

LHS Football Team Chases Down Bank Robber

Farmers add "Fighting" to their nickname

There are thousands of stories about Lewisville's past, but only a handful have been told and re-told often enough to become legends. One such legendary tale relates the stirring events of Sept. 30, 1946, when members of the Lewisville High School football team chased down an armed bank robber.

As with nearly any legend, some parts of the tale may have been embellished in the ensuing years, but the basic facts are well documented by participants, witnesses and contemporary newspaper accounts.

On that day, a man named S.A. Brueggemeyer entered Lewisville State Bank on Main Street and robbed the bank at gunpoint. After locking the employees in the bank vault, the robber was ready to make a clean getaway with his bag of stolen money. However, there were two things he didn't know that forced him to make a change of plans.

First, bank president G.C. Hedrick had installed an emergency phone inside the vault after reading accounts of robberies in other areas in which employees were locked in the vault to facilitate the robber's getaway. Hedrick was able to use that phone to call the phone company operator (located directly upstairs) and report the robbery.

Second, after hearing the alarm sounded by telephone operator Willie Sparks, Brueggemeyer's accomplice and getaway driver took off -- without her partner. That left the robber standing outside the bank with \$1,046 in cash, a .22 caliber revolver, and no ride.

He ran across the street and tried to force workers at the cotton gin to give him a ride. When that failed, he started running south through a cornfield. The field happened to be adjacent to the Lewisville High School football field, and that year's football team was outside practicing under the watchful eye of their stern head coach, J.K. Delay.

Here, the story takes two paths. Delay insisted afterward that he told his players to let the robber go. However, some players later swore he quietly told them to do what they thought was right -- which turned out to be chasing the robber through the rows of corn.

After a half-mile pursuit, Brueggemeyer had enough and he surrendered to resident Bob Hilliard, who had been relaxing outside Whatley's Store and just happened to have a double-barrel shotgun handy.

Brueggemeyer got jail time, and the Lewisville Farmers got a new nickname -- the Fighting Farmers. Oh, they also got a district title with a 10-2 season. And future generations of Lewisville residents inherited quite a legend!



LEWISVILLE BANK ROBBER JAILED HERE--Captured minutes after he staged a daring daylight holding of the Lewisville State Bank late Monday afternoon. S. A. Brueggemeyer, 22-year-old Navy veteran, is shown above with Deputy Sheriff Sam Gentry in the Denton county jail where he was brought after he was caught by Roy Rogers, Lewisville filling station attendant. Rogers stopped the exhausted robber after he had been chased about half a mile across a cornfield by Lewisville football players.

Bank Robber Caught After Wild Chase In Lewisville Hold-Up

Round About Town
By BILL SUTTEY
Home-Chicago Staff Writer

A daring attempt to rob the Lewisville State Bank was thwarted late Monday afternoon when a youthful hold-up man was captured by an enterprising filling station attendant about a half-mile south of Lewisville.

The figure, 22, identified as the Thomas and Sara service station on Highway 101, approached S. A. Brueggemeyer, 22-year-old Navy veteran, as he fled on foot after taking \$1,046 in loot from the bank. The exhausted robber had been chased about half a mile across a cornfield by Lewisville High School football players.

Brueggemeyer had entered the bank through an unlocked rear door at about 1:30 p. m. in the afternoon. He had about four bank employees when the door was closed and he was ready to be shot up the stairs. He was armed with a .22-caliber revolver and attempted to escape. The robbery was reported when one of the bank's attendants called the police.

The robbery was reported when one of the bank's attendants called the police.

This 2011 newspaper article includes personal observations made by some members of that 1946 LHS football team.

FORMER LEWISVILLE FOOTBALL PLAYERS RECALL ROLE IN CATCHING BANK ROBBER

(ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY DENTON RECORD-CHRONICLE)

By WENDY HUNDLEY / Dallas Morning News
September 29, 2011

In Lewisville, it's been called the "The Great Robbery Caper of 1946" and has become part of the lore of the community.

"It was one of the top news stories of the year," said 81-year-old Sam Wilson, recalling the incident that happened 65 years ago Friday.

He was a junior at Lewisville High School and played tackle on the Farmers football team.

On the afternoon of Sept. 30, 1946, Wilson and his teammates were practicing on a field just south of Main Street, the commercial center of the small farm town.

The team heard a siren and thought there must be a fire somewhere. But then Mrs. Sparks, who lived above the grocery store, shouted from her balcony that the bank had been robbed and pointed in the direction of the fleeing suspect, recalled Alvin Jones, a running back on the team.

"We talked Coach [J.K.] DeLay into letting us chase him," said Jones, 81, a retired U.S. Army major general who lives in College Station.

The team took off in pursuit of S.A. Brueggemeyer, a 22-year-old Navy veteran who was later arrested for robbing Lewisville State Bank.

Brueggemeyer had ordered the bank president and three other employees into the bank vault, stuffed \$1,046 in a paper sack and ran out the door.

But Brueggemeyer's luck was about to run out.

"What the robber didn't know was that the phone company upstairs served as the town warning system for fires and other community emergencies," according to an account of the robbery posted on the Lewisville State Bank's website. "An emergency phone had been installed in the bank's vault that connected directly to the telephone operator upstairs."

When the operator sounded the alarm, a female accomplice waiting in the getaway car got scared and drove away, leaving Brueggemeyer to flee on foot, the website stated.

That's when the Farmers football players spotted him running through a cornfield and gave chase.

"As we ran through this cornfield, someone saw him stop by a utility pole and put something down," recalled Uel Stockard, who played guard on the team.

"We stopped at the pole and there was a sack with a gun in it," said Stockard, 81, who lives in Bryan. "I don't remember if the money was in it."

Citizens apprehended the exhausted suspect, who fell to his knees after a half-mile chase by the team, according to newspaper accounts.

All of the bank's money was recovered. Brueggemeyer was charged with armed robbery and held in the Denton County Jail.

Over the years, the derring-do of the 1946 football team has become "part of the fabric of our traditions," said Teresa Wells, assistant principal of Lewisville High School.

"Everybody who was old-time Lewisville knows the story," said Wells, who heard it recounted many times by J.K. DeLay, the former school superintendent who also coached the football team.

"Dr. DeLay loved to tell that story," Wells said. "And I never tired of hearing it."