

The Double

My partner, Bo, and I were pretty successful. So much so that we bought a condo in the Houston area, furnished it and had a car in the garage for an emergency getaway. We sat around night after night getting stoned and trying to come up with original ideas to make money. Since Bo was broke, we decided that we would do two banks, one after the other, and use the distraction of the first to reduce the police presence at the second. We also wanted a natural barrier between the banks, some type of separation that would slow down the response from the first bank to the second. The simplest would be mountains or a river, something natural. It was in the fall, so we wanted to stay in the South and didn't want to go more than a day and a night away. We planned on taking my motor home and leaving my wife, Linda, and the car. We would be gone a week, max. Linda had no idea.

After scattering maps all over the floor, we came up with two possibilities. The first was East and West Memphis with the Mississippi River in between the two. The second was Baton Rouge with the same barrier. We ruled Memphis number two and turned our attention to Baton Rouge. The big city was on the east of the river, and little Baton Rouge on the west side was on the way home back to Houston. Things were coming together, and we took off going east on I-10.

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We found a trailer court on Baton Rouge's east side that was real low-key. Very easily, we acquired all the frequencies for the scanner. In town, we found very detailed maps of the entire community and fire department maps showing the grids that sometimes made a big difference as to how the police react to major crimes.

It was time to go to work and find every bank in the area and put them on our maps including cop shops, sub-stations, highway patrol and county sheriff stations. The biggest part of the city, about 400 thousand people, was separated by the river from the 20 thousand on the west, so it seemed logical that we would hit one on the east, come west and hit number two, then leave on the freeway west. Baton Rouge-proper was a big challenge. It is a southern town, with mostly blacks, with a medium to high crime rate—that meant a lot of police. Our frequency director books showed how many cop cars and radios, how many hand-helds (street cops) and how many repeaters, and the same research went into the highway trooper and parish cops. Most of the time, we listened to the scanners main net for crimes and how they were handled. Although by law all the radio transmitting in the U.S. must have a license from the FCC, the cops would use a few other frequencies for their top crimes that they for sure didn't want people to listen to. If a crime happened, the dispatcher might say, "All detectives to Tac Number One." People don't know about the frequency, so they didn't get to listen. When this happened, I would turn my scanner to scan and try to find the frequency they were on. After a few nights and a weekend, I could begin to figure out their methods of operation, including where their "eyes in the skies" were and their hours as well. It was information that could make or break a good robbery.

During the next few days, we decided on a bank. We checked, and rechecked, and checked again the car transfer point and get-away. We used right turns only, because a left turn could turn

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into two-to-three minutes of waiting for traffic. We also developed a place where two people could get out of one car and into another without any witnesses. It would have looked very suspicious if we were seen. In practice, sometimes we would just pull up and one person would get out and follow the other for a couple blocks, then the driver would stop and get out. On all our jobs, it was something we worked out. On this job, we had to figure out if we were going to keep the first car or take time to switch before crossing the bridge to the second bank.

We went through the want ads to find a reliable junker for the first car, and maybe a second. We couldn't make up our minds if we needed one or two cars, so we decided to go with two to be safe: a white Chevy and a black Volvo. Both cars looked liked shit, but they fit our criteria of quick-starting, had OK tires and up-to-date tags and inspection stickers.

Finally, we decided on our first bank, which was staffed by women. It was about two-and-a-half miles from the big bridge. It was sort of on the edge of a residential area. There was an easy exit to the main street and an adjacent residential street where we could change cars or follow the street all the way back to the bridge on-ramp by staying off the main avenue. For some reason, cops always want to go to the bank *after* it's been robbed. They know you won't be there, but they still go. It was important that these on-the-scene law-types were misled from the start. We always made it a point to give a witness a good look at the getaway car, since that information would be relayed to the cops—say a white Chevy with tags number so-and-so—but that car would never be on the road for more than a couple minutes and never on a main street. If we did it right, the car would be left somewhere where it wouldn't be found for a while and that would give us plenty of safe time to leave the area.

The second bank was quite small, with three women and one drive-up window. We liked drive-up windows, since they

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would have more money on certain days like the first and the fifteenth for local paydays. That bank had a great getaway. Three blocks after leaving, we would head for the back roads that could get us to a west-bound freeway rest area—a slick getaway. It all looked good, except we didn't want to leave the Volvo at the rest area. If it was found too fast, it would show another car transfer going west. We didn't want to drive the Volvo down the freeway behind the motor home, or to someplace else to ditch it. We decided to leave the car at a 7-Eleven about eight blocks from the trailer park, which was far enough to distance the Volvo from the park. We would walk to the motor home with backpacks.

