had tried to crash the party, but Taylor "put the gun on him," as they say down in the Tennessee hills.

Anyway, word got about that Taylor was home. Some of the gang went up to see him. They were met by their host with a rifle in his hands. Taylor took no chances either with friends or foe.

The Secret Service men, knowing this, decided they'd better play safe and organize a posse when they went calling on Lonnie Taylor. They got up quite a party in Knoxville—fifty-five miles away from Taylor's home in the mountain. In the group with the Secret Service were Director of Public Safety Walter Anderson, Chief of Detectives D. D. Fogarty, City Detectives Joe Kinney, T. Kirby, Dan Kerr, Officers Tower and Buchart and Deputy Sheriffs Carl Thomas and Herman Goods. It fell to the lot of Albert Vaughan, of the Nashville office of the United States Secret Service, to help rid the State of Taylor. Armed to the teeth, these traveling companions of the Secret Service sped over mountain roads to capture Taylor.

When the party arrived, Taylor was not at home. They had a long wait. It was midnight when they got there. Taylor did not get back till dawn. He had two women with him in a classy roadster.

Taylor was just stepping out of the car when one of the women yelled, "There's the law."

At that moment the shooting began. Taylor had expected no such greeting

at his old homestead. He was unprepared—could not get out his pistol—and as he reached for a gun in the car a Secret Service man shot Taylor in the left hand. He couldn't use his shooting irons. Taylor fled.

When the officers examined Taylor's car they could not understand why somebody had not been killed—but no one was hurt. The car had Alabama tags on it and was later found to have been stolen. Taylor got all his cars that way. They also found a sawed-off shotgun and rifle in the car. When a search of the Taylor premises was instituted the officers discovered several sets of license tags from Alabama, Kentucky, Texas and Tennessee.

From sun-up until noon, the Secret Service men and their companions searched all the nearby woods for Taylor—but no Lonnie. Then they returned to Knoxville. Returning to Newport after dark this same evening the Secret Service men learned one thing: that Taylor had been shot in the left forearm. This was the shot which prevented him from getting his rifle, "Old Faithful," out of the car and demonstrating his ability as a sure shot. Taylor's pistol toting was for the mere purpose of "putting a gun on a man." His fine shooting—the finished article—was always done with a rifle.

After Taylor made his getaway, shot in the arm, he showed up at the home of a man named Orville Lindsay, and at pistol point made the man accompany him to a doctor. Dr. Proffitt's office was two miles from the scene of this early morning shooting affair. The doctor worked with a pistol trained on him.

His wound dressed, Taylor started again on the road. Next night he held up a store to get funds for his escape from the Tennessee country.

The trail was opened again, and the Secret Service went after the fugitive. Taylor managed to get into the Lone Star State. There he married a woman named Jean Morrison. She was afterward haled as a witness against him, though he swore he had never seen her. They were married in Fort Worth with Taylor taking the name of the bride.

All the Secret Service was on the quiver. They expected to shoot it out with Taylor, but the end came peacefully so far as the Secret Service was concerned.

Agent I. V. Ryan read in a New Orleans newspaper one Sunday morning that a bad man had been arrested, a gun-toting mountaineer who entered a saloon with a .45-caliber pistol and shot up the place. Plenty drunk, he was overpowered by New Orleans police officers who answered the riot call. Secret Service Agent Ryan figured out that this was Taylor and secured a confession from him in his cell. That was the end of Taylor's career. He was taken back to the origin of his crimes, tried, convicted and sentenced to ninety-nine years in prison.