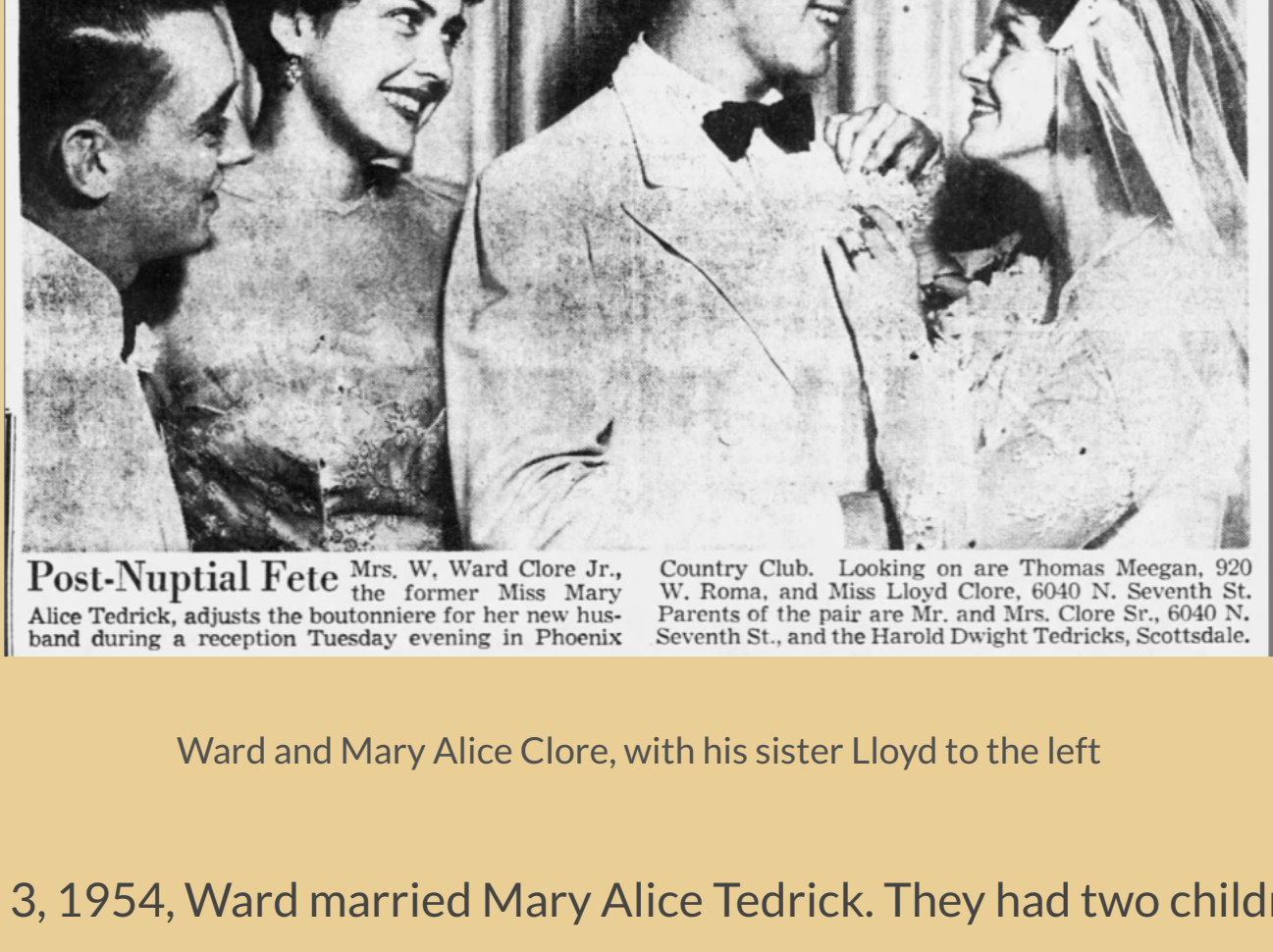


What Are Friends For?

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This story is about my sixth cousin, Ward Clore. It's one of those stories that leaves you hoping that there is indeed a more perfect justice in the next world than that which is meted out in this one.

