Garden City S&L Robbed; Five Suspects in Custody

By JOHN MONK
Sun News Writer

Police using a bloodhound took three suspects into custody in a wooded area near Garden City Tuesday afternoon following an armed robbery by masked men of the Surfside branch of the Peoples Savings and Loan Association.

Two other suspects remained at large until late Tuesday evening when they were captured by three Surfside policemen near the beach terminal on 9th Avenue N. in Surfside Beach.

Earlier in the day, bandits took an undetermined amount of money and the tip up Peoples branch manager J. Steven Hawley with telephone cord during a holdup, which took place shortly after the trailer-type loan office opened at 9 a.m. The money has been recovered, police said.

Hawley, the only person in the office at the time the robbery took place, was not injured. Police said his car was used in the getaway by all but one occupant, who later abandoned it about a mile away on Ocean Boulevard in the Garden City shopping district.

Eight other persons were questioned Tuesday afternoon by law enforcement officials, but were later released.

The suspects in custody have been identified as Raymond L. Mitchell, 21; his brother Michael Mitchell, 24; Theodore Thompson, 20; Ronald McGuire, 20; and Larry L. Nieren, 31. As of Tuesday evening, none had been charged with the robbery. All except Raymond Mitchell, identified as a sergeant recently stationed at Myrtle Beach FBI, are said to be from New York, police sources said.

One source described the robbery as a "spur-of-the-moment type thing," rather than a well-planned heist.

The FBI has custody of the suspects.

"The capture was the result of all the local law agencies combining their efforts to effect the arrest," said an FBI spokesman, who added that about 11 municipal, county, state and federal law enforcement agencies helped in different ways to bring about the arrests.

The early morning robbery was apparently broken up while still in progress by Surfside Police Chief Robert Adamos, who arrived at the leading institution several minutes after an alarm went off in the Surfside police station at 8:07 a.m. (The savings and loan is about a half mile south of Surfside in the unincorporated area of Horry County known as Garden City.)

Upon his arrival in a marked car, two cars apparently driven by holdup men hastily left the leading institution's small parking lot.

One of the cars belonged to the office manager, who was tied up inside the office.

Adamos, who jotted down the license number of one of the cars, then started into the office, but was met at the door by two masked masked men, one of whom brandished a black revolver.

Adamos, who was not carrying a weapon, was seized by one of the two masked men, who then took off on foot toward the beach area of Garden City, the chief said later in an interview.

"He was starting to take off his [nylon] stocking mask when he was coming out," said Adamos. "I just turned around and put my hands on his neck. I told him 'I have to go.'" The chief said he does not wear a gun as a rule.

Adamos said his main concern at the time was to avoid a violent confrontation which might endanger not only himself, but innocent people perhaps inside the office. He said, "I'm glad they reacted the way they did. I didn't want to excite them because I thought they might take hostages."

Adamos said he then turned and walked away. The bandits fled, and he went in the trailer to find manager Hawley lying face down on the floor, tied with telephone cord. The inside

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Fast Action

Robbery suspect Theodore Thompson, top photo, stands in the rain on a muddy road west of Surfside minutes after being captured by area policemen. Law officers armed with shotguns face the woods, looking for another suspect then still at large. Horry County police question handcuffed robbery suspect Raymond Mitchell (back to camera, center photo); minutes after he and Thompson were captured. From left are: Det. Ellis Bellamy (face partially hidden); Det. Enoch Smith, Officer Johnny Morgan, Mitchell, and officers Willie Dutton, Harry Wilson, and Wesley Johnson. Below, Sgt. Eugene Graham and Horry County Police Department Chief Herman Emerick inspect a car stolen from the manager of Peoples' savings and loan in Garden City and used as a getaway car after the loan institution was robbed. (Sun News Photos by John Monk and Donna Blake)