

Capture from page A1

The detective, who hasn't been named, had gone into the jail to process a domestic abuse suspect. The two men looked alike, and O'Bannon, according to police, lied about his identity to obtain his release.

Since that morning, Hills police, South Oakland Narcotics Intelligence Consortium, Detroit narcotics officers and the Federal Bureau of Investigation had been locked in a massive hunt for O'Bannon in the Detroit area. Over the more than three weeks the suspect remained at large, officers came close to tracking him down several times.

They got their break this week.

SONIC believed O'Bannon had placed a catalog order using a fraudulent credit card and using a Pierson Street address.

"We executed the search warrant at around 6 p.m. on Pierson and recovered items that belonged to O'Bannon," Dwyer said. "Around 7 p.m. they received information he was at a house on Santa Clara. Officers spotted him there and collared him in front of the home."

Among the items recovered was a handgun, and officers believe that was an indication O'Bannon may have intended

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Bill Dwyer
—Hills police chief

to commit more crimes. Dwyer said. A \$5,000 reward offered for information played a part in the arrest, he added.

The entire SONIC unit — including officers from Farmington Hills, Novi and West Bloomfield — participated in Wednesday night's capture. O'Bannon was brought to Detroit's 6th Precinct before being transferred to Farmington Hills.

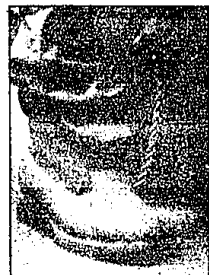
"We're pleased with the results as far as the cooperation with other agencies," Dwyer said.



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL DEWELTER

On his way: Suspect Johnny Frank O'Bannon enters 47th District Court for arraignment Thursday afternoon.

Escape from page A1



Tied: Johnny Frank O'Bannon in shackles

trial, also a felony that could earn him up to four years in prison and/or a \$2,000 fine.

While being held in the Farmington Hills jail pending an arraignment on charges stemming from a New Year's Eve robbery at the Red Roof Inn, O'Bannon was accidentally released from custody by a Hills detective. He falsely identified himself as another man who was in custody on a domestic assault charge and was scheduled to be released that morning.

Though Judge Fred Harris had advised O'Bannon he had the right to remain silent, the suspect had a definite opinion about the lesser charge.

"As far as the escape goes, I didn't escape," he said. "The officer came and let me out."

■ "I used to work, until all this happened."

Johnny Frank O'Bannon
—Suspect

Judge Harris said that particular aspect of the case would be determined at a later date. He also asked O'Bannon whether he'd been working.

"I used to work, until all this happened," the suspect replied.

O'Bannon is being held in the Farmington Hills jail in lieu of \$250,000 cash bond. A preliminary exam has been scheduled for Feb. 14.



Entering: Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer watches as Johnny Frank O'Bannon is escorted into 47th District Court. He was found in Detroit Wednesday night after mistakenly being released from the Hills jail three weeks ago.

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