

Hughson Bank Robbers Kill Deputy

Shootouts Net One, Slay 2nd

BULLETIN. Ross N. Porter, 59, the second man sought in the slaying of a Stanislaus County sheriff's deputy, was shot and killed shortly before 2 p.m. today near horse stables on the south shore of Camanche Reservoir in Calaveras County. There was an exchange of gunfire.

By Bee reporters S. J. Ringhoff,

Thorne Gray and Bill Kane

Stanislaus County Sheriff's Detective Billy Joe Dickens, was fatally wounded at 3 p.m. yesterday by one of two men who moments earlier had robbed The Central Valley National Bank in Hughson. Leonard Ellsworth Miller, 45, Albany, Ore., the alleged slayer of Dickens, was captured by San Joaquin County sheriffs deputies in Calaveras County early today after two shootouts and a high-speed chase through the Mother Lode. More than 100 peace officers joined the night time search.

This afternoon lawmen continued to search the foothills near Camanche Reservoir in Calaveras County for the other robber tentatively identified as Ross Porter, 50, address unknown, who fled into the hills possibly wounded, after the 2 a. m. exchange of gunfire which ended with the capture of Miller on a rural road 3 miles north of Valley Springs. The rolling foothills where the search centers are covered with brush hampering the searchers.

Serious Condition

Miller is in serious condition San Joaquin General hospital in Stockton. Officers said X-rays showed he had 14 slugs his body. Miller apparently took one slug in the shouting at the bank yesterday and 13 in the capture this morning. Miller reportedly has spent 26 years in prisons.

Miller was wounded by Detective Charles Moore, 32, in an exchange of gunfire at the side of the bank at Hughson Avenue and Charles Street in Hughson which ended with the robbers speeding away in Moore's and Dickens' unmarked detectives car. Dickens was felled by two .32 caliber slugs which struck him in the arm and lower hack as is he and Moore held one of he robbers at gunpoint.

Dickens, father of three daughters, died at 7:10 p.m. in Stanislaus Memorial Hospital. He died in surgery without having a chance to talk to his wife or mother, who were taken to the hospital by other detectives .

Moore, who lives in Hughson, said he and Dickens were in the Hughson area when they heard a radio call that an armed robbery was in progress at the bank, and were the first lawmen on the scene.

Moore said they spotted one robber holding his arms over his stomach at the side of the bank. He apparently was holding money. Moore said Dickens stopped their detectives' car and both detectives got out, pointing their revolvers at the bandit and ordering him to raise his arms, he did, and \$1,000 cascaded to the sidewalk from under the black raincoat he was wearing.

Moore said he heard a shot from behind him and saw Dickens fall. Moore said he turned around and saw Miller, gun in hand, less than 30 feet away. Miller, who

was the last robber out of the bank, came up behind the two detectives as they held Porter at gunpoint.

"We stood there and emptied our guns at each other," Moore said. Moore said the robber he shot at flinched once and held his hands to his chest as if wounded. Dickens, a member of the Sheriff's Office pistol team, did not get to fire a shot.

While Moore reloaded his snub-nosed .38 caliber revolver the two robbers jumped into the detective's car and sped off with the red light on and taking Detective Dickens gun with them. Moore emptied his revolver again at the fleeing robbers and hit the car three times.

Near Dam

The unmarked detective's car was found abandoned at 4:45 p.m. in an undeveloped subdivision near Don Pedro Dam north of La Grange, where the robbers apparently parked their second getaway car. They had left one getaway car near the bank and it became a key to the capture of the robbers.

The robbers entered the bank shortly before the 3 p.m. closing time and donned stocking masks. They wore dark felt hats and black raincoats.

Bank bookkeeper Carolyn Firpo of Hughson apparently was the first to realize the two men intended to rob the bank. She said, "I saw one man pulling something over his face. So, I nonchalantly walked over to teller's cage, and pressed the (alarm) button. Then I waited for him to tell us what to do".