Bill and Catherine Lloyd Clore married in Illinois and had a son — William Ward Clore, Jr., known as Ward — and a daughter — Lloyd deWolf Clore. Bill was an insurance salesman near Chicago, but the family relocated to Phoenix, Arizona, where he was general agent for the New England Mutual Insurance Company. The Clore family was well known in the area, involved in civic affairs and their Trinity Episcopal church community. The children graduated from high school there and attended Arizona State College, Ward having first served in the Air Force.



Ward and Mary Alice Clore, with his sister Lloyd to the left

On October 3, 1954, Ward married Mary Alice Tedrick. They had two children before they divorced. Ward remarried and both he and his second wife, Nancy, were employed at the Valley National Bank branch at Central and Southern in Phoenix.

At about 1:00 on the afternoon of Friday, October 19, 1962, a man entered the bank and asked to see the manager. He was ushered into the office of Robert W. Hasseries. The female bank employees noted his presence because he was “strikingly handsome,” “well-built,” and neatly dressed in sport coat and tie, freshly pressed trousers and highly polished shoes. He was later identified as Robert Camacho, 35. What the employees couldn't see was that Camacho had a gun, and he ordered Hasseries to write out a sight draft for \$10,000 in the name of Robert Marshall and to take it to a teller.

The teller said he didn't have enough cash in the drawer to honor the draft, but Ward Clore, operations manager, was sitting nearby and volunteered to get the money from the vault. Only Hasseries realized a robbery was in progress. After the money was obtained and handed to the “customer,” Camacho told the bank employees that he and Hasseries were going out for coffee. They left the building and got into the manager's car.

Clore apparently became suspicious at that point, got in his own car and took off after them. By then, Camacho had driven three blocks and let the bank manager out of the car. Clore saw the car and followed it to a shopping center. At the end of an L-shaped alley behind the stores, he asked a truck driver if he had seen a man go down the alley. When the driver answered that he had, Clore started down the alley on foot. Two women later told FBI agents they saw a red-haired woman grab Clore in the alley and pull him into Hasseries' vehicle, which drove off. They were the last people to see Ward Clore alive.

Less than an hour later, Hasseries received a telephone call from the robber: “I have one of your boys.” Clore then was put on the phone and said, “Bob, this is Ward. I'm all right—so far.” Then the phone went dead.

