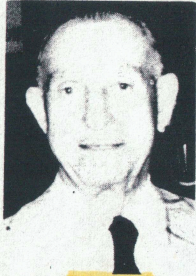


Wiping Out of the Al Brady Gang Was a Major Achievement of FBI

Ernie Hair Recounts Story of How Special Bureau Team Ended Crime Wave in 1937 at Bangor, Maine

By Erwin P. Hair



Ernie Hair

One of the major accomplishments of the FBI was the elimination of the Brady gang at Bangor, Maine, on October 12, 1937. The Grapevine of February 1958 had a story on Bill Nitschke becoming general manager of the Riverside Hotel at Reno, Nevada. It told of some of his recollections regarding the Brady case, including the names of some of the Special Agents who were there.

I think the case was of sufficient importance and interest that it should be reviewed, with proper credit to the 12 Agents who were there. Milton Jones has obtained from files of the Bureau the details of the case, with a list of the Agents participating and a chart showing where each man was stationed in Bangor.

The city of Bangor remains quite excited about the affair, and an artist there has completed a 16-foot mural depicting the scene of the shooting. Another Bangor man, Orlando Frati Jr., is working on activities for the unveiling of the mural, originally scheduled for October 12, 1979, but postponed until the same date in 1980. He is hoping that a movie of the Brady case will be made sometime in the future. Still another Bangor man, Richard R. Shaw, has been researching the case for two years in order that he can write a book about it.

The gang consisted of Al Brady, who seemed to be the leader, James Dalhover and Clarence Shaffer, and

they combined their talents in the latter part of 1935. There is little evidence of good citizenship on the part of these men in earlier years. Mostly they kept busy stealing automobiles and dealing in illicit liquor. The gang is said to have claimed they would make Dillinger look like a piker. They committed many robberies of stores and banks in Indiana and neighboring States, murdering two or three people while doing so. Early in 1936 they were apprehended, separately, and held in Indiana awaiting trial on a murder charge. Like Dillinger before them, they escaped after five or six months and resumed their robberies.

The FBI joined in the search for the bandits. Shortly before they had been apprehended, they had robbed a jewelry store in Lima, Ohio, and there was evidence indicating the stolen jewelry was transported interstate, so a Federal complaint was filed.

Realizing that they were really "hot" in the Midwest, the gangsters headed for Maryland, and rented a room in Baltimore. At a restaurant, Shaffer met Minnie, an 18-year-old waitress, and started taking her out. Soon, Dalhover met Minnie's sister, Mary, 20, and within a couple of weeks there were two marriages. Dalhover already had a wife and two children. The three men told the girls they had business interests in Maine, which seemed to explain their absences when they visited neighboring States to commit more robberies.

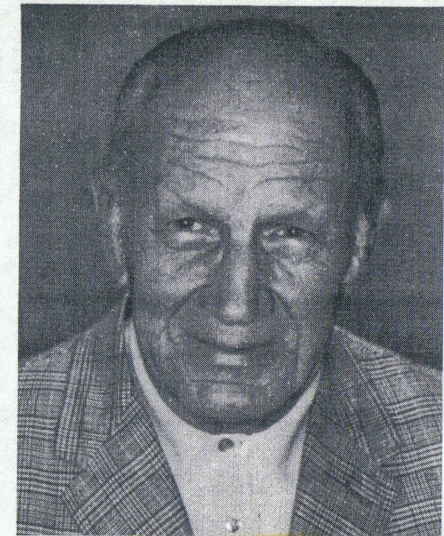
The four newlyweds moved to a house in Baltimore they rented, and Brady was a visitor there each day. The men spent much of their time in a basement workroom, which was

kept locked. They were making extra magazines and clips for the various guns they had. Dalhover was a capable gunsmith and he kept the guns in good working order. The gang had stolen many of the firearms. The fact that they bought some doesn't seem especially commendable when you realize that they bought them with money that was stolen.

During their several months in Baltimore they took up roller skating, and took some trips in a boat they purchased. They continued their robberies as a source of funds, and stole automobiles and license plates when it appeared helpful to them. In May, 1937, they robbed a bank in Indiana, and in making their getaway they spotted a car of the Indiana State Police. They got their car in a position where they were able to kill Officer Paul Minneman, and wound a Deputy Sheriff who was with him. They took a revolver and a shotgun the officers had carried.

In August they were changing some clothing and guns from one car to another, and they realized that police in a Baltimore squad car were observing them. They fled in an old car they had with them, but the squad car was gaining on them. They opened fire on the squad car and managed to disable it. This event enabled the police to establish the identity of the bandits, but they had left the city immediately. In their travels they robbed a bank in Wisconsin, getting \$7,000 and another revolver. They stayed in Buffalo a few days, and then went to Bridgeport, Connecticut, early in September.

The gang apparently traveled with an extensive collection of weapons, including machine guns, but they wanted more. There is no indication the guns were wanted for peaceful



I. E. (Bill) Nitschke

purposes. Hearing that Bangor was a good place to get guns, they went to Maine late in September, 1937, and made purchases at two stores. On October 5 they went back and bought some more at Dakin's Sporting Goods Store. They also ordered a machine gun and clips, saying they would return on the 11th or 12th. All this made the store owner a bit suspicious and he made a report to the Bangor Police. When the State Police at Augusta got the information the Boston Office of the FBI was notified. An Agent, probably Chris Callan, exhibited photographs at the store in Bangor, and it appeared definite that the Brady gang was involved.

