

Bank robbery suspects caught

By **William Yardley**

Three Orlando men who police say robbed a Floral City bank are quickly captured in Sumter County.

Three Orlando men believed to be involved in a robbery of the Floral City branch of the Bank of Inverness late Thursday morning led deputies on a chase into Sumter County before crashing their car at a railroad crossing in Bushnell.

Pursued by a Sumter County deputy, the men lost control of their two-door, black Mazda after crossing a dip in the road near the tracks.

"It was enough of a jolt to deploy the air bags," said Citrus County sheriff's spokeswoman Gail Tierney. "At least that's the impression I got."

The men, one of whom remained in the getaway car while the others entered the bank and allegedly robbed it at gunpoint, were arrested by Sumter County deputies and initially declined to identify themselves.

But by late Thursday, Tierney identified the men as Antonio Lamar Glover, 19, Trelly J. "Cotrell" Farrington, 18, and Jason Brewer, 19, all of Orlando. It was unclear late Thursday if any of the suspects has a criminal record or why they targeted the Floral City bank.

Tierney is not sure which two men allegedly entered the bank on U.S. 41.

Sumter County sheriff's Lt. Russell Merritt said the men were transported later in the day to Citrus Memorial Hospital. "One of them is definitely being admitted," he said. "They developed problems (injuries from the accident) during interviews."

Citrus County detectives and FBI agents are investigating the robbery. Bank robbery is a federal offense.

Crediting "a lot of luck and good communication," Citrus County Sheriff Jeff Dawsy said Sumter County deputies had the men in custody 15 minutes after receiving reports of the robbery.

The call came in at 11:26 a.m., just after two men allegedly entered the bank, both armed with semiautomatic pistols.

"The whole thing went down in like a minute. They jumped over the customer counter and started taking money out of the trays," Tierney said. "No shots were fired inside or outside, and no one was injured. The whole thing happened so quickly. Everybody was kind of like "Wow!" "

Seven employees and no customers were in the bank at the time.

The men are believed to have headed south on U.S. 41, then east on County Road 476.

"Dispatch immediately contacted the surrounding sheriff's offices," said Dawsy, who stood outside the closed-off bank just before noon. "We had a great witness and a good description of the vehicle."

Sumter County sheriff's Deputy David Cofield was "sitting right there at 476" when the men crossed the county line, Tierney said.

A statement released by the Sumter County Sheriff's Office said Cofield chased the men as they headed east on CR 476 at more than 100 mph.

According to the statement, the car struck a dip where CR 476 crosses U.S. 301 in Bushnell, parallel to the railroad tracks. The car became airborne and rolled, ejecting one man, who was arrested immediately.

The two other men ran off. "One entered into a business and was arrested hiding in a closet," the statement said. "The third subject was captured just northeast of the car crash after a foot pursuit."

The men will be held at the Citrus County jail, Tierney said. Neither the bank nor the Sheriff's Office has disclosed how much money was stolen.

"At this point we believe the money and the weapons are in the vehicle," she said. "Nobody's actually put their hand on this stuff." Investigators have impounded the Mazda but are waiting for a search warrant to proceed.

Tierney said the three men likely will be charged with armed robbery and may face felony charges in Sumter County related to the chase.

Nearly two years ago, the bank was the scene of an unlikely extortion attempt by an Orlando resident. On March 7, 1997, a woman abducted 76-year-old Margaret Rooks, drove her to the bank at gunpoint and threatened to destroy Mrs. Rooks' home and her relatives' homes unless Mrs. Rooks withdrew \$20,000 and gave it to her.

That woman, Stefanie June Butler, later pleaded guilty to several criminal charges and accepted a five-year prison sentence and 15 more years on probation. Butler told a reporter she orchestrated the extortion scheme because she needed money to pay for cancer treatment.

Wednesday's three alleged robbers may have come to rural Floral City hoping to "pull off the easy one or whatever," Tierney said. "Surprise!"

Source:

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