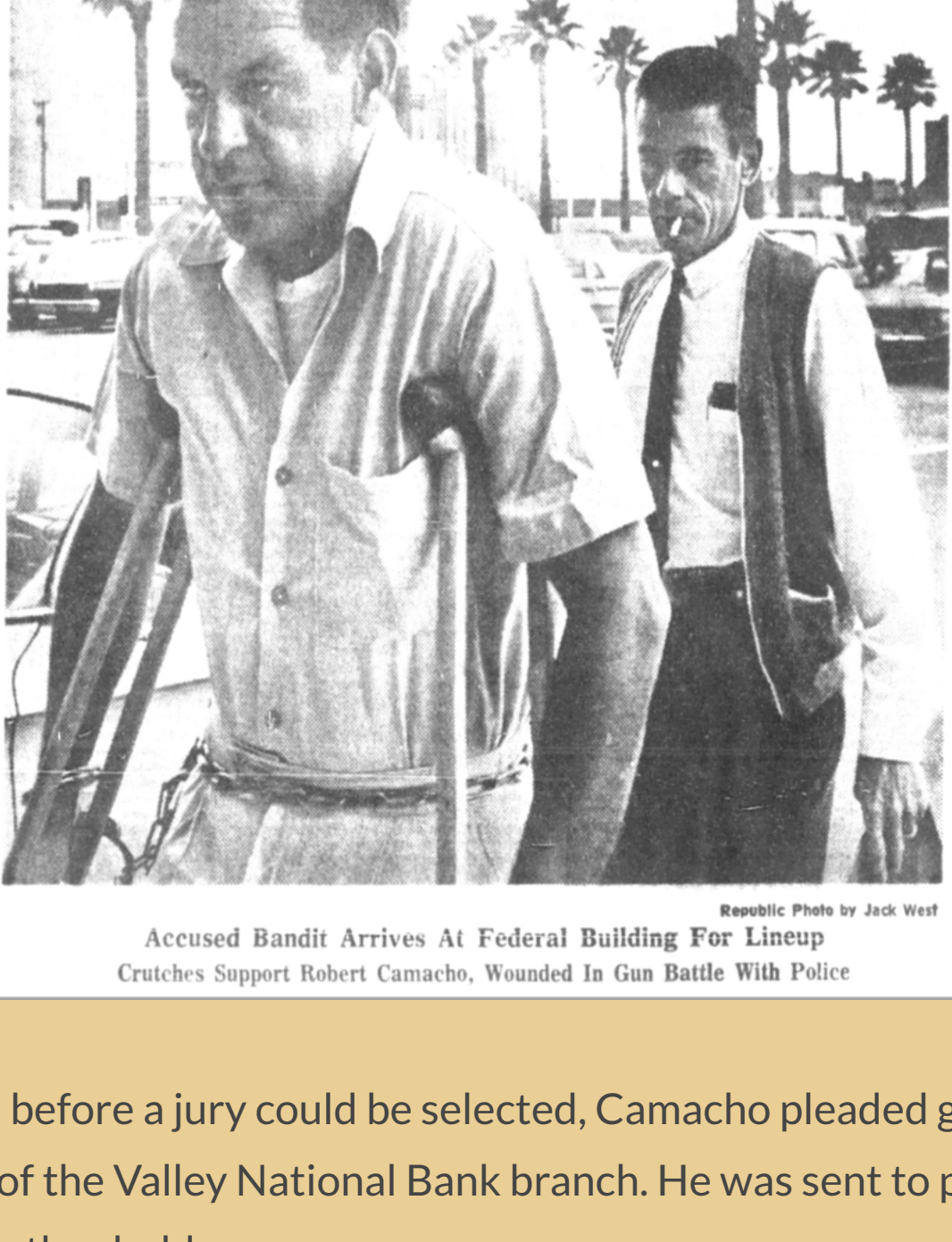
Police immediately searched house to house in the area and pursued leads for three years without solving the crime, years filled with rumors, false reports, speculation and even an attempt to invoke a mentalist's powers to crack the case. By 1965, the FBI file on the case filled 25 volumes, each as thick as a Phoenix telephone book. And Ward Clore's body had never been found.

Robert Camacho, however, was alive and well and still residing in Arizona. A native of Tucson, Camacho and his wife, Lupita, had four children. He was a WWII veteran, employed for at least seven years as assistant right-of-way agent for the Pima County Highway Department, and was a member of the Young Democrats of Greater Tucson, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Citizens Democratic Club, and American Legion. In September 1962, one month before he held up the Valley National Bank, Camacho ran for the Democratic nomination for state representative from District 3. His bid was unsuccessful, and when he returned to work after having taken a leave of absence during the campaign, he found that his job had been eliminated and he was relegated to being a highway laborer, at a lower salary. Perhaps that was the beginning of Camacho's downhill slide.

In 1963, he moved with his wife and two children to Nogales, where he worked as freight manager for the City Express Line. The owner of the firm described him as being of “above average ability” and said he was “smart, had a good appearance.” He started a business importing loads of charcoal from Mexico and selling them in Nogales and Tucson, but he was not particularly successful in this venture. Acquaintances in Nogales said Camacho was a “nice guy,” but liked to live well above his income, taking frequent trips to Las Vegas and California. He was a member of a Nogales country club, but the club learned not to accept his personal checks.

In 1964, Ward Clore was declared legally dead (as of October 19, 1962, the date of the robbery and abduction) so that his family could receive benefits.

