

## 2 DIED FOR \$ 45 , 000 ANATOMY OF BLOODY THEFT

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Sunday, September 11, 1983

Author: BRIAN FLANIGAN Free Press Staff Writer

In a burst **of** gunfire last February, Wardell (David) Ford got rich -- according to law enforcement officials.

His alleged accomplice and an armored car guard were killed, but Ford escaped with \$ **45 , 000** , the FBI and Detroit police homicide detectives say.

Now he's being hunted.

"This one bothers us, because they pulled this thing off and opened fire without any regard to who might be hurt or killed," said FBI Special Agent John Anthony.

Shortly before noon Feb. 22, Ford and David Temple allegedly robbed a Purolator Armored Inc. guard who was making a cash pickup in the Montgomery Ward store at Greenfield and Grand River.

It was 11:40 a.m. when Purolator guard Charles Birmingham, 61, **of** Westland, entered the store and went to a second-floor office to drop off money bags containing coins. After dropping off the coins and making a cash pickup, Birmingham was walking toward the store's second-floor escalator when Ford, 25, and Temple, 23, walked up beside him with pistols drawn and announced a holdup, according to police.

Birmingham, a 30-year Purolator veteran, pulled his own pistol while trying to take Temple's gun away. The area near the escalator exploded in gunfire as Birmingham and Temple struggled and began shooting. Police said Ford fired his gun at both men. Birmingham and Temple, both wounded, dropped to the floor. Ford grabbed a gray money bag and ran from the store, spraying bullets behind him as he fled, police said.

Temple, hit by six bullets, was dead on arrival at Mt. Carmel Mercy Hospital about 20 minutes after the robbery. Birmingham **died** in the same hospital at 10:15 a.m. the next day. He had been hit by three bullets, one fired from a gun placed close to his head

"We then had a man wanted **for** armed robbery and **two** counts **of** murder," said Detroit police homicide Lt. James Saffold.

In the days that followed, Squad 7 homicide investigators discovered, they say, who both holdup men were. Detectives also pieced together some **of** the planning that had gone into the holdup.

Ford had been convicted **of** armed robbery in Detroit and sentenced to **two** to five years in prison on Feb. 25, 1977. He was paroled 16 months later, according to state prison records, and discharged from the system **two** months after that. Temple, a distant cousin **of** Ford, was convicted **of** armed robbery in Macomb County and sentenced to five to 10 years in prison on April 1, 1977. He was paroled July 30, 1980, and discharged from the system **two** years later.

Investigators believe the **two** men spent several days checking the routine **of** Purolator guards who picked up money from stores in the Grand River-Greenfield area. On the day **of** the robbery, Temple was wearing surgical gloves and carrying no identification, police said. Witnesses said Ford also was wearing surgical gloves. Investigators also discovered the **two** men had used **two** cars during the robbery.

At 6:30 p.m. the night before the robbery, a man was getting out **of** his 1976 gray Pontiac near the intersection **of** Fourteenth Street and West Philadelphia when **two** men -- one armed with a pistol -- walked up, ordered him to surrender his car keys and drove off in the Pontiac. The men fit the descriptions **of** Ford and Temple, police said. The morning **of** the robbery, witnesses told police, Ford was seen taking the front license plate off a 1975 blue Buick.

About 10 hours after the robbery, police found the Pontiac abandoned in front **of** a home in the 14400 block **of** Robson in northwest Detroit -- a short distance from the robbery scene. The Buick was found **two** days later in front **of** a building in the 15300 block **of** Lawton on the west side.

"He used the Pontiac as the getaway car," said Squad 7 detective Sgt. Danny Knepp. "He drove it to Robson and then switched cars and drove the Buick to Lawton. Then he abandoned that and left the area in a cab."

Ford was last seen wearing a new suit and carrying a brown paper bag, which witnesses told police was filled with money.

Three days after the robbery, a **two** -count murder warrant was issued against Ford and a month later a federal fugitive warrant was issued.

"Because **of** the number **of** shots that were fired during the holdup," said FBI agent Anthony, "and his record, we feel that he must be considered armed and dangerous."

Anyone with information about the whereabouts **of** Wardell (David) Ford is asked to call the Detroit FBI office at 965-2323 or the Detroit police homicide section at 224-4280. Both numbers are answered 24 hours a day.

\*\*\*\*

Caption: Photo

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 3A

Index Terms: ROBBERY ; MURDER

Record Number: 8302270442

Copyright (c) 1983 Detroit Free Press