

News at a Glance

Big city crime hits the Hills

Big city crime hit Halton Hills and surrounding areas with a vengeance Thursday morning, in a cops and robber scenario more reminiscent of the John Dillinger era than the 1990's.

There is also a Keystone Kops flavor to the incident: which ended at the intersection of King and McLaughlin Rds. in Caledon in a hail of gunfire.

At press time, the suspect, identified by police as 50-year-old Hermann Beier from the Alliston area, was under police guard at Peel Memorial Hospital in Brampton suffering from gunshot wounds, after a robbery spree and police chase that involved five police forces, including the OPP and the RCMP.

Through police, eyewitnesses and other sources, the Herald has been able to piece together the events of the day.

Just before 9 a.m. on Thursday, a dark-colored Lincoln Towne Car, with a lone occupant, was observed parked awkwardly in front of the Royal Bank at 232A Guelph St. in Georgetown.

When the bank opened for business, a male, purportedly wearing a wig, false moustache and dark sunglasses, entered the bank, positioned himself in the centre of the work area, drew a revolver and demanded "all the money you have."

When a customer attempted to leave the bank, he was ordered by the gunman to "stay where you are."

The robber was described by one eyewitness, who asked not to be identified as "very calm, cool. He knew what he was doing and what he wanted."

The robber then approached the cashier's counter, produced a plastic bag and waited while it was filled. "He seemed to know where

the money was," said the eyewitness.

As the robber backed out of the bank, still brandishing the revolver, he pulled the pin on a smoke bomb to cover his escape.

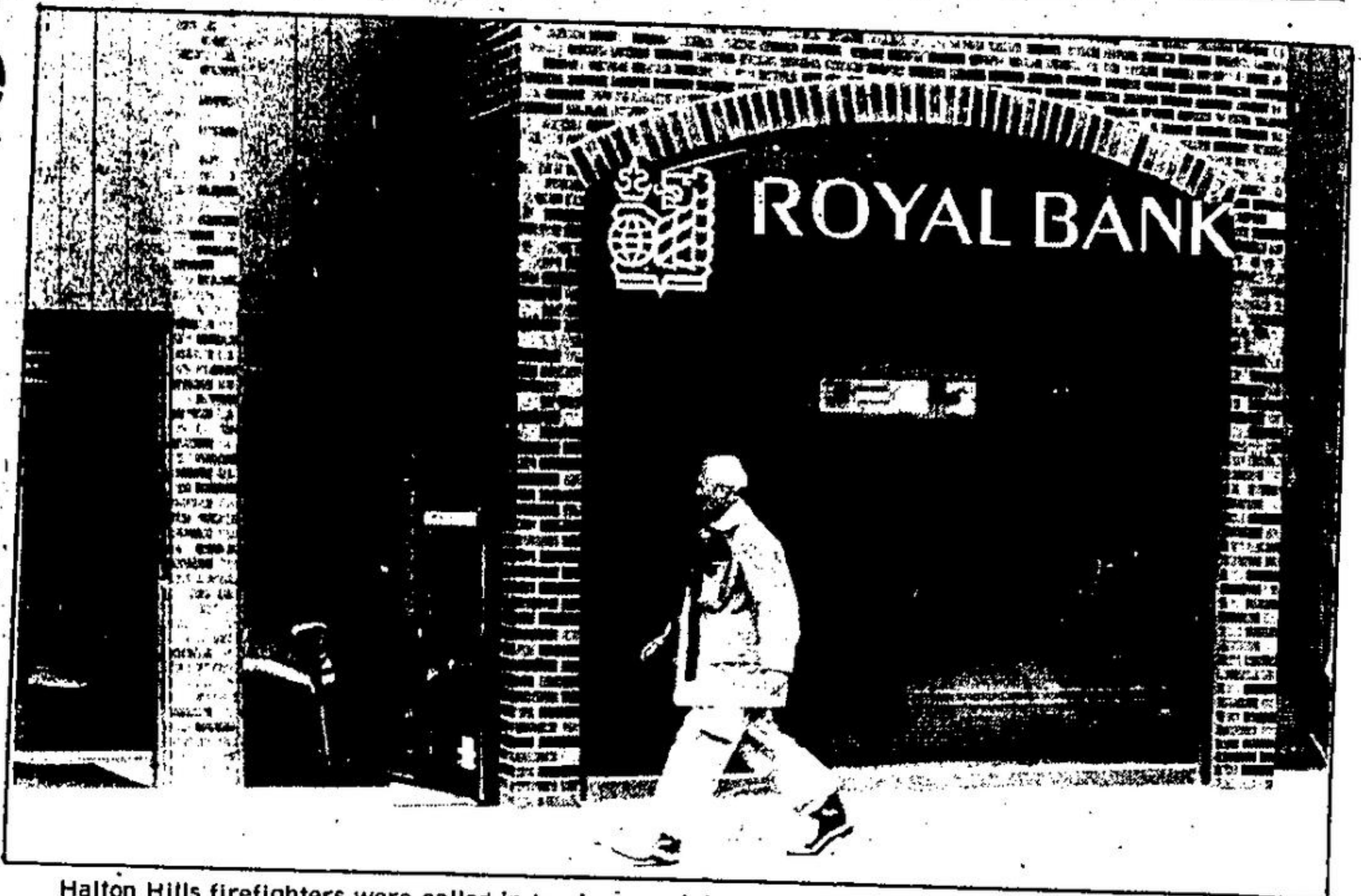
According to information collected by the Herald, a description of the robber, his car and the licence plate number of the car was given to Halton Hills police who arrived on the scene mere minutes after the robbery.

