

CROOKS LOSE NAME GAME

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"The Thriller," "Red," "Blood," "Gangster," "Hollywood," "Bam-Bam," "McGurk," "Frankenberry," "Wamp," "Splat 'n' Doobie" and "Junebug."

Bad guys have always had colorful monikers such as these, but leave it to officers in trend-setting California to suggest that cops deliberately nickname suspects as a crime-fighting tool.

San Jose (Cal.) Police Chief Joseph McNamara will urge members of the International Chiefs of Police meeting that starts today in Houston to follow his department's example and tag catchy handles on suspects.

The San Jose department has learned the practice keeps officers alert and makes catching suspects easier.

The nickname "is based on a robber's modus operandi, his method of operation, or some physical characteristic" said Sgt. Larry Darr, the designated **name** hanger for the San Jose department. "I read all the robbery reports, and when I spot a pattern of three cases with the same suspect I give him a **name**."

"THE THRILLER" was Darr's **name** for a stickup man who dressed like singer Michael Jackson, complete with one glove and long, curled hair. San Jose bank tellers helped **name** "Hollywood" - they all said the robber was movie-star handsome. "The Herder" was labeled for the way he rounded up his victims during a crime, Darr said.

Darr said the nicknames are announced, along with a thumbnail description of how the suspects operate, at patrol roll calls, and shared with other police agencies.

Nicknames are easily remembered and help officers stay alert for suspects, Darr said.

While nicknaming criminals is a time-honored practice -- who would recall William Bonney were he not dubbed Billy the Kid? -- San Jose has been doing it formally since 1975. Darr credits the practice for helping police close the books on 86 percent of the city's bank robberies last year.

DETROIT POLICE do not create nicknames as a matter of policy, but must often match a "street **name**" to a suspect.

"Different individual units . . . keep their own alias files, but we have no master list of aliases," a spokesman for the department said.

Inspector Gilbert Hill, who is chief of the Detroit police homicide section, said that "a lot of times a street **name** is all we have to go on. You get a nickname and you try to find out who it is."

The 1984 deathbed statement of Joseph (Wamp) Brown that he was shot by "Mohawk" and "Kurt McGurk" led to the arrests of Detroiters Maurice Gibbs and Kurt Napier.

Napier, thought to be an enforcer for the drug ring Young Boys Inc., pleaded guilty two weeks ago to the killing. Gibbs was acquitted after witnesses testified his nickname was "Mo- Heart," not "Mohawk."

The coming trial of Gaylin Holman for the March killing of Dean (Bam-Bam) Johnson in Detroit could turn on whether Holman is the gunman identified by witnesses as "Gator."

Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Timothy Kenny recalled a homicide case that depended on tracking down a man known only as "Frankenberry." "Frankenberry was Dennis DeJarnette and he's now doing natural life in Jackson (Prison)," Kenny said.

OTHER AREA law enforcement officials said they have had more suspects named "Red," "Blood" and "Slim" than they care to remember. For instance, during the mid-1970s, Detroit police were busy keeping tabs on James (Memphis Slim) Wilkens, George (Texas Slim) Dudley and James Lee (Watusi Slim) Newton.

Detroit investigators thought they had a good lead on a street shooting three years ago when witnesses said "Junebug" did it. But when they began combing the area, they learned there were a lot of Junebugs.

While some suspects get nicknames because of their hometown or a startling physical feature -- "There was a guy named 'Frog,' and he really looked like one," said assistant prosecutor Douglas Baker -- others work at their persona.

Robert Goodlow actively cultivated the moniker "Gangster," Inspector Hill said.

The infamous 1979 triple beheading case in Detroit had enough nicknames to give newspaper readers parenthesis shock -- Frank (Frank Nitti) Usher, Adolph (Doc Holliday) Powell, James (Red) Freeman, Robert (Lefty) Partee, Benjamin (Shorty) Fountain.

Sometimes the monikers live on long after the given **names** and crimes attached to them have faded.

"There was 'Splat 'n' Doobie' . . . one guy, two apostrophes," Hill said. "But, you know, I just can't remember who he really is or what he did."

Caption: Drawing Color NOLAN ROSS

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