

Robbers Was Here

Robin Banks

1983

These are bad times and getting depressed about the situation is an easy trap to fall into. But then there's always that little spark that makes you think there's still a chance for humanity. New York's Sentry Armored Car-Courier Co. heist for \$5.3 million, brought on such a spark.

On the night of December 14, two people cut their way through the roof of the Sentry garage and office building and made off with the loot (Sentry officials put the amount at around \$5.3, while FBI agents are talking of \$8 million or more). Everyone I talked to was elated after reading the front page stories of this "victimless crime." A hold-up where no one was hurt, the guard was handcuffed to a stairway, and where the daring and adventure of such an act brought life to the dreams of millions of people. Where the unpredictable act of these two "criminals" gave meaning to desires in the otherwise pre-arranged and predictable day-to-day lives of the people on the street. Personally, the heart-warming headlines concerning the Sentry robbery, also made me think back to another "take the money and run" situation that happened earlier this year in the Motor City.

While cruising down Detroit's Lodge Freeway on the night after Halloween, an armored car's back doors flew open and several sacks of money fell to the pavement. The security truck immediately came to a halt, as the guards scurried around the freeway retrieving the loot. Thinking that they had recovered all of the money, the armored car drove on, not noticing a man kicking one of the bags under his car. But the scene wasn't going totally unnoticed.

Donna Lewis and two friends were in a car, sitting on an overpass, watching everything. After taking the whole thing in for a few minutes, Lewis said she yelled, "Hey, mister, you ought to give us some of that money." At that point, the unknown man drove off, the bag still under his car and Lewis and friends in hot pursuit. As the car they were following turned into an alley, the money bag was dragged loose. "It was in front of our car," Lewis said. Then one of her friends "jumped out, picked up the bag, threw it in our car and we were off."

From there on, the story seemed a happy one. Finding that the bag contained \$407,000, its new owners used it to buy cocaine, new cars and good times. But what separates this experience from the recent one in New York—turning people's joyful feelings towards the three Detroiters' find, into one of anger horror is that this story was told by Donna Lewis to a judge in Detroit District Court. No, Lewis hadn't been caught by the cops; if that were the case I would have only admiration rather than anger for her involvement in this story. No, Lewis was struck with an incurable case of social conditioning—guilt—and, as her lawyer put it, a sense of "moral duty." And if that isn't enough to make your skin crawl, she also felt it her "moral duty" to turn over to the police the names of her partners in adventure (perhaps I should mention that Donna Lewis was given immunity from prosecution by coughing up this information).

Perhaps she couldn't handle the feeling of not being just another face in the herd. The effects of coming across \$407,000 "illegitimately", with little or no chance of getting caught, certainly begins to unravel the binding fabric of this society for the people involved, and whether real or imagined, gives one a great feeling of personal power over one's own life. But I guess Donna Lewis, just like animals returning to the barn at night, couldn't even handle this small taste of independence, or allow anyone else to for that matter. She telephoned her uncle, a U.S. marshal!, and

asked him what should be done. It doesn't take much to guess what he said and, obediently, Lewis did it. Needless to say, Lewis wins the Most Domesticated Animal of the Year award, and that's letting her off easy.

But as angry as the Detroit incident makes me, my happiness for the New York robbery more than makes up for it. I've come to expect the everyday actions of the Lewis' of the world and quite frankly, it's depressing. But just when everything looks bad, along comes the robbery in the Big Apple and the excitement of millions, resurrecting my belief that among nearly all of us, rebellion lives, humanity lives. If obedience is slavery, then rebellion must be freedom.

fifth Estate

Robin Banks
Robbers Was Here
1983

<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/311-winter-1983/robbers-was-here>
Fifth Estate #311, Winter, 1983

[fiftheestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fiftheestate.org)