The robbers herded 15 employees and customers into the bank vault, tying up the men. Bank operations officer Larry Williams was forced to give the men money from the vault before the robbers closed the vault door. The robbers cleaned out three teller drawers before fleeing.

The employees opened the vault door from the inside after hearing the shots. The FBI, in charge of investigating the bank robbery, did not disclose the amount of cash stolen from the branch. Some \$1,000 in \$1 bills was recovered behind the bank after the robber dropped the bills. But higher denomination bills still were missing. Miller, when captured, had \$100 in his pockets, officers said.

Deputies were swamped with reports of sightings of the stolen detectives' car, seen by Cathie Vaughn, 7408 E. Pine St., Hughson, racing east on Whitmore Avenue towards La Grange. She told deputies the red light was still on as the robbers sped past her.

That Moore's slug had found its mark was evidenced by large quantities of blood found on the front seat of the car. Dickens' revolver was left in the car.

For a time it was thought three men had been involved in the robbery, and a building-by-building search of the area in Hughson was conducted by shot gun-armed deputies. Deputies say now the man probably was a frightened bystander who fled from the area and was mistaken for a fleeing robber.

For two hours, lawmen from Calaveras, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Tuolumne, Mariposa and Merced Counties joined with Federal Bureau of Investigation agents in the search for the men who shot their fellow officer. An estimated 100 officers were involved. Some were volunteers who heard of the shooting.

Washed Wound

A creek runs near Los Nogales Road in the subdivision where they stashed their getaway car where the two robbers, dumped the raincoats and hats. An empty gauze bandage container was found near the creek, leading deputies to speculate Miller washed his wound and bandaged himself before the men fled in a late model compact car which they had left in the remote area before the robbery.

Miller's wife of 18 days Phyllis, called the sheriff's of from Albany, Oregon this morning, to inquire about her husband. She told Undersheriff Harry Oliver that Miller was released from the Oregon State Penitentiary Jan. 6 after serving a four year term. She told Oliver that Miller has spent 26 years in prisons. She did not say why he was imprisoned.

There were a number of witnesses in Hughson to the shooting of Dickens and the gunfight between Moore and Miller, including Maria Marquez, 6, who watched the gun battle from the front window of her home at 2419 Charles St. A stray slug smashed through the window four feet above her head, but Maria and two other youngsters in the room were not hit.

Bank Robbers Are Tied To Crime Orgy

By S. J. Ringhoff and Richard Stanfield

Ross Porter, 47, killed by a posse in Calaveras County yesterday afternoon, and Leonard Ellsworth Miller, 44, captured 12 hours earlier, are being connected to a series of armed robberies from Oregon to Hughson.

Stanislaus County sheriff's deputies and Federal Bureau of Investigation agents today learned Porter and Miller may have pulled as many as six holdups in past days.

Porter and Miller robbed the Central Valley National Bank in Hughson of about \$20,000 Tuesday. They then eluded more than a hundred lawmen, abandoned a stolen sheriff's car and fled into Calaveras County where both men fell, riddled with buckshot slugs.

In the bank robbery, Stanislaus County Sheriffs Detective Billy Joe Dickens, 30, was fatally wounded by one of the robbers at 3 p. m. Tuesday and died about 4

hours later in Stanislaus Memorial Hospital in Ceres. Miller is accused of firing the fatal shots.

Porter had held Carrol Skaggs, 73, owner of horse stables at the south shore of Camanche Reservoir, hostage for 5 1/2 hours. The lake is about 30 miles east of Lodi.

Skaggs said he talked Porter into trying to escape the tightening ring of lawmen on foot. Then Skaggs ran to Modesto Police Officers Leroy Applequist and Dwanyne Hardenbrook at their roadblock post near the lake. Porter, he said, left his trailer and began walking up a hill away from the lake.

Lawmen called in one of three helicopters helping in the search and the crew spotted Porter walking up the hill. The copter hovered over him to pinpoint his location for deputies on foot. At least six lawmen approached to within 40 feet of Porter who was hiding behind a Manzanita bush.