Somehow, the bandit evaded local police—even though police transmissions appeared to indicate a constant pursuit—and according to OPP reports, travelled to Rockwood where he robbed the Royal Bank in that hamlet.

This same individual, according to police, then proceeded to Guelph, where he robbed the Royal Bank branch located at York Road and Kingsmill.

According to police sources, the Royal Bank in Rockwood was hit at 9:53 a.m. and the Royal Bank in Guelph at 10:30 a.m.

It was at this point that the OPP and RCMP became involved and a helicopter and light plane were also sent aloft in pursuit of the daring bank robber.



Halton Hills firefighters were called in to air out the Royal Bank of Canada, located at 232 Guelph St. in Georgetown, after a lone gunman robbed the bank and ignited a smoke bomb inside. No one was

injured during the robbery and firefighters were able to clear the smoke away within minutes. The bank was closed until approximately 2 p.m. following the robbery. (Herald Photo)

The police chase went through the north end of Guelph, into Fergus, north through Belwood, south to Highway 25 and east over rural roads in the Caledon area.

The drama ended when the suspect's car was rammed by an OPP cruiser at the intersection of King and McLaughlin Rds. and the erstwhile Dillinger emerged from

the vehicle firing shots at police.

Conflicting reports indicate the suspect was hit at least four and possibly six times.

The chase reportedly covered 66 miles with the suspect running at least one and possibly more, police roadblocks; smoke bombs being tossed at pursuing police vehicles; gunfire being constantly exchanged

between police and the suspect; police vehicles being run off the road and at last report, no mention of any money being recovered.

At press time, it was reported that the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) of the Ministry of the Solicitor General, has been called in to investigate the occurrence.

Staff lauded

The staff of the Royal Bank in Georgetown who were victims of the robbery Thursday, should be congratulated for their bravery and steady thinking, said David Moorecroft, manager of public relations for the Royal Bank in Ontario.

"We are very proud of the tremendous job done during the crisis. All staff acted in first class fashion," said Mr. Moorecroft.

There is a certain set of procedures when in a robbery situation, said Mr. Moorecroft. "The number one priority is ensuring staff and customers are safe," he explained.

Mr. Moorecroft said staff at the Georgetown Royal Bank branch, in particular, one male and one female employee, did their utmost in ensuring the traumatic situation remained calm. Mr. Moorecroft also said the staff told the man they wanted no one hurt.

He also said the employees go

through training programs so they are equipped to handle this sort of situation.

Mr. Moorecroft said he recently read an article on bank robberies from the Canadian Bank Association.

Mr. Moorecroft said the article stated many police officers think bank robbery "is a dumb thing to do."

He said the article stated most robberies are attempted in broad daylight with many witnesses. This and bank cameras and photographs can positively identify the suspects, said Mr. Moorecroft. "They also know police will be alerted directly or a few seconds after the robbery, yet they still think they can get away with it," said Mr. Moorecroft.

"There are so many safeguards such as alarms and cameras, eventually the robbers will get caught. It amazes me how many people still attempt it though," said Mr. Moorecroft.

Unwilling participant

When local real estate agent Mike Adams got into his car Thursday morning to travel to his farm in the Ballinafad area, he probably had no idea that someone would soon be pointing a gun at him.

"Everything happened so fast I didn't know what to think," Mr. Adams said calmly during a telephone interview about two hours after the incident.

While taking a leisurely drive along Town Line towards the Sixth Line at approximately 11 am, Mr. Adams recounts how he was suddenly overtaken by a speeding unmarked police cruiser. After turning the cruiser sideways up ahead of Mr. Adams' car, a male and female officer got out of the cruiser and signalled Mr. Adams to stop his car.

"All of a sudden I then see a speeding Lincoln coming up over the ridge, being pursued by about eight cruisers and a helicopter up above. The (two officers) scattered,

yelling get out of the way!" he said.

Mr. Adams said before he could do anything, he saw the Lincoln swerve around the stopped police cruiser, and head for his car.

"He, (the driver), started to come after me with his arm out of the car window pointing a gun at me.