Next, we had to decide when we wanted to do the job. The first bank would be the big money bank, since it was located right at the end of a small mall, so it would have the night deposits. That meant the best time was Monday morning before the armored truck did its pick-up. Bank Two was just a potluck; we really didn't know what to expect. It was small enough that we could take our time and clean out the vault, and we thought we might just get lucky and find some gold coins or something valuable. So we decided that Monday at approximately 9:45 a.m. was our target. The bank opened at nine, so the rush would probably be over. We had to get there before the armored car pick-up came. If we timed it right, the money would be in the bags just waiting for us, and we would use the remainder of the time to pick up the rest in the vault.

The rest of the week, we worked to finish all the details. We wanted traveler's checks—American Express was the best. We didn't want to try to get those at Bank One because it would take too much time and more bags. We planned on taking some blank cashier's checks if they were easy, but we mainly planned on going for all the twenties, fifties and hundreds. If there were customers in the lobby we planned on just skipping the tellers,

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but if the lobby was relatively empty, Bo would pick up their money while I dealt with the manager and the vault clerk.

At night, we just sat and watched television, smoking a pipe or two.

On Saturday, we went to a flea market we'd heard about. We weren't really shopping for anything, just looking around. I heard Bo yell from across a table to come check something out. He thought we could use a flare kit from a yacht that included a flare pistol and a smoke bomb. It said on the package that it produced dense smoke—dense smoke? Bo thought it was perfect for a diversion! It said it was a yellow and orange smoke and burned for 150 seconds, so we decided to buy it and check it out. There were three smoke canisters, a flare pistol, six flares and dye packs. The guy wanted a hundred bucks for the kit. We thought that was expensive, so we passed.

Later, while we were eating and having a beer, we talked about that flare kit. The more we talked, the more we liked the idea of a diversion with non-toxic smoke, so we decided to go back and dicker with this guy. I was worried that if we did that, he would remember us. So once we got back there, I spotted a kid about fifteen or sixteen wandering around and looking sort of out of place, but not a thief. I yelled at him, and he came over. I told him he could earn ten bucks if he ran an errand, and he said sure. I told him what I wanted and for him to take this \$100 and buy it. I told him that he was to give him \$90 for it, and he would get to keep the change, or get it for \$80 and keep twenty, I didn't care. I also told him if he ran off with my \$100 I would find him. He came back in about ten minutes with the kit. He said he'd paid \$90, and we were cool with it. The kid was happy too.

On the way back to the trailer park, we decided to see if we could put the flare in the air handler at the mall by the bank with a timer to go off as we left Bank One. It for sure would

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keep the cops occupied for an hour or so as we did Bank Two, even though it was across the river. Who knew what kind of response would take place, if any? But it would guarantee our exit to the river bridge. But how were we going to make it pop on a certain time? We figured a battery-powered alarm clock and an old fashioned flash bulb—the kind with a lot of fine wire inside that flared bright when electricity was applied. So we then had to find some of those old types of flash bulbs, and we instantly thought of K-Mart! We got everything we needed back to the motor home, and the room looked like a light bulb-making plant. We had two alarm clocks, wires, tape, two smoke canisters and batteries. But the problem was the clock couldn't be set for longer than twelve hours, which meant we had to plant it at nine the night before. We went ahead and made up our smoke bombs: we cracked the glass on the bulb and inserted it into the smoke powder and sealed everything up real tight. We took one way down a country road to try it out, but it was late at night and very dark. It still made a ton of smoke and worked good, so now we had to figure out how to get the gizmo in front of the air handler for the air conditioning, which was on the roof. Bo and I drove over late on Saturday night, and there was a ladder to the roof that we could get to if we parked the car next to the building and got on the car roof. Bo volunteered and took one of our hand-held radios and went up to check it out. Back down he came—piece of cake. The plan was to set it on the roof, right in front of the air pick-up, and it had to work. Even if it just went up in the air we would get some response.

On Sunday, we positioned the Volvo to run through the get-away route, but it was not a real test of the traffic, since it was the weekend. It was better than no test, though. We couldn't take the white Chevy to the trailer park, so we picked an apartment complex to store it in. I called Houston and talked to Linda. Then we

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ran the getaway twice more, but didn't foresee any problems. The Volvo was still OK, and we made certain that it would start. Sunday night around midnight we circled the mall and tried to find the security people, but evidently they were inside. Bo hopped up on the hood as we pulled around the back of the store to the ladder, and up he went. Two minutes later he was back, and we were on. At the last minute, we decided we'd had the white Chevy at the trailer park for too long, so we traded it for the Volvo just to be sure. We thought if they did link the Chevy to the bank we would be OK.

