

THE SEWING CIRCLE

By W. E. Hill

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The husband of the hostess arrives from the office half an hour too soon and finds himself up to his neck in the Tuesday sewing circle. Every one stops talking and husband has a bad time backing out gracefully.



Lovely sewing circle member bestowing sweet, but chilly, nod on some one she doesn't get on with.

"Oh, it's just HEAVENLY! What is it?" (These girls are weary of sewing, and are comparing perfumes. Sniffing handkerchiefs and having loads of fun.)



"Betcha half those dames don't know how to sew. All they do is give their friends dirty digs!" (Just one of those big he-men who likes to kid the wife about her sewing circle.)

Bride of one month getting ready to entertain the sewing circle. Cleans house from top to bottom and rearranges all the furniture. (Six months from now she won't take it so hard.)



The whispered comments. "My dear, did you EVER see such a terrible room as THIS!"

The gossip item. "Why, his poor wife can't so much as look the other way, without his going down to see that baby-faced blonde who works at the Owl Cafeteria!"



This sewing circle believes in improving the mind. So Mrs. Clapp is reading aloud from one of those powerful, outspoken best sellers that are almost too frank at times to be read aloud. The circle is intensely interested, especially when Mrs. Clapp is obviously skipping.

Hunting the Hijackers!

How Chicago Cleared Its Highways

● In the first instalment of this story of hijacking the technique of this now outmoded crime was told, and something of the methods the Chicago police cartage detail, under Lieut. James B. Kerr, has used in killing it off.

● In today's instalment the hijackers themselves are introduced, and the story continues, revealing the secret organization of their gangs and more of the canny tactics of the detectives in dealing with these predators of the road.

By GUY MURCHIE JR.

FOUR YOUNG men are seated at a table in the back room of a rooming house on Chicago's west side. Before them is spread a map of the city and northern Illinois, with red pencil lines showing the main truck routes and red circles indicating the areas near police headquarters or where highway patrolmen are known to be most numerous.

These supercilious looking youths, nervously twitching their cigaret ends, are hijackers planning their next "heist." Although there are very few of them left, they are the nearest thing to modern successors of the notorious highwaymen of old. Their game is the robbing of trucks on the highway, generally by holding up and kidnapping the driver until they have had time to store the load in some secluded hideout shack.

But just who are these hijackers? What sort of men are they, and how do they work?

Most of them are in their early twenties. They operate in small gangs or "mobs" of four, five, or six men. The smallest hijack gang encountered by the Chicago police had three men. It would be very difficult for two men to conduct a hijacking, for if one man drove the truck and another the hijack car containing the captive truck drivers there would be no one left to guard the drivers, and the unloading of the truck would take a dangerously long time.

As for spotting their victims, hijackers usually seem to leave that to chance. They may wait by the highway until a good prospect comes along, or they may cruise about until they see what they are looking for—usually a particular type of load, depending upon the kinds of fence they are in touch with. Undoubtedly they sometimes have advance information that a particular load is going to be on the road, but the cartage detail has only once found proof that any office help or driver ever "put the finger on" a truck load or got a cut in the "swag."

Kidnaping the truck drivers is virtually essential to the success of hijacking a whole load, because it takes several hours to unload the truck, and if the drivers were free to notify the police before it was unloaded it would be comparatively easy for the police to spot such a noisy and bulky operation. Usually it is not necessary to hold the drivers more than a few hours, however, and, as no ransom is asked for them, the hijackers are not kidnapers in the usual sense. The longest any driver was kept prisoner, according to the cartage detail records, was twenty-six hours, and in only one case was a driver seriously molested. That was in 1935, when a driver's head and feet were burned because he was reluctant to give the hijackers the information they wanted.

The cartage detail, at present under the command of Sergt. Michael Phelan, has so thoroughly eliminated known gangs of hijackers that its work is almost wholly prevention rather than cure. The detail's patrol cars cruise around the dock and warehouse sections of the city where trucks are loaded and try to spot any hijack scouts before they have had time to execute their schemes.

Education is an important part of the police work in this connection, and Kerr and his successors have persistently urged all trucking companies and their



Truckers report to Chicago detectives on hijacking of their \$25,000 load of cigarets. (Tribune photo.)

drivers to report cases of suspicious loiterers or of cars driving about the loading zones for no plausible reason, and several times license numbers taken down and descriptions made by alert trucking men have resulted in arrests and convictions.

Kerr's teaching of drivers to be observant when kidnaped has led to numerous arrests, especially his instructions concerning the identification of cars used by the hijackers. Among Kerr's suggestions to truck drivers driven away in hijackers' sedans are the secret burning of holes in the upholstery if they are given cigarets, and the stuffing of bread crusts under the seat if they are given food. Such tricks can be very helpful later when the police need positive identification of a car.

No detail is too small to be overlooked by the experienced cartage detail detective, for it is the minor oversight that is the surest weak spot in any apparently perfect crime. One hijacking case was cleared up, for example, by noticing that the red whisky truck that had been

crime has been so much easier and more frequent that the total loss from it is about the same. One big trucking company, for example, reports that in 1937 four or five of its trucks leaving Chicago were pilfered every night, amounting on the average to about one out of every ten trucks dispatched. If you consider that there are three million or more trucks in operation throughout the United States there is room for a lot of pilfering. A typical case will show how the thing is done.

