

Iowans Jamie McMahan and Christopher Kauffman forgo a fight and yield peacefully after negotiations.

By KIRSTEN SCHARNBERG

REGISTER STAFF WRITER

Oskaloosa, Ia. — After a 20-day manhunt, the two young Iowans sought for bank robbery and murder surrendered Monday after a stolen pickup truck, still bearing its Iowa license plates, was spotted at a Pensacola, Fla., motel.

With SWAT team riflemen looking down from a church and a nearby motel, Jamie McMahan, 22, of rural Rose Hill and Christopher Kauffman, 19, of Oskaloosa gave up following telephone negotiations with authorities.

"This three-week search has come to a peaceful conclusion," Mahaska County Sheriff Charles Van Toorn said late Monday afternoon. "We're thankful of that."

But Van Toorn said he wasn't surprised that the men surrendered.

"To go out shooting takes either a lot of courage or a lot of foolishness — one of the two," he said.

Iowa authorities were en route to Florida Monday evening and said the two could be brought back quickly if they don't fight their return. So far, they face an Iowa murder charge and federal charges of crossing state lines to avoid arrest.

At a minimum, another murder charge and bank robbery charges are likely to be filed.

Two Killings

Their flight began June 11, after Barbara Garber, 52, of What Cheer and Island Schultz, 18, of Barnes City were found dead and the Gibson State Bank was robbed. Both women's vehicles were stolen, though Schultz's was found that day.



PENSACOLA NEWS JOURNAL PHOTOS/SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

Sheriff's deputies in Escambia County, Fla., take Jamie McMahan, left, and Christopher Kauffman from the Pensacola motel where the two murder suspects were apprehended Monday.

The fugitives' undoing was that they never parted with the 1997 green Dodge Dakota extended-cab pickup they are accused of stealing from Garber. The truck — which still bore its Iowa plates and was parked in plain sight of a major Pensacola freeway — was spotted outside Pensacola Comfort Inn by a resident.

Local and state authorities openly shook their heads in disbelief that the two had not dumped the stolen pickup or at least removed the Iowa plates.

Within an hour of the sighting, authorities surrounded the motel — only to be told by the men a shoot-out was imminent. One gun was later found in the motel room.

The first person to exit the men's

motel room was a hitchhiker McMahan and Kauffman had recently picked up. The male hitchhiker — who has been released and faces no criminal charges — warned authorities that McMahan and Kauffman were planning to "go down shooting," said Agent Chuck Wood of the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation.

But Kauffman — whose family and friends have dubbed him a quiet teen-ager who recently got mixed up in drugs and crime — surrendered almost immediately. Clad in shorts and a white T-shirt, and with his dark-brown hair dyed blond and shorn close to his head, Kauffman was led from the motel by two armed

SPREE Please turn to Page 4A

Inmate: McMahan bragged about bank heists

But he denies being the trigger man in deaths of two women, Oskaloosa man says

An FBI agent confirms that the stepbrothers are key suspects in the February robbery of the What Cheer bank.

By KIRSTEN SCHARNBERG
REGISTER STAFF WRITER

Oskaloosa, Ia. — A man who shared a jail cell with murder suspect Jamie McMahan said the 22-year-old bragged about nearly orchestrating "the perfect crimes."

The inmate, Trevor Money, said that shortly after McMahan was locked into an Iowa jail for the first time since a June 11 crime spree, he boasted that he had gotten away with the February hold-up of a What Cheer bank and claimed he had nearly been as successful robbing a rural bank in the tiny town of Gibson last month.

But as proud as McMahan seemed of his bank robberies, he mellowed as he talked about the two women who died during the June crime spree, Money said.

"His whole attitude just changed. He said he knew someone had died when he heard all the gunshots, but he insisted he didn't pull the trigger," Money said.

Money, 38, of Oskaloosa, was housed overnight Tuesday at the Mahaska County Jail after he was charged with domestic

abuse for allegedly striking his wife in the face.

Same Cell

Sheriff Charles Van Toorn confirmed that Money had shared a cell with McMahan, a Rose Hill resident who has been charged with first-degree murder and is expected to be charged with two bank robberies and a second murder.

Money said he had been nearly asleep in his cell when McMahan was brought in late Tuesday after being flown here from Pensacola, Fla., where he and his stepbrother were caught Monday.

Money said the first thing McMahan said to him was, "You've probably seen me on the news, huh?"

Money said he admitted he had.

"My first reaction was, 'Oh God, what's he doing in my jail cell?'" Money said.

McMahan — though sleeping off and on throughout the night — gradually told his story, Money said.

"He said he'd robbed the two banks and that people had been killed, but that he didn't pull the trigger," Money said. "I asked him who did, and he said, 'Well, think about it. Who do you think?'"

What Cheer Robbery

McMahan's stepbrother, Christopher Kauffman, 18, is also charged with first-degree murder.

Money said McMahan detailed how to pull off a perfect bank robbery, using the What Cheer heist as an example.

FBI agent Scott French confirmed Wednesday that McMahan and Kauffman are key suspects in the February robbery of the What Cheer bank. That bank is just miles from the Gibson bank they are suspected of robbing the morning of the crime spree.

Sheriff Van Toorn said that the men got away with at least \$50,000 in the Gibson holdup.

Authorities allege that McMahan and Kauffman killed 18-year-old Island Schultz and stole her Ford Probe the morning of the Gibson Savings Bank robbery. Witnesses say they saw McMahan and Kauffman driving the Probe at the time of the robbery, and the car was found abandoned later that day. The two allegedly then fled Iowa in slaying victim Barbara Garber's pickup truck, which was found Monday at the Florida hotel where they were caught.

Money said he asked McMahan "why in the world he would be so stupid as to keep driving that truck with Iowa plates when pictures of it have been broadcast all over the country. He told me they were about to get rid of it, and had lined up an Acura somewhere in Florida."

Authorities said they had talked to Money about his reported conversations with McMahan.

They wouldn't comment on whether the information would help convict the stepbrothers. "Our case is already strong," Van Toorn said.