The officers said they opened fire when Porter ignored commands to surrender. Five double-0 buckshot slugs slammed into Porter and he fell on a tree-studded slope. Porter was seen on the slope from a helicopter by Detective William Sweeney of Modesto who said he saw a gun in the robber's hand. However, after deputies gunned the fugitive down, no gun was found.

Deputies searched the hillside today for the discarded weapon. Information developed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation had led deputies to believe the men were in Calaveras County and a trap was sprung shortly after midnight Tuesday in Altaville from which the two men escaped.

Nurse Is Hit

Marilyn Bowen, a nurse at Mark Twain Hospital in San Andreas, unwittingly drove her car into an exchange of fire between lawmen and the two bandits in Altaville and was grazed on the arm, officers said.

During an ensuing high-speed chase through the county, Miller and Porter temporarily were able to elude officers. At about 1 :30 a.m. yesterday two San Joaquin County sheriff's deputies came upon a car stopped along a narrow, winding county road 1 1/2 miles west of Campo Seco.

According to officers, the two fugitives, Miller, with one arm wounded in the gun battle in Hughson, trained their guns on the patrol car and opened fire. The officers returned the fire. Miller ran by the patrol car just feet away, still shooting his revolver. One of the deputies, unable to unlatch his seatbelt, returned the fire, escaping injury miraculously. Deputies finally stopped Miller by blasting him with shotgun fire as Porter escaped over a hill. That exchange of shooting launched 12 hours of searching for Porter. In minutes other units began responding to the call for aid and an ambulance transported the critically injured Miller to a hospital. He is in fair condition today.

Hounds In Action

Throughout the remaining hours of night, road blocks and search teams were formed and bloodhounds were put into action on the brush-covered hills. The night was cold and long for the officers, despite the search. Many officers no sleep since the bank robbery and murder the day before.

At daybreak, three helicopters were pressed into service at the request of FBI agents. Two helicopters came from Sharpe Army Depot, the other from the US Navy.

Up and down and around the hills the 'copter crews searched, vainly attempting to locate the elusive Porter, who was reported heavily armed and considered extremely dangerous.

Calaveras County Undersherff Rudy Blanusa estimated at least 90 per cent of the bank money was recovered. More than 150 law enforcement officers took part in the manhunt. Systematic searches were made of areas around Burson, Valley Springs, Camanche Reservoir and Campo Seco, where a command post was established.

Calaveras Sheriff Russell Leach, backed by another officer, was let down by helicopter in remote areas where he checked isolated, abandoned cabins for the fugitive.

Until Skaggs gave lawmen the information about Porter, their search was concentrated in an area covered with brush and rocks between Campo Seco and Valley Springs.

Porter was given emergency treatment by officers but was dead on arrival at Mark Twain hospital in San Andreas, where he was taken by ambulance. Seconds before the ambulance sped away, officers attempted to stop reporters from photographing Porter.

Robbery Spree Loot from a Monday robbery in San Francisco was found in the robbers' getaway car in Calaveras County along with the money from the Hughson stick-up. About \$8,000 was taken in the San Francisco holdup.

The two men also have been connected to the robbery of a Safeway Store in Woodland, Yolo County, last Friday at gunpoint and a Sacramento robbery.

Dickens was hit twice with .32 caliber slugs shortly after 3 p.m. Tuesday while holding Porter at gunpoint. Miller was the last to leave the bank and while Dickens and Moore held Porter at gun point, Miller fired and struck Dickens twice in the back and arm.

Moore and Miller exchanged shots, then Porter and Miller jumped into the detectives' car parked in the middle of street still running and fled car as Moore reloaded. Moore hit the car three times as it sped away. The car was abandoned in an undeveloped subdivision near La Grange where the two men had a getaway car parked.

