

Witness tells how he planned Brink's robbery

By Robert E. Walsh
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In a day-long appearance on a Suffolk Superior Court witness stand yesterday John J. Kelley, 56, of Watertown told how he planned and helped execute a \$500,000 robbery of a Brink's truck in 1968.

Kelley, white-haired and tense, opened his testimony by identifying the four men on trial: Charles A. Domenico of Braintree, Rocco Novello of Jamaica Plain and Carmelo Merlino of Canton, who are charged with armed robbery, and William J. Cresta of Medford, charged with being an accessory before the fact.

Kelley said he began watching the Brink's truck on the Saturday department store run a year before the robbery. He said he first met Merlino and Santo Diaferio of West Roxbury (Diaferio is out of the trial because of a heart attack) and discussed a robbery. Both are charged in connection with the robbery.

Later on an out-of-state trip, he learned from Domenico that "Billy" Cresta had made contact with a Brink's guard, he said. Kelley went on to testify how a series of meetings was set up with the guard and, on information provided by the Brink's man, Andrew DeLeary, he checked out possible bank robberies in Natick and Burlington.

Kelley and DeLeary pleaded guilty to armed robbery before the trial of the four opened.

Kelley, under examination by Assistant District Attorney James F. Sulli-



JOHN KELLEY
... testifies

van, told how he eventually told DeLeary about his ideas on taking the Brink's truck carrying the downtown department store money Saturday. DeLeary agreed and said he could provide the key for the truck.

After the key was passed, Kelley said, meetings were held in the Fens in Boston and at other locations in which the roles each would play in the robbery were agreed upon. In all, seven men participated in the robbery, he said. Philip Cresta and Stephen Roukos of Brockton are still at large.

Kelley told how he purchased a carbine, cut down the barrel, modified the stock and attached a leather thong so it could be carried over the shoulder under the coat.

He also told about stealing a uniform in Boston's South End that belonged to a security company for Roukos to wear during the robbery. He described how they stole cars and license plates from abandoned autos in the South End and where they housed the cars until they were ready.

On the Saturday after Christmas all went according to plan Kelley said, and the seven men succeeded in capturing the driver and drove off with a truck from Canal street to

a location near the registry, where it was emptied.

Kelley outlined each man's role in the robbery, including the stolen cars used and their drivers.

The star witness told how the cars were dropped and about the gathering of the gang in a Brockton area motel where the money was counted and left in a parked car overnight at the home of relatives of Roukos in the Brockton area.

Kelley told of the split

on the Sunday morning following the robbery and how they took some \$50,000 right off the top for Brink's employee De Leary and said his (Kelley's) share was about \$65,000.

Just before the court recessed for the day, the prosecutor completed his direct examination and turned the witness over to defense counsel Ronald Chisholm for cross examination.

Chisholm at one point asked Kelley where his

share of the money was, and Kelley said he had gambled it all away at race tracks, mostly in New York.