

Yeggs Pull Off Hotel Heist in Fancy Dress

By VINCENT LEE and ANTHONY BURTON

In a summer rerun of the Pierre Hotel heist, weirdly disguised gunmen seized control of the lobby of the Croydon Hotel on E. 86th St. for nearly two hours early yesterday and rifled safe deposit boxes for jewelry and negotiable stocks.

They escaped with loot whose value, police said, could amount to more than \$100,000. The Pierre loot was more than \$3 million.

Detectives dubbed yesterday's raiders the Tuxedo Bandits because they wore tuxedo pants and were as courteous as Fred Astaire when they held captive five hotel residents and two members of the hotel staff.

Took Their Time

"These guys were cool professionals," said Detective Sgt. Frank Bruen of the hotel squad. "They knew what they were doing and they took their time doing it."

The witnesses, who ended up on the floor in handcuffs, saw two intruders, but it was believed that a third man took part in the robbery.

The two who were seen entered the hotel, between Fifth and Madison Aves., through a rear entrance at 2:30 a.m. One was about 5 feet 4 and 140 pounds. He wore a Groucho Marx-style mask made of eyeglasses and a false nose. He was dressed in tuxedo pants and a dark jacket.

A Ruffled Shirt

The second was about 6 feet and 175 pounds. A more elegant type, he wore a blue, ruffled tuxedo shirt, a dark jacket, and tuxedo pants. His head was completely swathed in gauze.

Both carried pistols.

Bellhop Pablo Aponte, 43, and night auditor Allen Bozeman, 38, were handcuffed and forced to lie on the floor near the elevator bank. "Be quiet," they were told, "and you won't be harmed."

They're Selective

The gunmen then went to work on the safe deposit boxes in an office off the lobby. Detectives said later that they had used a list of box owners, which they found in the office, to select the 13 they broke into.

At about 3 a.m. Mrs. Martha Lissauer, 48, a resident of the hotel, entered the lobby from the elevator. She was handcuffed and



NEWS photo by Mel Finkelstein
Maynard Ferguson sits in Hotel Croydon lobby.

forced to lie on the floor. So was another resident, Lester Patnick, 52, when he came out of the elevator shortly afterward.

At about 3:15 a.m., somebody knocked on the front door, which is kept locked at night.

A Payroll Ignored

The smaller of the Tuxedo Bandits took the bellhop's jacket and went to answer it. In came

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Yeggs Pull Off A Hotel Heist

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jazz musician Maynard Ferguson and two associates, Ernest and Donald Garside.

In the jazzman's hand was an attache case containing \$6,000, the payroll for his band. But the holdup men ignored the case. After relieving the newcomers of the cash in their pockets, amounting to about \$2,000, the bandits handcuffed the three and forced them to join the other captives.

Finally, at about 4 a.m., the invaders decided to call it a night. As cool as when they entered, they picked up their loot and vanished into the darkness.

They left behind them Ferguson's case with the \$6,000 payroll, and 13 empty safe deposit boxes.

"Man," Ferguson said later, "we could have gotten our heads blown off. I don't understand why the hotel didn't have a heavy private guard on duty.

"But I'm laughing a bit now because when I hit the dirt, I hit it on top of the \$6,000 payroll and they missed it."

Police said later that the valuables that had been stolen were not insured.

The Pierre job was pulled the day after New Years Day 1972. Three men were convicted and given jail sentences last December.

London Crime Log

London, Aug. 23 (UPI)—The number of muggings on London streets dropped 3% in the second quarter of 1973, Scotland Yard said today. But the number of homicides and assaults rose 13% in the period and there were 25% more cases of rape, it said.