

Palm Beach Post, The (FL)

June 7, 2003

Edition: SOUTH

Section: LOCAL

Page: 1C

POLICY ROBBERY TRIAL SUSPECT CRIME SENTENCE

THIEF GETS LIGHTER TERM IN 'ROLEX BANDIT' HEISTS

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Dateline: BOCA RATON

Correction: UNPUBLISHED CORRECTION: Always refer to Circuit Judge Lucy Chernow Brown in stories.

Rodney Jackson in some ways was the worst kind of criminal: a violent mugger who often targeted the elderly.

En route Jackson became a prime suspect in the "Rolex Bandit" robberies, netting more than \$750,000 in stolen jewelry in 2 1/2 years and frustrating authorities in south county.

But Jackson decided to testify against his alleged partner in the robberies, Darryll Eugene Capers.

As a result, the victims, the prosecution and a circuit judge gave their blessing for Jackson to serve his prison time concurrently with a federal sentence for armed robbery.

Jackson pleaded guilty Friday to three counts of robbery with a deadly weapon and one count of burglary with battery, all first-degree felonies that could have put him in prison for life.

In return, Judge Lucy Chernow Brown sentenced Jackson to 15 years in prison with about three years' credit. He already has been sentenced to 12 years in federal prison, but that time may be reduced because of his cooperation.

"Honesty's the best policy," said Jackson's **attorney**, Bruce **Lehr**. "He got this good deal because he came clean and volunteered his own culpability to authorities."

Prosecutor Joe Martz said the victims in the case understood that, if Jackson had not volunteered information initially, "we probably wouldn't be able to make the cases against him."

Some of the robberies were getting musty, and if Jackson went to trial, victims would be forced to identify someone they saw only fleetingly as long as four years ago, Martz said.

The muggings were dubbed the "Rolex Bandit" robberies because expensive watches were often the target.

Victims in the more than 40 robberies from 1998 to 2000 were ambushed in parking lots as they headed to or came back from shopping.

The robbers were not polite. One woman was pistol-whipped in the head, splattering blood through her Mercedes-Benz as the thief stole a \$25,000 necklace and a \$75,000, 5-carat diamond ring.

But DNA from particles lodged under that victim's skin led police to identify her attacker as Capers, of Miami, who was tracked down in an Alabama jail in April.

DNA also played a key role in tracking down Jackson, also from Miami, in federal prison. The 58-year-old victim had pulled off a glove and bit her robber when he got in her car at the Town Center mall west of Boca Raton and demanded her Rolex.

Lab tests pointed to Jackson, who pleaded guilty to that crime and two others on Friday.

The victim, Sue Goldblatt of Long Island, said the man, who fled after being bitten, had threatened to kill her.

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Caption:

GREG LOVETT/Staff Photographer

Rodney Jackson, who testified against his alleged partner in crime, appears in court Friday in West Palm Beach. He received 15 years with about three years' credit, although he could've gotten a life sentence.

Memo:

Ran all editions.

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Record Number: 0306070222