The several Agents making up the Brady squad in Indianapolis headed for Boston and on to Bangor. They were joined by Agents Gurnea, Nitschke and Walsh from Washing-

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Nelson Operating Investigations Firm

Everett W. (Swede) Nelson (1947-77), of 433 Stonefield Place, Moraga, California, advises that he is now operating his own security consulting firm under the name of Nelson Investigations at that address. For the last 20 years of his service as a Special Agent he was assigned to Oakland, Calif., and his present operations now cover the same area. His wife Joyce was a Bureau secretary for several years.



END OF A CRIME WAVE AT BANGOR, MAINE—Midwest gangster Al Brady and his cohort Clarence Shaffer Jr. were killed in a shootout with FBI Agents on the morning of October 12, 1937 on a street at Bangor, Maine. Brady is in the foreground. Another Brady cohort, James Dalhover, was captured without firing a shot in a nearby sporting goods store. Brady and Shaffer outside elected to shoot it out with FBI Agents.

Brady Gang

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ton. The area around the store was carefully examined, and a reception committee was planned.

Nitschke and Walsh were stationed in the store, posing as clerks. A Bangor police officer was in the back part of the store. Callan and Johnson were upstairs in the building across the street. Gurnea and Devereux were in a car parked a short distance west of the store, and Reeder and Barber in a car about the same distance east of the store. Two cars were in the alley in back of the store, with Coulter and Criss in one, and Logan and Stewart in the other. Stewart was with the Indiana State Police, invited to participate because the Brady gang had killed one of their officers. My copy of the shoot-out does not show the location of Agent Fitch, although he is listed as being

at the scene.

The morning of October 12, 1937, the three gangsters drove past the store a couple of times, and not seeing anything suspicious, parked their Buick fairly close to the store. Brady stayed in the back seat, and the other two got out and walked up to the front door.

Dalhover went into the store, and Shaffer stayed outside. It required a bit of physical prodding to make Dalhover realize that he was being placed under arrest. Nitschke and Walsh handcuffed him and took his two hand guns, along with extra loaded clips. Shaffer saw what was going on, and started firing through the door. Walsh was wounded, but not severely. Shaffer caught bullets from the .357 of Walsh and the sub-machine gun of Nitschke, and probably other bullets from the guns of other Agents who were nearby. That was the end of Shaffer.

Brady Gang

Meanwhile, Gurnea and Devereux, with their guns drawn, approached the Buick. Devereux tried to open the rear door, but it was locked, so he broke the window with his rifle, opened the door, and ordered Brady to come out with his hands up. He came out, but quickly fired four shots from a .38 revolver. He had two other hand guns on him. One of the shots went through the topcoat of Devereux and nicked his holster, but did no damage otherwise. But the shots from Gurnea and Devereux, and perhaps some of the other Agents nearby, left Brady dead in the middle of the street. There were so many weapons on the floor of the Buick it was a wonder that Brady was able to step out of the car.

The sharpshooting ability of the Agents was verified later, as it was found they had fired 45 shots, with 43 hitting the three criminals.

Dalhover was tried in Federal Court in Hammond, Indiana, on a



Al Brady



James Dalhover

murder charge, with Gurnea and Nitschke giving testimony. He was convicted, and with his appeals being denied, he was electrocuted in November, 1938.

The Brady bunch had a mania for firearms, and the list of guns recovered from them includes three machine guns, and various pistols, revolvers, rifles and shotguns for a total of 35 weapons.

Editor's Note: This is the first of three articles by Erwin P. Hair, of the Society Historical Committee, on the Al Brady gang. Other articles will recount the careers of the FBI Agents who were members of the special team which cornered the Brady gang at Bangor, Maine.

Long Island Hears Reports of Montreal Conference and Status of Legal Fund

Members and guests of the Long Island Chapter enjoyed a lavish cocktail hour, followed by dinner and a business meeting at Antun's Restaurant, 244 Old Country Road, Hicksville, N. Y. on May 9.

Chairman Jim Lynch and Northeast Vice President Joe Flaherty reported on the great turnout for the Northeast Regional Conference at Montreal. Jack O'Connell gave a report of the present status of the Special Agents Legal Fund and the upcoming

trial of Mark Felt and Ed Miller scheduled for July 7 at Washington, D. C.

Lynch appointed a nominating committee consisting of Art Duffy, Gerry Caswell and Charlie Monticone to prepare a slate of candidates for election as Chapter officers. He also listed plans for a Chapter meeting in June.

Forty-six members and wives attended the dinner session.

JOE NALLY, *Secretary*

Houston Plans For Regional Conference

In preparation for hosting the South Central Regional Conference on February 13, 14 and 15, 1981, the Houston Chapter at its April 25 luncheon meeting made various com-

mittee assignments. Chairman Pat Carr presided. Forty-seven members, wives and guests attended the meeting.

M. A. RUEBRIGHT, *Secretary*