Evidently Camacho concluded that robbing banks was the easiest way to supplement his income and live in the style to which he had become accustomed. But his luck ran out in October 1965 when he tried robbing the Valley National Bank at 16th Street and Buckeye in Phoenix and was apprehended before he could get away. Federal charges were filed against Camacho for this bank robbery as well as for three others, including the 1962 holdup from which Ward Clore vanished; a similar robbery in March 1963 in which the manager was forced to accompany the robber for a short distance; and a holdup on March 3, 1965, from which he escaped after being chased on foot by the bank manager. In his final attempt, a bank secretary had been able to alert the police, who chased Camacho as he left the bank. A gunfight broke out and Camacho was hit in the thigh.



In March of 1966, before a jury could be selected, Camacho pleaded guilty to the October robbery of the Valley National Bank branch. He was sent to prison to await trial for the three other holdups.

Apparently, Camacho was always looking for the easy way out, and on September 29, 1966, he and five other prisoners sawed their way out of the federal prison camp and took to the hills. They were pursued by Pinal County deputies, officers of the Arizona State Prison and the federal prison camp, and bloodhounds. The Pinal County sheriff's posse was patrolling the streets of Florence and nearby areas, and road blocks were erected at roads leading to Winkelman, Tucson, Oracle, Superior and Ray. Camacho's freedom was short-lived, as he was caught the day after the break-out; the other escapees were also eventually found.

The next month, Robert Camacho went to trial for the crimes he had committed in 1962. After deliberating for more than seven hours, the jury acquitted him of the abduction of Ward Clore, most likely because there was still no body; they found him guilty on the charge of kidnaping and assaulting Hasseries and on the bank robbery charge. In November 1967, Camacho was sentenced to a total of 70 years — 15 years for the robbery, 20 years for using a gun, and 25 years for kidnaping the bank manager, the sentences to be served consecutively.

Three months later, on February 27, 1967, a 16-year-old boy who was out hunting wild pigs stumbled upon the remains of William Ward Clore. His skeleton was found about 800 feet from heavily traveled U.S. 60-70 where the steep, rocky mountainside is covered with brush. Several articles were with Clore, including a monogrammed tie clip, a bank account number, and a keychain with metal replica of his license plate. Positive identification was made from dental records, and the pathologist ruled Clore had suffered a severe beating resulting in several broken teeth and a fractured skull and was shot to death. No charges were ever filed in Clore's death, and most people probably figured Camacho was locked up tight for the rest of his life anyway.

But as the Arizona Republic wrote on October 18, 1976, “It pays to have friends in high places.” After having served nine years of his 70-year sentence, Camacho was released on parole, due in large part to the glowing letters of recommendation the U.S. Parole Commission had received on his behalf. The newspaper lodged a formal request under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act to discover the names of those who had petitioned for Camacho's early release. Included were:

- Former State Sen. Joseph A. Castillo, D-Tucson, then the Chairman of the Pima County Board of Supervisors
- Former State Rep. Bernardo M. Cajero, D-Tucson, who died in Jan 1973 and was replaced by his widow, State Rep. Carman F. Cajero, D-Tucson
- Former State Rep. Helen Grace Carlson, D-Tucson
- Santa Cruz Co. Sheriff Esequiel “Zeke” Bejarano
- Martin Leon Sr. of Tucson, a former Pima County Superior Court bailiff and interpreter and a member of the Arizona Industrial Commission

Castillo told the newspaper, “The man made one mistake. He got caught. He paid his debt to society. Now I think people should leave him alone.” Cajero said, “He was the nicest person and then all of this happened. My husband never thought Mr. Camacho was the kind of person who would have done what he did.” Carlson said, “I just happen to think that he made a mistake. I think everybody is entitled to a second chance.” Bajarano said he was acquainted with Camacho when Camacho lived in Nogales and that “he seemed to me to be a nice guy.” Leon said his son and Camacho once worked together at the Pima County Highway Dept.

If the sentences had been carried out as ordered, Camacho would have been more than 100 upon his release from prison. As it was, he served about 9 years and was released at age 47, after which he went to work as a counselor at the Tucson Hope Center, a drug-rehabilitation center. He died on July 17, 1993, in Tucson, at the age of 66.

One final thought about friends in high places: The inscription on Ward Clore's tombstone reads: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”