

# Supermarket Stickup Stuns City

It was a typical Friday on September 11, 1953. At the local Krambo grocery store located on Jackson Street just south of Church Street, business was bustling with customers as Friday was always one of the busiest shopping days of the week. Many shoppers would go to their local supermarket to cash their payroll check and at the same time pick up groceries for the coming weekend.

Victor Helstrom was the manager of the store. Victor was busy making sure shelves were fully stocked and tending to his usual managerial duties throughout the day. Those duties included, but were not limited to, running to the bank, writing schedules, approving ads, handling customer requests, answering phone calls, and directing employees to ensure his customers were getting the best service possible.

It was early Friday evening, when things started to quiet down at the store, that Helstrom decided to go home, have dinner, and spend a quiet evening with his wife, Arlene. The Helstroms lived at 345 E. Irving Street in Oshkosh.

Victor and Arlene had retired to their living room after dinner and were relaxing while watching television around 11:45 pm when the doorbell rang. Victor rose from his chair and went to the door, wondering to himself who it could possibly be at this late hour.

He opened the door and was greeted by a man “thirty years old, 5-feet 10-inches tall, very well dressed, neat appearing and very good looking. He was wearing a light colored (probably tan) suit and hat, white shirt and maroon tie.”

The man in front of Helstrom spoke first. “Mr. Helstrom, could I speak to you for a moment?” He then asked if he could come inside the house and speak privately.

As Helstrom did not know the man, he asked him what he wanted.

At that point the man pulled out a short-barreled gun and said, “This is a stickup. No funny stuff. You are going down to the store and open the safe.”

The man ordered both Victor and his wife Arlene to their car. Victor was ordered to drive, while the bandit forced Mrs. Helstrom into the back seat, holding her at gunpoint the entire time.

Helstrom followed orders from the armed bandit who claimed he had an accomplice working with him. He was directed to turn onto Oak Street when the bandit ordered him to flash his headlights twice. After doing so, he was instructed to drive on.

When they arrived at the store, which was now closed, Helstrom was ordered to go inside and collect all the money and checks and bring them back out to the car where the bandit continued to hold Mrs. Helstrom at gunpoint. A short time later, Helstrom returned with a briefcase containing the money and checks, climbed back in the car and was ordered to drive.

Helstrom was instructed to drive south on Jackson Street. As they approached the intersection with Marion Street, the traffic signal turned red. The bandit ordered Helstrom to drive through the red light, unaware of two police officers positioned nearby. The officers quickly pulled out behind the Helstrom car, with lights flashing, stopping Helstrom on Oregon Street near Sixth Avenue. Before the “boys in blue” came to the car, the bandit told Helstrom to give the officers “a good story” and told Mrs. Helstrom to “keep your mouth shut or you’ll get it.”

The officers suspected nothing, releasing the car with a warning to the driver. As they pulled away, still heading south on Oregon Street, the bandit ordered Helstrom to drive to Sacred Heart cemetery, located near the Winnebago County Airport on the south edge of the city.

When they arrived at the cemetery, the bandit ordered the couple out of the car, still at gunpoint. He then commenced to secure Helstrom to a tree with adhesive tape and rope. He also taped over his mouth and eyes. Then he did the same with Mrs. Helstrom, tying her to a nearby tree and taping her mouth to prevent her from crying out.

The bandit then jumped back in the Helstrom’s car and drove off. Before the car was out of sight, Mrs. Helstrom managed to free herself, then released her husband. The couple made their way to a nearby farm and called police. A squad car was dispatched to pick up the Helstroms and take them to police headquarters for questioning around 12:45 am Saturday. The entire ordeal lasted about an hour.

Police broadcast a statewide alarm searching for the bandit who made his getaway with \$20,000 in checks and \$4,000 in cash. The Helstrom vehicle was recovered by Oshkosh Police where it had been abandoned in front of 164 Grove Street. The bandit had worn gloves the entire time, making fingerprints irretrievable. <sup>1</sup>

Insert Jpeg 15. 1/3 page. Center align. Caption: “Kroger Supermarket on Jackson Drive, Oshkosh”

### ***Kidnapper Nabbed – Bank Robbery Attempt Foiled***

After being “on the lam,” the kidnapper bandit of the Oshkosh Krambo store was captured and put “behind irons” in the Des Moines, Iowa jail in April 1954. The culprit was identified as Murl R. Jarvis, 29 of Richmond, Indiana.

Jarvis was considered an escapee after his flight from confinement at the jail in St. Paul, Minnesota on March 28, 1954. He was one of six prisoners who escaped while being held for trial. The group fled captivity after brandishing a stiletto, slugging one guard and overpowering another.

Jarvis was captured in front of a small-town bank in Iowa when he drove up with two loaded revolvers in his belt. He also was carrying a set of handcuffs.

The FBI identified him as the person who robbed a Minnesota bank of \$101 and an Iowa bank of \$5,100 the previous year. He was also wanted for abduction and armed robberies in Oshkosh at the Krambo supermarket and in Chippewa Falls at the JC Penney store, where he unsuccessfully tried to force the manager to open the store safe.

Iowa officials were notified by a tip of a “strange green car with Ohio license plates” being seen in the area the past several days. Sheriff deputies were “staked out” in a car nearby, armed with machine guns and riot guns, when Jarvis drove up in front of the bank, not suspecting anyone was “on to him”.

Jarvis was returned to St. Paul for arraignment. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, September 12, 1953, p. 1;

<sup>2</sup> *Appleton Post Crescent*, April 12, 1954, p. 19;