

## **TRIAL OPENS IN ' 83 ROBBERY , SLAYINGS FUGITIVE'S ARREST FOLLOWED SEGMENT ON 'AMERICA'S MOST WANTED'**

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More than eight years and one television re-creation ago, Wardell Ford gunned down two men and escaped authorities after a \$45,000 department store **robbery** , police say.

Now Ford, 35, will be back on center stage as he goes on **trial** today **in** Recorder's Court.

Ford had been on the lam for 7 1/2 years when he was featured on the crook-catching "America's Most Wanted" show on Sept. 7, 1990. He was caught 10 days later after viewer tips led law enforcement agents to New London, Conn., where Ford was working as a painter at a plant that manufactures nuclear submarines for the Navy.

According to Detroit police, shortly before noon on Feb. 22, 1983, Ford and his cousin, David Temple, 23, ambushed Purolator Armored Inc. guard Charles Birmingham, 61, of Westland after he made a cash pickup at a Montgomery Ward store at Greenfield and Grand River.

Birmingham was preparing to leave the store when Temple and Ford walked up beside him with their guns drawn. Birmingham pulled his own gun while struggling to take away Temple's.

Gunfire exploded as the two men fought. Police said Ford opened fire on both men. Temple was hit by six bullets and was dead on arrival at Mt. Carmel Mercy Hospital. Birmingham died the next day at the same hospital. He had been hit by three bullets, one fired at his head at close range.

A man who worked **in** the store's auto department reported seeing the men struggle. A woman who worked at a nearby store reported seeing Ford flee from the scene.

Ford disappeared and wound up on the FBI's most wanted list. There he stayed until after photographs of Ford and the TV re-enactment were broadcast on "America's Most Wanted."

**In** an interview with Hartford, Conn., television reporter Gail King a few months after his capture, Ford insisted he isn't guilty of the killings or the heist.

"I'm only guilty of that crime by association," Ford said.

Charged with armed **robbery** and two counts of first-degree murder, he is being held without bond **in** Wayne County Jail.

Jennifer Snell, a spokeswoman for the Fox Network television program, said the show's staff was interested **in** following the **trial** .

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