

Hunting Hijackers!



By GUY MURCHIE JR.

OUT OF NOWHERE a black sedan swooped abreast the big truck. There were three men in the sedan. Two of them were holding guns. They aimed at the truck driver. "Pull over!" one of the men shouted. Ralph Johnson, the truck driver, pulled over.

The black sedan's occupants kept the truck covered as it came to a stop beside the highway. The three men quickly hustled Ralph and Hank Garmicky, his helper, into the rear seat of their car, tying their hands and forcing them to lie on the floor under a blanket.

"We won't hurt you if you shut up and do as you're told," was the advice given the victims. As they were driven away, accompanied by two of the men, they could hear the snorts of their truck starting up with the third man at its controls.

The men who held up Ralph and his helper were hijackers. Their object was the theft of the \$10,000 load of tires which Ralph carried in the spacious compartment behind the driver's seat.

Ralph was no novice driver. He was horny-handed and burly, and he knew the highways of Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa as he had known his mother's back yard when he was a kid.

He was near Wheaton, Ill., roaring westward along route 30 toward Iowa, when the hijackers appeared. After two of the three hijackers drove off with Ralph and Hank on the floor of their car they kept on going for what seemed to Ralph about ten minutes. Then they made a sharp turn into some sort of driveway and came

They Were a Cruel and Crafty Breed Until—

Foreword

Hijacking is highway robbery. In 1932 hijackers were in their heyday. The prohibition era had been their golden age. After repeal they became so bold that the insurance companies refused to insure any merchandise against robbery while it was being trucked through Cook county. To deliver Chicago from the ravages of this scourge an able police officer, Lieut. James B. Kerr, was appointed head of the police cartage detail, with a squad of four men to help him. Kerr set to work with such ardor and success that within a year Mayor Kelly increased his force to six men, and three years later, in 1936, it was increased to eighteen men and six automobiles. In 1933 there were eighty-four hijackings in Chicago. In 1938 not a single hijacking was reported in the city. • How the hijackers were wiped out is a fast-moving record of brilliant detective work solving the most baffling crimes.

to a stop. Here one of the men blindfolded Ralph and Hank and sat in the car guarding them, while the other man went away.

Soon the captives could hear the sound of a heavy truck, which they guessed was their own. It stopped near by, and for several hours they could hear the intermittent thuds of heavy objects being

dropped and moved over a wooden floor. At the end of about five hours the hijackers drove off with them again and after ten or fifteen minutes of going told them to get out of the car.

"You're free now," said one of the robbers. "You'll find your truck down the road there." And the hijackers' sedan quickly sped away, leaving the truck drivers five hours behind schedule and with an empty truck and a \$10,000 loss to worry about.

That is the story substantially as Lieut. James B. Kerr of the Chicago police force heard it from Ralph Johnson over the telephone half an hour later—at 6 a. m. Kerr was head of the police cartage detail, whose special job was to fight hijacking in and around Chicago. A slim man with his head thin of hair and with large, keen eyes, he had the quick manner of one whose trained body is perfectly controlled by an alert, intelligent mind.

Instantly Kerr and his men swung into action. First they got hold of Johnson and Garmicky and questioned them thoroughly.

"How far would you say the hijackers drove you from the scene of the crime?"

"Exactly what did you hear during the five hours you were kept in the car?"

"Did the hijackers talk with a foreign accent?"

"Was the place they took you to in a town, or did it sound like a farm in the country?"

After an hour of clever interrogation Lieutenant Kerr felt pretty certain of the following facts: (Continued on page nine.)