They used another car to get to the bank and it was traced to a Castro Valley man who was questioned by FBI agents and apparently supplied some information about the two men and the type of car they were driving.

In Prison Together

Miller and Porter reportedly served prison terms together at McNeill Island Federal Prison in Washington State. Miller was released from prison Jan. 6 after serving sentence for the 1953 kidnapping of an Oregon policeman. He was married four days later to a woman, the mother of five, who had waited for his release.

Miller was in surgery at San Joaquin General Hospital in French Camp most of yesterday as doctors attempted to remove some of the 14 slugs in his body. He

will be moved to Scenic General Hospital In Modesto early next week, deputies said. He is under guard.

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500 Lawmen Attend Last Rites for Slain Lawman

By S.J Ringhoff

More than 500 lawmen from as far away as San Jose and Sacramento attended the funeral this afternoon of Stanislaus County Sheriff's Detective Billy Joe Dickens, 36, who was gunned down just outside a Hughson bank Tuesday.

The man accused of killing him, Leonard Ellsworth Miller, 44, of Albany, Ore., is in fair condition in San Joaquin General Hospital in French Camp. He has 14 bullet wounds. The body of the other bank robber, Ross N. Porter, 47, is in the Salas Brothers Funeral Chapel, where the services for Dickens were held.

A massive manhunt, one of the largest in the area's history, ended with the slaying of Porter in Calaveras County. There were three shoot-outs between the lawmen and the robbers; a trap was devised which did not work because an informant panicked and a high speed chase twisted along mountain roads.

Detectives took time out today to honor and bury their fellow officer, resuming the task of piecing together details of the chase through three counties and the details surrounding the deaths of Dickens and Porter and the capture of Miller.

First Shootout

Dickens was shot in the back and arm just outside the Central Valley National Bank in Hughson at 3 p.m. Tuesday. His partner, Detective Charles Moore, exchanged gunfire with Miller and wounded him before he stopped to reload. While Moore reloaded, Miller and Porter stole the detectives unmarked police car, which had the motor still running, and sped away. The car was found abandoned at 4:45 p.m. in an undeveloped subdivision near La Grange and Don Pedro Dam, blood on the seat and on stolen money. The bandits, detectives said, apparently had a getaway car parked there, which they used in fleeing into Calaveras County.

Third Man

The car the bandits left in Hughson was registered to a Castro Valley man. Miller and Porter apparently purchased the car from the widow of the Castro Valley man late last week. She remembered a third man was with Porter and Miller and FBI agents were able to track him down.

The third man, whose identity has not been revealed, gave agents the identities of the two men. Then, after Porter and Miller telephoned him while on the run, the unnamed man agreed to act as an undercover agent.

The fugitives asked the man in the telephone conversation to meet them in Altaville, Calaveras County, with blankets and medical supplies for Miller. They agreed to meet at a service station in the middle of the Mother Lode Village.

Lawmen surrounded the town and one carload, including Sheriff Dan Kelsay, followed the informant's car into town. The informant was to stop at the gas station and then run to a telephone booth, which would be the signal for lawmen to make the arrest.

Kelsay said the Informant apparently panicked and drove right past the service station. But lawmen spotted the car Miller were suppose to be in and screeched to a halt. The bandits' car sped away as the lawmen, including the sheriff, fired on them.

A nurse just finishing a shift at Mark Twain Hospital In San Andreas was on her way home and drove through the Intersection as lawmen and the fleeing bandits exchanged fire. Marilyn Bowen was grazed on the arm by a stray slug.

Chose To Shoot

The bandits in their high powered compact car managed to outdistance pursuing deputies but apparently chose to stop and shoot it out rather than run on. A San Joaquin County sheriff's patrol car rounded a curve near Campo Seco and saw the compact car stopped at the roadside, Porter and Miller running at them guns blazing. In the exchange, Miller was felled about 2 a.m. by a shotgun blast About 12 hours later Porter was shot and killed when he refused come out from behind a bush on a slope near the south shore of Camanche Reservoir and the deputies opened fire.