"All I could do was drive my car into the ditch to avoid being hit," said Mr. Adams.

Police were chasing the Lincoln because its driver was a suspect in connection with a bank robbery at the Royal Bank of Canada, 232 Guelph Street, in Georgetown Thursday morning.

Questioned if he was scared, Mr. Adams replied, "I'm glad he wasn't some weirdo just shooting at people."

He then added, the incident should send a message to government that "it's time to get tough on criminals. Citizens aren't safe on the street anymore."

Officer injured

Only hours away from his last shift of the week, PC Alan Stennett, 29, a Halton Regional Police officer (Georgetown Division), was admitted to Peel Memorial Hospital with leg injuries suffered during the pursuit of the suspect alleged responsible for the robbery at the Royal Bank of Canada, located at 232A Guelph Street in Georgetown.

According to Halton Regional Police, at approximately 9 a.m. Thursday, a lone gunman robbed the Guelph St. bank. The suspect fled the scene in a late model Lincoln Towne Car after taking a quantity of cash and throwing a smoke bomb, which was ignited, inside the bank.

A short time later, police stated, the same suspect is alleged to have robbed the Royal Bank in Rockwood and continued into Guelph where he is suspected of robbing the Royal Bank at York Road and Kingsmill.

PC Stennett, a Halton police officer for nine years, received his injuries when his cruiser went off the road in the area of Old Base Line and McLaughlin Rd. in Caledon. A press release issued by Halton Regional Police stated that PC Stennett was being fired upon and did return fire.

Stennett was treated at Peel Memorial Hospital in Brampton and released later in the day.

The suspect was finally stopped on McLaughlin Road and King Rd. in Caledon. He reportedly fired at police officers and was shot in return. He was taken to Peel Memorial Hospital with gunshot wounds.

Shortly after being admitted, the suspect was described as being in "serious but stable condition", by Peel Memorial Hospital Public Relations Director Joanne Rider.

Gypsy Moth invasion predicted for North Halton

By BEN DUMMETT
The Herald

The Gypsy Moth which is defoliating large tracts of forest area in Burlington and Oakville, will soon invade North-Halton unless a spraying program to kill the insect is carried out, Halton's Planning and Public Works Committee learned Wednesday.

Murray Stephen, Halton Region Conservation Authority, (HRCA), General Manager urged committee

members to support the spraying program in south Halton or soon face an influx of the insect into forests in Milton and Halton Hills.

According to a staff report, the HRCA has so far received approximately 60 calls from Oakville and Burlington residents this year enquiring what can be done to stop the moths from defoliating the forests.

HRCA Forester Bill Haines told committee members if defoliation is permitted to continue unhindered, then there could be a loss of certain types of Oak and Birch trees, as well as, species which live off the foliage of these trees. He emphasized his point, saying most infestation of the insect has happened in identified environmentally sensitive areas.

After hearing this information, committee members recommended the Region participate in the spraying program at a cost of \$6,000. The province's Ministry of Natural Resources will also participate in the program.

In making the recommendation, committee members also directed Halton Region's Health Department to take further steps in determining if the spray's contents pose

a health danger to the general public.

Oakville resident Bruce Lofquist urged committee members to oppose the program because certain ingredients in the spray are not public knowledge.

The moth killing agent in the spray is Bacillus Thuringiensis (B.T.), which is a living bacteria.

The spray is also comprised of other ingredients, but because they are not part of the killing agent they don't have to be made public under provincial patent regulations.

However staff told committee the Regional Health Department can enter into an agreement of secrecy with the spray's manufacturer to satisfy itself the contents are safe.

Advance poll

Halton Hills residents required to vote in the upcoming municipal election before voting day, Nov. 12, should take note of the following advance poll.

The only remaining advance poll is Nov. 6. Ward One and Two voters can only vote at the Acton Community Centre, Prospect Park in Acton while Ward Three and Four voters can only vote at the Halton Hills Civic Centre at 1 Halton Hills Drive in Georgetown.

The polls are open between 10am and 8pm.

New driver restrictions

Halton Planning and Public works recommended Wednesday the province make it more difficult for new drivers to earn their licence.

The recommendation will go before Regional Council this Wednesday for final approval.

The recommendation calls for the Ministry of Transportation to adopt a graduated licensing scheme, assuming first the Ontario Chiefs of Police Association ratifies the system.

Under the system there are two 12-month levels. The Level I licence restricts the new driver in the following ways:

- operation of passenger vehicles only.
- always accompanied by "fully" licensed driver.
- not carrying passengers other than immediate family members.
- limited to highways 90 km per hour or less.

- have a zero blood alcohol level.
- not drive between midnight and 5 am.

The Level II licence restricts the driver in the following ways:

- no restrictions while accompanied by a "fully" licensed driver.
- if unaccompanied, the same restrictions as in Level I would apply.