

Agent deceives thieves

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UPI) — More than 300 people were tricked into selling \$2.3 million in stolen goods to a stocky, balding undercover agent known as "Nick the Greek" in the nation's most successful "sting" operation, police said yesterday.

Federal agents and police began a roundup of 284 persons named in 686 indictments. Police were trying to identify another 75 who sold goods to undercover agent Charles D. Lowe while hidden microphones and cameras recorded the deals.

Lowe, telling thieves he worked for the Mafia, opened a bogus typewriter repair shop May 5 as a front for his operation and continued to buy until Oct. 12 when the shop was closed. Authorities then began tracing identities and preparing for yesterday's raid.

Engraved calling cards identifying the shop as C.T.&T. and including a phone number and the motto "We buy and sell" were circulated through prostitutes.

Although the shop's initials stood for

Consolidated Telegraph and Typewriter, undercover police secretly referred to it as "Catch Thieves and Thugs."

More than 150 of those named in indictments had been arrested by yesterday afternoon. The suspects came from ten states and included the son of a city councilman, brothers of two police officers and four state prison inmates who allegedly stole while on job assignments from a minimum security prison. Almost 90 per cent had past criminal records, officials said.

"Some were a little resentful," said Lowe, a 39-year-old federal Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agent. "Most were very cordial. One of them told me, 'You did a good job. You do your thing and I'll do mine.' A lot of them take that attitude."

Recounting his experiences for newsmen, Lowe said he was once arrested by police officers unaware that he was an undercover agent. After explaining, Lowe asked an officer to hit

him as they left a building in sight of several thieves and the policeman complied, knocking loose a couple of his teeth after Lowe talked to officers in "rough language, putting on an act."

"It's hard on you," said Lowe, whose undercover name was Nicholas, "Nick the Greek," Becko. "It's a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde situation. I wouldn't do it again."

Nashville was the 25th city to host a "sting" operation funded by the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. Police Chief Joe Casey said the total of arrests was higher than in any of the previous bogus fencing operations.

Nationally, 2,392 suspects had been arrested in similar operations and stolen property valued at \$66 million had been recovered prior to the Nashville operation. Federal Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms officials said the crime rates in those cities have dropped from 5 to 26 per cent following the operations.

Blizzard blows across midwest

By United Press International

An early blizzard bowled across the northern Plains and upper Midwest yesterday.

Mammoth drifts and blinding sheets of snow marooned travelers, kept snowplows off highways and virtually paralyzed entire cities.

Sioux City, Iowa, was all but shut down. Rush-hour traffic was badly snarled and public and parochial schools closed in Omaha, Neb. The mayor of Sioux Falls, S.D., declared a snow emergency to battle six-foot drifts.

Blinding snows blotted out auto travel and left streets and roads to snowmobiles and four-wheel-drive vehicles in western Minnesota.

The National Weather Service said blizzard conditions swept a five-state area covering parts of South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota and Iowa.

In the East, more than eight inches of

rain in two days sent floodwaters pouring into homes in Lodi, N.J., and drove about 500 people from their homes to a temporary refuge in a school. They were carted to safety in ambulances and National Guard trucks.

Hundreds of residents of other New Jersey communities also were evacuated because of floods fed by the violent storm system that claimed 50 lives in the southern Appalachian and Blue Ridge mountains earlier this week.

The blizzard snows swept northeast across the midlands, riding winds up to 83 m.p.h., after dumping more than a foot of snow in the southern Rockies.

A Weather Service spokesman said the storm's path had been plotted and warnings raised but, as is often the case with unseasonably early autumn storms, many people were caught by surprise.

"It caught everybody with their drawers down — us included," said Sheriff's Sgt. Jerry Thomas at Sioux

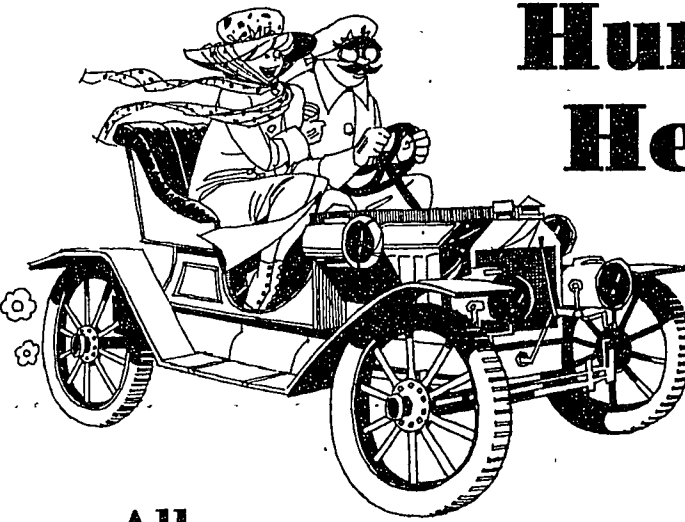
City. "My squad car's sitting in the ditch next to my house. I slid into a bank and couldn't move. I rode in to work with the wrecker driver."

Most businesses shut down, buses and cabs remained in garages; automobiles were ordered off the streets, and schools were closed in Sioux City.

"Everything is at a total standstill here — everything in town is closed because you can't see any place," said Rev. A.J. Elbert, a high school superintendent.

Interstate 29 was closed south of Sioux City. Abandoned automobiles blocked westbound lanes of Interstate 80 in Omaha. City-operated buses ran more than an hour behind schedule in Lincoln, Neb.

In an 18-mile stretch east of Norfolk, Neb., eight stranded motorists were plucked from cars bogged in drifts. A highway patrol spokesman said other motorists were reported missing."



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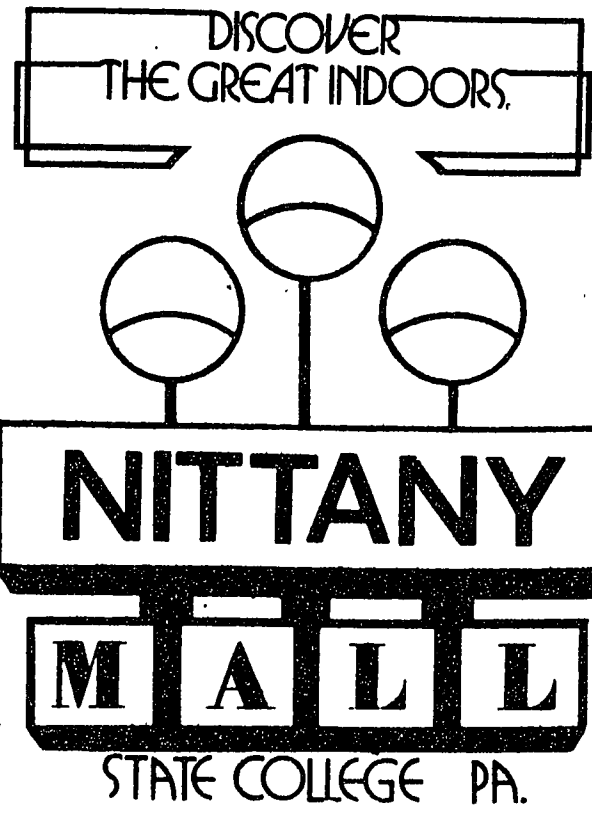
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