

Case Closed

"48 Hours — The Weak Link"

by Cpl. R. J. B. Wylie

It was about 5:30 p.m. on February 16, 1982. The owner of Wallace Jewellers in Chilliwack, British Columbia had had a relatively slow day and was preparing to close. A lone male entered the store. He was wearing a jogging suit, sunglasses, and carrying a sports bag. He was using a crutch to assist him in walking and had two small bandages affixed to different places on his face. The sales clerk approached him and offered her assistance while the jeweller continued to carry his more valuable merchandise to the rear of the store to be placed in the safe overnight. The male placed his bag on the glass display counter and engaged in small talk with the clerk. When she asked him about his apparent injuries, he reported that he had been involved in a skiing accident several days earlier in another part of the province. As they spoke, he reached into his bag and withdrew a sawed-off rifle. The suspect departed a short time later carrying approximately \$200,000 in cash and merchandise.

The police investigation that followed failed to lead to an arrest. However, publication of the details of the offence in the usual police intelligence circles led to the discovery of other occurrences which appeared to have been committed by the same individual. On February 17, 1981, Vancouver City Police investigated a robbery at Carat Jewellers, where the lone suspect escaped with over \$100,000 in jewellery. International Gems in Kelowna was robbed of approximately \$125,000 on March 20,

1981, and Peoples Jewellers in Lethbridge, Alberta, of \$50,000 on April 14. In each of these cases, the lone male suspect was approximately the same in stature. More importantly, the suspect in each robbery had one or more bandages on his face. Despite the individual efforts of each investigational body and the subsequent discovery of the links between all of these offences, no significant progress was made toward solving them.

At 10:30 p.m. on July 18, 1982, two uniformed members of the Delta Municipal Police Department were dispatched to the ferry terminal at Tsawwassen to investigate the presence of an apparent mentally disturbed person. Upon arrival, they were directed to a male who was walking around in the parking lot adjacent to the car loading dock. They learned from him that he had driven his car onto the ferry enroute to Vancouver Island. While waiting for the ferry to depart, he became obsessed with messages from the devil, he told the officers. These messages had caused him to leave his car and walk off the ferry. Due to this individual's strange behaviour and utterances, he was arrested under the provisions of the Mental Health Act. He was returned to the cells at the Delta office for examination by a doctor. Over the next several hours in police custody, the individual claimed responsibility for a number of robberies and the murder of a friend. However, his ravings were very erratic, vague in detail, and in-