By Monday, we had gone through the steps at least ten times and felt we were all set—no worries. We headed off to Bank One fairly confident. Bo parked the Volvo almost right in front of the bank's no parking area, and I went inside. I knew the name of the manager through our homework, and asked for the woman by name. The manager came over and asked if she could help me. I told her I was moving here from Charleston and needed a new bank and had some questions about them.

"Please come in!" she said and took me back to her cubicle. I took a seat with my back to the lobby. As she sat down, I handed her an envelope from my suit inside pocket. She took the envelope and opened it. As she did, I started to arrange my equipment on her desk starting with the two-way radio. Then as she looked up from the note with questions on her face, I pulled the scanner out of my other pocket and set it on the desk with a twist of the knob to show her it was on.

I gave her my "Don't turn this into a homicide" speech; that I wasn't alone and was monitoring her alarm system and the police, and should a call come through I would shoot her.

I told her to call her vault clerk over. As she was getting the vault clerk's attention, I picked up the hand-held and called Bo and told him to come in. Then I put it back down on the desk. I took a folded nylon bag out of my attaché case.

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When the clerk came over, I told the manager to let her read the note, too. I then told the vault clerk to sit down in the other chair. She looked at me hard, so I opened my coat revealing my shoulder holster and the butt of the gun, but I didn't make any effort to take it out or touch it at all.

"Are you going to cooperate?" I asked her.

Of course, she said yes. I repeated that I was monitoring the alarm system and was not alone.

"What do you want me to do?" she asked.

I told her I was going to sit there with her boss and wait while she filled the bags with all the twenties, fifties and hundreds from the vault. "Don't short me, since I know approximately how much is available. And I want the bank bags you've got ready for the armored car given to the fellow at the counter right now!"

She got right up, went inside the vault and came out with two bulking bags and set them on the counter. Bo grabbed them and headed for the car. The next three to four minutes dragged by with the manager sitting there staring at me as I watched the bank go about its business. I couldn't tell if anyone was aware of anything.

Finally, the clerk returned and handed me the bag. Then she just stood there.

I told her: "Go to the tellers and have them put all of their twenties, fifties and hundreds on the counter. If one dye pack is handed to my partner, I'll shoot your boss."

There were three tellers, and as Bo was picking up the money very calmly, a couple came in and sort of looked at him and went to a teller. He had just left that window, but the clerk showed no emotion. Bo finished up, and we both met at the door almost at the same time. I had picked up the radio, scanner, attaché case and the bag of money, I was loaded. I couldn't have got at my gun if I wanted to!

We went out and Bo got in the driver's seat. The Chevy fired right up. We calmly pulled away with no one running out to look

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at us or anything threatening. We left a trail straight to the main drag, then two rights back behind the mall to our residential road to the bridge.

Bo tapped his ear piece as I played with the scanner bands. “We got smoke,” he said. “The smoke bomb went off on schedule.”

We picked up the Volvo and threw in my two bags, attaché case and Bo’s two bags. Two minutes later, we were on the bridge. After two exits, we turned off and pulled into a furniture store parking lot and put the bags in the trunk and committed ourselves to Bank Two, which was six blocks away. All was quiet on the scanner on that side of the river. Not much was on the east side news—except a bank robbery and smoke at the mall! They said two men in suits, armed, left in a white sedan—but they didn’t have the tags. That was great.

We thought we would wait and more action would cover us, but after fifteen minutes Bo said, “Let’s do it!” Then my adrenaline really went up.

We pulled into the bank lot, and there was only one car, plus the cashiers’ cars on the side. I parked almost in front, out of the line-of-sight, but as close to the door as possible. I got out with the attaché case, went in and walked straight over to the counter where I waited. There was only one customer at a teller, and I had to wait—funny! No wonder people hate banks. I waited until someone looked up and saw me, but the lady who asked if she could help me wasn’t the manager.

I ran the line about being a new customer, but she said she could handle it. So I said, “I’m looking for a personal-type bank and I’d like to sit down with a manager.”

What could she say but, “One moment.”

She went over to the manager’s desk. Instead of motioning me over to her desk, the manager got up and came over to the counter.

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This is not going right. I stood firm and asked, "Can we sit down and go over my requirements for a new bank?"

"OK, sure, come in," she said.

