

Preparedness Does Prevent Holdups

By DANIEL MARKEL

A Portland, Ore., Bank Cashier and His Wife, Having Read How to Discourage Banditry, Prepare for Aggressive Action and Rout Gang of Five Holdup Men, Killing Two of the Most Notorious Members. The Climax of a Bad Era for Robbers in Oregon.

TWO armed bandits on the morning of Jan. 19 walked into the Mt. Scott State Bank, Portland, Ore., and a few moments later were carried off dead.

Twelve hours before the holdup and attempted robbery A. J. Demorest, cashier of the bank, had read an article in the January issue of the AMERICAN BANKERS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL by Dale Graham, titled "Preparedness Prevents Holdups."

Mr. Demorest discussed the article with his wife, who also is employed in the bank, before retiring. It was of special interest to them because on Dec. 29, only three weeks before, the Mt. Scott bank had been held up and \$1,900 taken from the counter.

"I believe I'll take the '22' with me when I go to the bank in the morning," Mr. Demorest reflected, recalling that at the time of the December holdup the robbers had appeared more nervous than any of the employees in the bank.

"Take the Winchester 30-30," Mrs. Demorest suggested. "If you are going to have a gun there, you should have one that is effective."

The larger rifle accompanied Mr. Demorest to the bank the following morning. It was loaded with soft-nosed bullets. Mr. Demorest placed it in the main vault.

Mrs. Demorest Prepared

FORTY minutes later Mrs. Demorest arrived at the bank. "I'm late," she explained to her husband, "because I stopped to read the article you were reading last night. I want to help also if anything happens."

Mr. Demorest jestingly asked what she thought she could do in the event of a holdup.

"I'd scream, for one thing, and throw something through a window to attract outside attention."

Mrs. Demorest stepped to a cloak room to hang up her wraps. At that moment



Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Demorest

Matthew Harris, a teller, was working at the window nearest the main entrance of the bank. Harold Jones, a bookkeeper, was standing back of the third window from the front. Mr. Demorest was about midway between the counter and the vault.

The cashier's wife came out of the cloak room and noticed two men enter the door of the bank. As she walked across the office and toward the rear of the bank she eyed them closely, displeased with what she read in their faces, but uncertain of her suspicions. She was about to step into an ante-room when she saw the two men draw pistols.

According to Schedule

MRS. DEMOREST screamed, stepped into the ante-room which looks into a side street, closed the door, picked up a

heavy inkwell, and hurled it through a window, almost hitting a bandit standing watch outside. She continued screaming.

Meanwhile two more holdup men had entered the bank, but, startled at Mrs. Demorest's cries, turned and fled. The first two invaders, however, remained.

One of them ordered Harris and Jones to go to the vault, while the other passed around the counter and back toward the vault.

Neither of the robbers, apparently, had noticed Mr. Demorest, who at his wife's first scream started to the vault.

The robber undertaking to rob the vault came upon Mr. Demorest before the cashier had had an opportunity to pick up the 30-30 "deer-gun." But Mr. Demorest seized the rifle and fired from the hip. The soft-nosed bullet severed the bandit's jugular vein and broke his neck.

Immediately the robber standing outside the cage opened fire, but in his agitation missed Mr. Demorest by many feet. His automatic "jammed," failing to throw the empty shell, and another soft-nosed bullet from the "deer-rifle" tore off the top of his head.

Police inspectors assigned to the case gave Mr. and Mrs. Demorest equal credit for foiling the robbery, the former for having the courage to shoot the two bandits, and Mrs. Demorest for having the courage to attract outside attention, thus frightening away two of the bandits in the bank and the "look-out" man just outside.

For, they reason, while Mr. Demorest was more than a match for two robbers armed with automatics, he might not have been able to successfully cope with five pistols in the hands of desperate criminals.

And, the inspectors believe, Mrs. Demorest's action may have tended to unnerve to a degree the two holdup men who remained.

Police identified one of the robbers, Fred Williams, as an ex-convict, who

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Preparedness Does Prevent

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had served sentence for robbery with a dangerous weapon, and the other as John R. Benton, several times arrested on suspicion of participating in holdups, but never convicted.

Passersby outside the bank, attracted by Mrs. Demorest's cries and the breaking of the window, observed details of the holdup with sufficient accuracy to furnish police with excellent descriptions of the robbers who fled and of their two automobiles, which resulted in the immediate positive identification of one of them and partial identification of another.

"Were you excited?" Mrs. Demorest was asked.

"Not at all," she replied. "Only mad. I was thinking of what I had read in the article in the BANKERS JOURNAL about being 'hard-boiled' and reducing holdups, and thought it a good time to put the advice into practice."

Incidentally, it was another cashier and his wife who had put a stop to bank holdups in Portland for nearly two years prior to the robbery of the Mt. Scott bank in December.

Another Daring Couple

THAT couple were Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Drake of the Park Rose State Bank. The final robbery of that bank was on March 16, 1926. It was the fourth robbery of the bank in fourteen months, approximately \$6,000 having been obtained. The successful raids had been made before Mr. and Mrs. Drake took charge.

The final attempt to rob the Park Rose Bank was frustrated by the simple but heroic act of Mrs. Drake in handing her husband a sawed-off shotgun as two holdup men confronted them with revolvers. Mr. Drake fired the shotgun. The bandits fled with their two "outside" men, and the Park Rose Bank has not since been disturbed.

Nor was any other during the twenty-one months intervening between that holdup and the first holdup of the Mt. Scott bank last December.

So it would seem that in Oregon at least preparedness plus woman's courage does prevent holdups.

At the Mt. Scott bank a heavy "deer-rifle" now stands permanently within easy reach of some employee.

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