

National

Thieves cash in on safe deposit boxes; bank clients face possible 100,000 loss

United Press International
SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — Thieves who fooled unsuspecting bank customers with two phony deposit boxes may have made off with as much as \$100,000, police say.

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One of the fake deposit boxes was found outside the BayBank's Valley branch in Springfield, the other next to the Middlesex office in Framingham, 20 miles west of Boston.

Police detectives on both cases agreed the fakes were well done. Springfield detective Charles Geoffroy said the box looked so real people assumed the original was out of order, and used what they believed was a temporary one.

Police said they believe both boxes were set up in time to reap the benefits from sales during the busy holiday weekend, but said they couldn't be sure they were the work of the same thief or thieves.

Both boxes were empty by the time the hoax was discovered, but Geoffroy estimated depositors dumped anywhere between \$50,000 to \$100,000 in the Springfield box. The exact figure won't be known until all customers realize their accounts have not been credited with their weekend deposits, he said.

Among the unsuspecting depositors, said Springfield Detective Captain William J. Martin, were a Caldor's department store, a McDonald's restaurant, a Friendly's restaurant and several large Springfield churches.



Staff photo by Dave Einsel

Easy does it

Paul Fredericksen of Connley Brother's Moving and Storage, lowers a telephone relay board on to a trailer. His company was contracted by GTE to haul off the outdated

relays from under the Sterling C. Evans Library to make space for the new phone system being installed on the Texas A&M campus.

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Bandits posing as clerks rob convenience stores

HOUSTON — Police are investigating a rash of convenience store robberies by bandits who put store clerks in back rooms and then pose as employees by putting

on smocks and waiting on customers while taking money, groceries or the safe from the stores.

Authorities said Tuesday they have investigated about 20 similar cases since early October, but

have no suspects in the cases. Usually, a team of four or five men are involved in each holdup.

None of the clerks, who are held in a storage area or restroom until the robbery is completed, have been injured.

Officer T. H. Bennett said most of the robberies occur during the early hours on weekends and about \$1,000 in cash and merchandise is taken in each holdup.

"In three or four cases, they've taken the whole safe," Bennett said.

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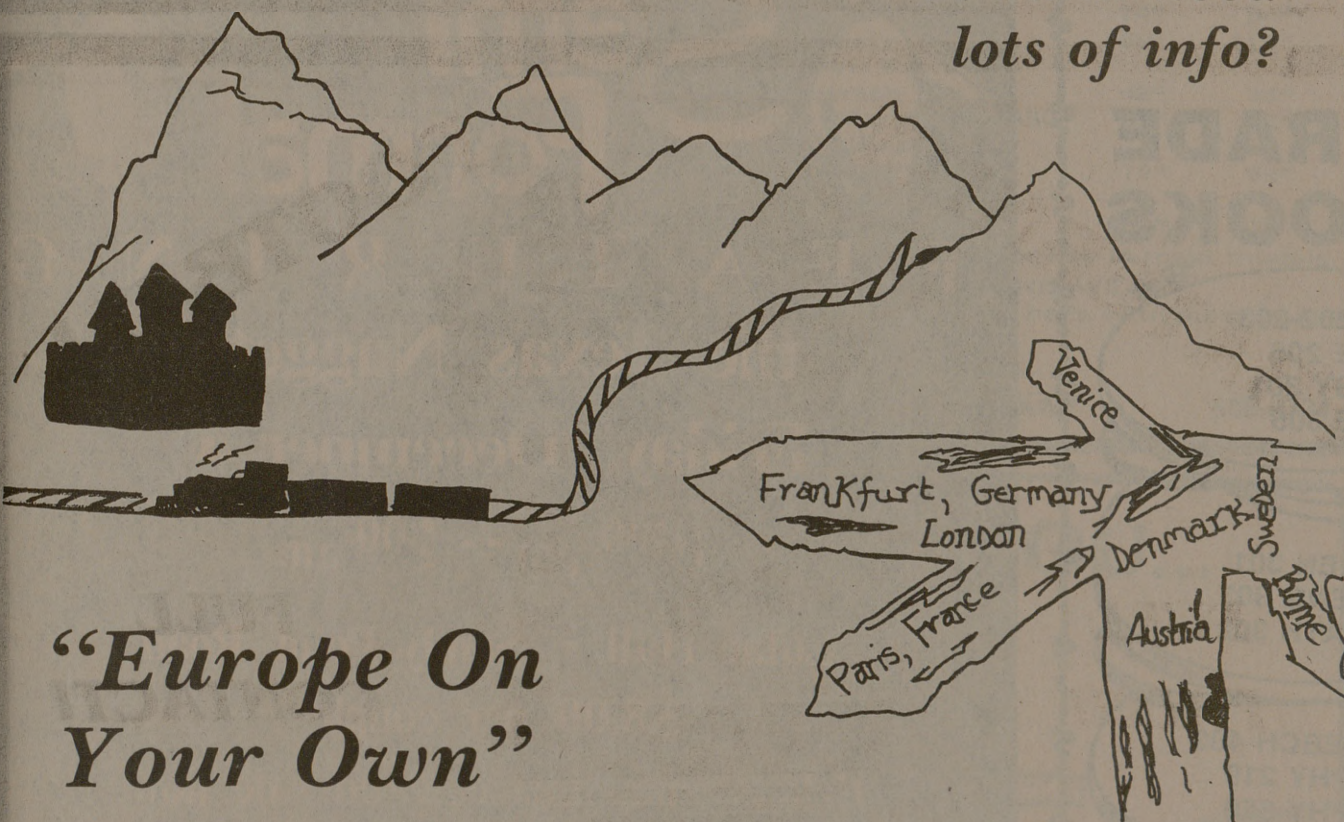


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