

Labor Attorney Is Shot Here

George Andersen Injured When Gunmen Hold Up Offices of His Law Firm

Masked Hoodlums Escape Without Loot After Lawyer Puts Up Fight; Victim's Partner Questions Motive

Labor Attorney George R. Andersen was shot through the right shoulder and bashed on the head yesterday while struggling with a pair of masked gunmen who held up his Montgomery street offices.

Police said it was the first known law firm holdup in San Francisco.

They are investigating on the theory robbery was not the motive. Andersen is a member of the law firm of Gladstein, Andersen, Rosner and Sawyer with fifth floor offices at 240 Montgomery street.

He is attorney for the California State Communist Party. In recent legal actions he has represented Local 6 of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union and the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union, both CIO.

Andersen is also attorney for the Daily People's World, a daily newspaper with Communist policies. The firm has represented left-wing CIO unions on many occasions. Members of the firm have also represented Harry Bridges.

BREAK ATTEMPTED

Andersen was shot when he tried to make a break for it while the robbery was in progress.

He told police, "When they came in I tried to get to a metal ash tray which had a heavy base. One of the men was close to me and I thought I might be able to club him."

"Then they ordered us all to lie on the floor. I stayed crouched on one knee. They asked for our wallets."

"When I handed mine over, the man who took it dropped his eyes momentarily, and I had my chance. I knocked his gun arm aside and got him around the middle. I wrestled him into the hall."

"The other man got behind me and hit me on the head. I went to my knees and somebody fired at me. I managed to get up and run down the hall. I'm not sure whether they shot at me again or not."

BULLET HOLES

Police said they did. Three shots in all are believed to have been fired. Two bullet holes have been located in the hall and office walls, so far, and two cartridges, a .45 and a .38, were found.

When Andersen reached the library at the end of the hall, he turned and dashed into a stenographer's room occupied by Doris Ostrander of the Granada Hotel and Mary Cuenod, 1820 Jackson street. His face and suit were covered with blood.

"Get the police," he said. He slammed the door shut, picked up a chair, and stood getting up and running down the hall. He collapsed.

At Harbor Emergency Hospital the 47-year-old attorney told police he felt sure the hoodlums' mission and motive was robbery.

PARTNER'S VIEW

Andersen's partner, Richard Gladstein, however, felt positive the gunmen had come "not to steal money but for another reason."

Under questioning by police Gladstein said members of the firm had been threatened several times during the past year in connection with certain protracted litigation.

Gladstein raised the point that a fifth floor office with a single shaft elevator as the only means of exit is a gunman's dream of an ideal setup.

He also pointed out the robbers appeared more interested in papers and documents than cash. They did not even ask for the combination to the safe, he said.

Police Inspectors Al Nelder and Ralph McDonald agreed there was strong possibility the guns may have been for hire. They cited Andersen's many bitter legal battles and the fact the bandits fled without taking any loot.

They said that the firm members received had come from widespread sources, and would make it difficult to pinpoint suspects.

"But we have a number of leads. This case is just beginning."

One fingerprint was recovered from Andersen's wallet. There has not yet been time to check it with police and FBI files.

They added that the job was amateurish.

"They shouldn't have gone into a crowded office as they did. And they got too close to individuals."

The holdup got under way about 10 a. m.

Mrs. Helen von Bernow, 40, 4839 Mission street, the receptionist, was sitting at the telephone switchboard in the lobby of the law offices.

"THIS IS A STICKUP"

One of the men was a six footer, carrying a .45 automatic. He wore a dirty white handkerchief for a mask at eye level.

The other man was short and slender. He wore a full multi-colored handkerchief as a mask with eye slits, and carried a .38 revolver.

Andersen appeared and one of the men said "Get back in there," and followed him into his office.

"Are you fooling?" Mrs. von Bernow asked.

"No. And you get in there, too!" the No. 1 gunman said. He gave her time to clear her switchboard, which was blazing with unanswered calls.

They also herded a client, D. C. Tuhey, 63, 610 Steiner street, into Andersen's office. The No. 2 gunman brooded in Attorney Harold Sawyer and a client of his, Walter Riggles, 35, from Long Beach.

Three other persons in the law firm's extensive fifth-floor offices had no idea the crime was taking place. They were the two stenographers and Attorney Ewing Sibbett.

"Now get down on the floor and stay there," the gunmen said, when they had rounded up the others. "Don't make any noise. Take everything out of your pockets."

ALL THE PAPERS

Sawyer asked whether he had to give up his identification papers.

"We'll take all the papers," one of the gunmen said, according to Mrs. von Bernow.

It was at this point that Andersen handed over his wallet and grappled with the gunman.

After being treated at Harbor Emergency Hospital, he was removed to Stanford Hospital. Doctors said his wounds are probably not too serious.

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