At the end of the counter was a little swing door with a clever little finger lock combination to open from the inside, but she opened it and signaled me past. I couldn't see how she opened it, but I decided to worry about that later. We sat down and she introduced herself. I just pulled out the same robbery letter that I had just used across the river and handed it to her.

She read it and asked, "Are you serious?"

"Yes, ma'am. Are you going to cooperate or am I going to have to shoot you?" I replied.

"Oh, of course I'll cooperate."

"Please call your vault clerk over."

"We don't have a vault clerk. I have the responsibility for that," she said.

I told her, "Hold on a second." I made her wait until Bo came in. I turned on the scanner and told her it was monitoring her alarm system. Bo's timing was perfect, so the manager and I got up. At that time there was nobody in the place but us.

The manager told the other girls, "These men are robbing us. Please cooperate with them."

Bo further told the cashiers what to do and what would happen if he found a money pack of bait or a dye pack in the money they gave him.

The manager and I went to the vault. She opened the large stainless steel door of the safe. I opened my case and handed her a nylon bag. She filled it, and I asked her, "Is this all?"

She said, "The rest is at the teller's cages." Which meant that Bo had already gotten that cash.

"OK, I said, let's go." As we passed her desk, I picked up the scanner. It was silent.

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I hopped over the gate and I was out! I said, “Thank you for your cooperation and don’t come outside!” And we ran out.

We’d left the key in the trunk lock to save time. Bo threw his bag in the trunk. I kept my bag and case with me, hopped in the driver’s seat and started out. The car was moving when Bo hopped in.

Our exit was made to look like we were heading for the freeway, but of course we turned the other way in two blocks and headed down our getaway to the back of the trailer park. We always carried a box of plastic garbage bags in case we got lucky, and our bags were not adequate. It was the kind of job we hoped for—the mother lode! In fact, we had too many bags to carry in one trip!

We parked in our chosen spot, and it was totally cool. There wasn’t anybody around in any direction. I kept a box knife in my case, and I sure was happy because the bank bags had a lock on them. We needed to dump them into a plastic garbage bag to be able to make just one trip. There wasn’t all that much money, but it was just too many bags to carry. And it would look mighty weird to be seen carrying four bank bags, two smaller bags and my case. So we cut the bags and dumped them all into two plastic garbage bags, and it made a much better load. We had worn ladies nylon gloves, like panty hose, that came in all shades. I don’t know what they were for, perhaps glove liners, but they were great. They left no prints in the cars.

I left the keys in the Volvo and hefted a bag over my shoulder that also had my suit coat and shoulder holster in it.

Before we left the car, we took a moment to think back about if we forgot anything. Bo asked, “Do we have everything?”

Everything seemed fine. “OK, let’s go!” I said. With my tieless white shirt and sleeves rolled up I didn’t look too bad. It seemed like a long walk to the back of the trailer park, but it really wasn’t. It was just the adrenaline pumping. We were on the

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home stretch! If a cop drove by, he would have surely given us a look, but none did. Ten minutes later, we entered the back of the park and crossed to the motor home. As far as we could tell, nobody noticed.

It was weird, but right then I started shaking so bad I had trouble with the key. Once inside, we high-fived, mixed a strong shot and downed a beer. Bo turned on the scanner, and they were just then talking about us. They had a great description of the Volvo and the tag numbers. I hoped some high school kid would steal the car before it was found. Bo wanted to stay, count the money and get high, but I vetoed that.

I told him, "You can count the money on the freeway. We are out of here!"

I unhooked the power cord, water and sewer hose and pulled around to the office to check out. We owed nothing extra. I went over to the phones and called Linda to tell her we were on the freeway, coming home. Back in the office, I bought a twelve-pack of beer and a bag of ice for our little cooler. Then we hit the road. I set the cruise control for two miles an hour over the posted speed limit and stayed in the right lane. We had 340 miles and six hours to go. I hit the stereo to hear, "On the Road Again"!

Bo had a ball counting the money and finding little surprises: a few gold coins, some two dollar bills, a big handful of cashier's checks that were blank and traveler's checks. Not a bad two weeks! It was a bit hard on the nerves, but considering we made about \$40 thousand in a week each, it was worth it!

Wanted:

Gentleman Bank Robber

The True Story of Leslie Ibsen Rogge, One
of the FBI's Most Elusive Criminals

Dane Batty



Hillsboro, Oregon

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Cover by Lesley Rogge
Interior design by Robin Simonds, Beagle Bay, Inc.

ISBN 978-0-615-2684-5-3
LCCN 2009936173

First Edition

Printed in the USA

15 14 13 12 11 10 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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