

Bank robber tied to 8 other heists

By Amy Rose and Joanne Maliszewski staff writers

The man who robbed a Comerica bank in Troy last Wednesday morning, bears a striking similarity to the man police and the FBI suspect of robbing at least eight other banks in Wayne and Oakland counties since late 1989.

Troy police last week said they couldn't confirm whether there is a connection between the hold-ups. But Farmington Hills police, who spoke with FBI agents following the chase, said "they are convinced" it is the same gunman, said Detective Sgt. Chuck Nebus of the Farmington Hills police.

"It's the same description and method of operation," Nebus said. Wednesday's 10:15 a.m. robbery occurred at the Comerica Bank at Rochester and Square Lake roads, where a well-dressed man walked up to a teller and demanded money.

The man, wearing a dark trench coat and carrying a black briefcase, removed an envelope from his briefcase and handed it to the teller. Inside was a note asking for money and saying he had a gun. According to police the robber kept his hand inside his briefcase "as if he had a gun," although the teller never saw a weapon.

The teller handed over an undi-

closed amount of money, which the robber fled with on foot. Police found no traces of the suspect.

THE ROBBER is described as a white male in his 30s, about 5-foot 10-inches tall, 170 pounds, with neatly-trimmed brown hair and a nicely groomed beard. In addition to the dark buttoned-up trench coat, the robber wore blue pants and a man's dress hat with the brim turned down, said police.

The description of Wednesday's robber virtually matches that of the man who robbed another Troy bank in March, a Royal Oak bank in January, and a Southfield bank in November of 1989.

This spring police released a picture of the man that was actually taken during a robbery from one of the bank's surveillance cameras. Pictures from the other hidden bank cameras indicated the same man was responsible for all three robberies, even though during one hold-up the man spray-painted his beard white to disguise his appearance.

In all four robberies a note was passed to tellers asking for money, and the thief did not openly display a weapon. Another similarity is the time of day the robberies have occurred, with all four happening between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. In all but one robbery the thief carried a briefcase.



FBI officials suspect this man of robbing at least eight banks in Oakland and Wayne counties over the last year.

It is not known whether or not the robber was captured on film through a hidden bank camera last week. A spokesman for Comerica said the bank could not comment on the incident.

The other communities in which police believe the man has struck are Farmington Hills, Rochester Hills, Warren, Clawson and Livonia.

Surveillance photos of the robber have been taken at various banks he has robbed, including a Standard Federal Bank in Farmington Hills, Sept. 13.

At first Farmington Hills police were uncertain whether it was the same man suspected of robbing the other banks, because the suspect had a large, whitish scar on his face.

But when they received a surveillance photo of the Standard Federal robber, police were convinced it was the same man who also robbed a United Savings Bank, 33505 Fourteen Mile in Farmington Hills, last April.

Two Detroit men arrested; residents assist after robbery

Continued from Page 1

cording to police reports.

A traffic jam at Grand River and Eight Mile halted the duo. While on patrol nearby, Commander John Coyle of the Farmington Department of Public Safety saw the car on Grand River and gave chase. The two men were caught in traffic near Eight Mile, and had to abandon their car.

Coyle ordered the driver to lie on

the ground, where he was handcuffed and arrested. A bag of money was discovered on the ground next to the car.

The passenger ran across Eight Mile. Police in Hedford and Livonia were alerted.

FARMINGTON HILLS detectives Patrick Sledge and Brian DeGrande saw the passenger run behind the Farmer Jack supermarket on Long Street, where they lost sight of him.

They saw him again on Deering Street in Livonia. "They both eventually pursued him over several fences," Nebus said.

Farmington Hills patrolmen John Ragorrah and Matt Koehn found the passenger in a Livonia resident's back yard.

The Livonia resident also found the rest of the cash and checks that had been taken from the auto dealership employee and gave them to Farmington Hills police.

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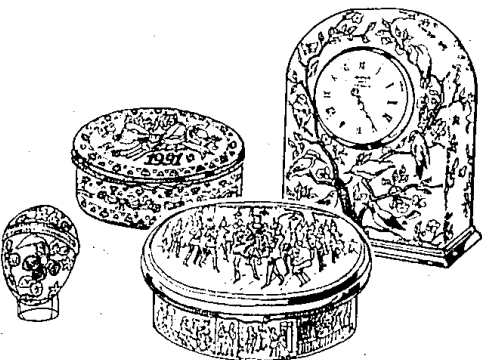
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