

Decorated ex-police officer gets 9 years for bank robbery

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A decorated former Mukwonago police officer was sentenced Friday to nine years in federal prison for violently robbing a bank in the village in 2010 while he was still with the department.

Alvin J. Brook, 44, almost got away with the brazen crime, which went unsolved until someone tipped authorities in late 2013.

By then, Brook had been fired for falsifying breath test results for his girlfriend, who was supposed to maintain absolute sobriety while on probation for her third drunken driving offense. That happened just months after the robbery.

He was convicted of misconduct in public office in 2011. As part of the booking process, Brook's finger and palm prints went into an offender database. When investigators got the tip he might have been the bank robber, they were able to match a print from a Walmart bag left at the crime scene to Brook.

Victims of the bank robbery had told investigators that the suspect seemed to have had military or police training, had a gun very similar to the investigator's, and had some kind of walkie-talkie or scanner in his pocket, over which the victims heard "police chatter." Surveillance video showed an antenna extending from the suspect's pocket.

The prints he supplied when he became a police officer in the 1980s were kept in a different database, and investigators never sought to match the evidence prints against law enforcement officers.

This year, Brook pleaded guilty to bank robbery and use of a gun during a robbery, which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of seven years.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Margaret Honrath recommended three years for the bank robbery count, for a total prison term of 10 years.

Honrath described the "takeover style" robbery at the M&I Bank at 730 Fox St. on June 15, 2010:

Wearing a baseball cap and bandanna, and waving his police department-issued Glock handgun, Brook entered the bank, ordered the three employees into the vault area then jumped the counter. Pointing a gun at their heads, he took \$54,000 and threatened to kill the workers if they pushed any buttons or tried to follow him.

One man said his wife was the supervisor in the bank that day and still suffers from having Brook

hold a gun to her head and threaten to blow her brains out if she didn't open the vault.

A bank representative told U.S. District Judge Lynn Adelman that all three workers eventually left the bank — one, a college student on a summer job, quit that day. The once open-style bank was then retrofitted with urban security features for \$145,000, and then lost business because customers said it was cold and impersonal.

Honrath said the crime also affected the public's trust and regard of the Mukwonago Police Department, where Brook had served for 21 years. Brook was declared officer of the year in 2002 and served as a student resource officer at Mukwonago High School.

Brook's attorney, Franklyn Gimbel, argued that a total sentence of seven years and a month was sufficient punishment, noting Brook's steady employment after leaving the Police Department, his counseling and family support.

Brook apologized to the victims, the community, his former police colleagues and his family. He said grief over his divorce led him to abuse pain killers, which led him to commit the crime.

Adelman said he found the crime "somewhat inexplicable." While many bank robbers have drug issues, few have the kind of solid employment and income Brook had as a police officer.

He recognized Brook's positives but said "the really severe impact" of the crime dictated a sentence closer to the government's recommendation.

Adelman added 10 years of supervised release and ordered Brook to repay the \$54,000. He will get credit for the nine months he's been in jail since his arrest.