A gun Porter used for six hours when he held Carol Skaggs, 73, owner of the horse stables at the lake, hostage has not been found and detective said they will search again on Monday. They may denude vegetation in the area, if necessary, to find the weapon, they said.

Other Robberies

Porter and Miller have been identified by lawmen as responsible for at least five robberies including incidents In Woodland, Yolo County, Sacramento, San Francisco, Salem, Ore., and the Hughson stick-up in which about \$20,000 was taken. The money was recovered.

Porter's family told funeral chapel officials he left Salem Jan. 22. A veteran of World War II, Porter had been a upholsterer before serving prison time. They served time together in MacNeil Federal Prison in Washington State. Miller was released from an Oregon prison Jan. 8 after serving a term for kidnapping a policeman. He was married four days later to a mother of five who had waited for him to finish his prison term.

Representatives of law enforcement agencies in all the counties surrounding Stanislaus attended the funeral. About 100 officers from the Stanislaus County Sheriff's office were to attend. Reserve officers were called in to fill in for the deputies during the funeral.

White gloved deputies in dress uniform lined up outside the funeral chapel and saluted their fallen comrade as his casket was carried out of the chapel to the hearse. Dickens' tan steel casket was buried in Lakewood Memorial Park after full honors services rendered by his fellow officers. Other deputies provided an honor guard and pallbearers wearing full dress uniforms and black crosses taped to their badges as signs of mourning.

Dickens was buried in uniform after the flag from his casket was presented to his widow, Beverly and their three daughters, Lorry Lynn, 12, Sherry, 8, and Diane, 5. Other survivors include a sister, Ella F. Emmans and his mother, Mrs. Mae Bray, both of Modesto.

Missouri Native

Dickens was born in Granby Mo., and moved to Stanislaus County in 1947. He had been a deputy since 1961.

Graveside services for Porter will be at 11 a.m. Monday in Ceres Cemetery. He is survived by four children, Nancy, Allan, Connie and April Porter, all of West Lynn, Ore.; his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George

R. Porter of Salem; and three brothers and sisters, Lee Porter of Hood River, Ore. , Betty Young of Salem and Albert Porter of St. Helens, Ore. Porter was born in Whiteftsh, Mont. Pallbearers for the funeral for Dickens were Deputies Herb Wilkerson, Cliff Gee, Don Lucas, Ben Keel, Harold McCoy, Sgt. Jim Trevena and Detectives Charles Moore and Ed Sayad. The honor guard consisted of Detectives Ed Lyman and Richard McKay and Deputies Terry Kelbaugh, James Goeken and Robert Hastings.

Man, Convicted of Pendleton Kidnapping,

Captured Near Modesto

MODESTO, Calif. (AP) -An Albany. Ore., man who has spent most of his adult life in prison was wounded and captured after a racing chase over mountain roads early Wednesday. He was identified as Leonard Ellsworth Miller, 45, one of two men wanted in connection with Tuesday's robbery of the Central Valley National Bank in Hughson, 10 miles east of Modesto. A sheriff's deputy was shot and fatally wounded when he answered a silent alarm at the bank. He was Billy Joe Dickens, 36, Modesto.

Police took up the chase and on three occasions exchanged gunfire in the course of it. The second man, Ross Porter, 32, Oakland, was caught several hours later in the Sierra foothills. Miller was released from Oregon State Penitentiary only 22 days ago. He had completed a sentence for kidnapping a state policeman near Pendleton in 1953.

The policeman had stopped Miller for a traffic violation and was writing a ticket when Miller pulled a gun and forced the policeman. Pvt. Lawrence N. Kezar, to drive him and four companions several miles. Miller was caught near Yakima. Wash. His first sentence was in 1943 when he was sent to the Preston, Calif., industrial school for two years for burglary. The next year Miller was sentenced to the California Institution for Men at Chino on a 1 to 10 year sentence for grand