About a year ago a big truck load of radios left Chicago at 9 o'clock one evening bound southward toward Indiana and the routes to the east. As it rumbled down Wentworth avenue past 43d street four colored boys, who had been waiting at the corner, swung aboard and quickly slit the tarpaulin covering with a knife, then disappeared through it into the hulk of the cargo beneath.

Once safely hidden inside the big truck's tarpaulin, the four could explore the cargo and prepare it for removal at their

truck and gently tossed several sacks of radios into bushes along the highway. Then they swung to the pavement to recover the loot as the two remaining youths prepared to do the same.

At this point the smoothness of the job being done by these young but deft criminals was suddenly ruffled. Swift justice rode the highway in the form of a squad car which appeared at the crucial moment and caught the crouching Robert and Li'l Brother at the end of a spotlight beam.

"What are you doing there, YOU?" rang out the terrible voice of the law.

"Nothin', suh. We's jus' walkin', suh."

"Are those bundles off that truck?"

"Er—yassuh, yassuh. We didn't d—"

"How many more of you are still on the truck?"

"Two, suh. Please, we—"

"Come on over here and get into this car!"

Swiftly the squad car sped after the great truck, whose driver still drove innocently toward his far destination, unaware of the drama taking place behind his head.

"What's their names?" asked the policemen of the two quivering prisoners.

"One's 'Dolphus and the other one is 'Do Tell'."

"What's their right names, their real names?"

"We don't know. Tha's all we calls 'em—'Dolphus and 'Do Tell'."

By the time the police had overtaken the truck 'Dolphus and 'Do Tell' were not on it. They had seen the fate descending upon their comrades and had escaped across the murky lots and fields. However, the Chicago police were notified of their "names" and of the addresses of the prisoners already arrested, and after a few days' detective work Adolph "Dolphus" Jones and John "Do Tell" Lamar, 19 and 18, were also picked up, to be later convicted of larceny of a truck.

That is the way truck pilferers do their work. In the vicinity of Chicago, say police, they work in gangs of two to six or eight and actually know each other only by such nicknames as Big Teeth, Cue Ball, etc.

Cases of pilferers following a truck for more than a hundred miles before seeing their opportunity to board it are known to police.

That brings us to the way the pilfering menace has been cleared up in the Chicago region so successfully that from more than a thousand pilferings of one company's trucks last year there has been only one case of pilfering reported in the last two months. It was done by educating truck drivers to watch their own trucks and each other's trucks, by asking gas station attendants and lunchroom men to look for slashed tarpaulins on passing trucks and for suspicious cars following trucks.

In rural areas it was accomplished by a very effective system of traps in which every truck or car leaving a designated area was stopped and searched. In the last year or two virtually every hijacker or truck thief left in the vicinity of Chicago has been either sent to the penitentiary or driven away to easier pastures in some other part of the nation.

Table of Hijackings in the Vicinity of Chicago, 1932-'38

Year	Hijackings in Chicago	Hijackings in the rest of Cook county	Hijackings in adjoining counties	Total amounts lost	Total amounts recovered	Size of police cartage detail
1932	about 250	records not available	no record	no record	no record	2 men 1 car
1933	84	records not available	no record	\$125,000	no record	2 men 1 car
1934	47	16	8	\$104,000	\$66,000	6 men 3 cars
1935	46	7	31	\$66,000	\$89,000	6 men 3 cars
1936	18	4	7	\$36,800	\$84,000	18 men 6 cars
1937	4	0	3	\$18,000	\$38,000	18 men 6 cars
1938	0	1	2	\$21,000	\$11,000	13 men 6 cars

*Not restricted to recovery of goods stolen same year.

robbed was returned with a slight streak of greenish paint on one side, as if it had rubbed up against something green during its absence. By searching diligently for a warehouse with a green wall they eventually solved the crime.

Another case, in which the driver was imprisoned in a small apartment for a whole night, was cleared up by the fact that the driver mentioned having been led to the kitchen sink while blindfolded. He had described the sink as being unusually low. Kerr sent his men looking for low sinks in the suspected neighborhood.

Taking detailed notes, photographs, making drawings and diagrams, and obtaining signed confessions are others of the important methods used by Lieut. Kerr and taught by him to his assistants. Without such painstaking attention to detail the police department never could have won its enviable record of 100 per cent convictions of all hijackers caught and its total elimination of the hijacking menace from the city of Chicago.

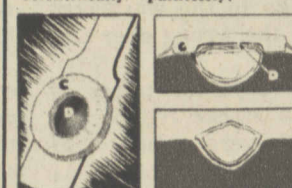
Another kind of truck plundering sometimes called hijacking is the pilfering from trucks by thieves who climb aboard without the drivers' knowledge and steal goods while the truck is moving, tossing them overboard to be picked up by a confederate in a car following. Although each loss from this type of crime is less than from the hijacking of a whole load, this

leisure. This they did. Finding a quantity of burlap sacks, they wrapped up a number of the radios in them, four to a sack, padding them so that they could be let down to the ground with a minimum of injury. Then they waited for an opportunity to escape with the swag, the most important and most difficult part of their undertaking. Mile after mile the great truck roared along through South Chicago, the Calumet district, and into Hammond, Ind. At last, in Hammond, there appeared a lull in the stream of passing traffic, and two of the youths, who knew each other only as Robert and Li'l Brother, 18 and 17 years old respectively, leaned out of the

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