

# THE MARTIN SILVER STORY

*Researched and written by Patrol Sergeant Mark Hodgson*

On April 22, 1944, Canada was still at war with the Nazis and in Winnipeg people were getting geared up for the sixth Canadian Victory Loan Campaign. Also on this quiet Saturday, something more sinister was about to happen to Winnipeg. A man was going to break into an apartment, shoot the former caretaker, and then get into a running gun battle with Winnipeg Police, where he was ultimately shot dead. This man was Martin SILVER.

Martin SILVER was 42 years old when he was killed. He was born in Montreal in 1902 and not much is known about his childhood. SILVER's first contact with police came March 3, 1922, when he was arrested in Ottawa for theft. He was then turned over to police in Montreal, where he was wanted for burglary. SILVER escaped jail on both charges when he was acquitted. Then in Feb. 1924, he was again arrested for carrying a concealed weapon. On this occasion, SILVER was not so lucky and was jailed for three months. SILVER was released in late April. On May 1st, 1924 SILVER was again arrested in Montreal for robbery while armed. As one can see, SILVER was moving to more violent crimes. He was sentenced to five years at Saint Vincent De Paul Penitentiary. On November 16, 1926, SILVER was released on a ticket of leave. Then on the 17th of October 1927, he was arrested in Toronto for robbery. He was sentenced to seven years, plus the time left on his previous conviction.



*Martin Silver*

In October of 1938, SILVER was again a free man. SILVER was not about to leave his criminal life. His years in prison had just hardened him and made him wiser in criminal ways. SILVER went right back to doing house break-ins. By 1941 SILVER had used several aliases to avoid further arrest. He had used the names Mack SULLIVAN, Max SULLIVER, Max ZUKERMAN, Moris SILVER and Maxwell Martin SILVER. He was wanted under several of these names for offenses in Montreal and Toronto.

In 1942 SILVER returned to Montreal from Toronto and began using the alias of Milton GOLEHART. In Montreal, he met a married woman by the name of Delvina ALAIN. In December of 1942, SILVER (aka GOLEHART) convinced ALAIN to leave her husband and come live with him. The couple then moved to Toronto.

In Toronto, SILVER took up his preferred vocation of breaking into houses and suites. In early 1943 it became apparent that SILVER was not going back to jail without a fight. He broke into a suite in an apartment block in the Toronto suburb of Forest Hills. There, SILVER was confronted by the block caretaker John GARBUTT. SILVER shot GARBUTT and crippled him for life, so he could make good his escape.

It was just about this time SILVER (aka GOLEHART) decided that it was time to head for a place where he didn't attract so much attention. So SILVER and ALAIN headed west, while investigators in Toronto attempted to follow his trail.

In October of 1943 SILVER arrived in Winnipeg with ALAIN and using his GOLEHART alias, he checked into the Leland Hotel. They stayed there for about one week and then moved to 390 Agnes St. At about that time SILVER began breaking into houses and suites again. Then in December SILVER and ALAIN moved to 591 Sherburn St. and about that time, fuelled by greed, SILVER began hitting numerous suites in a week. His modus operandi was almost always the same. He would phone first to make sure no one was home and then break into the suite using a piece of celluloid (similar to a credit card) to jimmy the lock. On several occasions, SILVER was caught in suites and in one instance he produced a revolver and threatened the victim. All victims of these celluloid break-ins described the culprit as a thin male, approx. 5'6" to 5'9" tall, with dark hair and dark eyes and approx. 35 years old - the precise description for SILVER. By April 1944 police suspected this suspect was responsible for 40 to 60 break-ins but didn't have any leads.

Then on April 22nd, 1944, Walter LITTLE left his apartment, suite 3A of the Albany Apartments at 91 Edmonton St., to visit a friend. At 2:43 p.m. LITTLE returned to his suite and found that his newspaper had been removed and he found his door bolted from the inside. Fearing his house was being robbed, LITTLE went to the street and enlisted two passing servicemen to assist him. The servicemen watched LITTLE's suite door, while he went to the caretaker's suite and called the police. While LITTLE was in the suite he told the caretaker's husband, Sgt. Major E. SEWELL of the suspicious circumstances in his suite.

Due to the recent installation of radios in all police cars, the call went out for cars to attend the Albany Apartment building. About a block away Detective James AYRES and detective Ted SYMS received the call and sped to the scene. They arrived less than a minute after the call was placed. The writer spoke with James AYRES and he remembers what had happened ... "Ted and me pulled up and SYMS took the front door and I went to the back with SEWELL. At the back, there was a balcony where the back door was located. As we arrived at the back, SILVER looked out the window. I asked SEWELL to watch the door and then I carefully entered the suite through the window. SILVER then dashed the back door. I then heard a shot."



*Detective James Ayres*

Unknown to AYRES, SILVER had just shot SEWELL, the man Detective AYRES had asked to watch the back door. AYRES stated he dashed to the door and found SEWELL wounded on the balcony. Once Detective AYRES reached the balcony SILVER began shooting at him. AYRES returned fire but missed SILVER.

SILVER then took off east in a lane on the south side of the block. Detective AYRES began chasing SILVER. SILVER turned north on Carlton Street. By this time, the new police radios were crackling, as cars moved towards the scene to assist the detectives. Also, an ambulance was summoned for the wounded SEWELL. Detective AYRES continued to chase SILVER but lost him between two houses on Carlton Street. Shortly after that, one of the cruiser cars in the area, manned by Patrol Constable Alex JAMIESON and Patrol Constable Charles MUIR took up the chase. While crossing the lane between Carlton and Hargrave Streets, they saw a man drop over the fence. Constable JAMIESON exited the car and was in foot pursuit of the male. Constable MUIR quickly drove the cruiser car in the front of 72 Hargrave Street to cut off SILVER's escape route.

As MUIR pulled up in front, SILVER saw his escape route was blocked. SILVER then quickly reversed his path and began heading into the backyard of 72 Hargrave Street, which was a nursing home at the time. There, SILVER saw Patrol Constable JAMIESON charging towards him. SILVER then pointed his gun at JAMIESON and said "get back, I mean business." JAMIESON quickly realized that there were several elderly residents in the yard and a gun duel would only result in possible injury to the residents. JAMIESON quickly retreated behind an outhouse in the yard and unholstered his service revolver. SILVER then dashed by JAMIESON's position. As SILVER passed within six feet of JAMIESON, SILVER fired four shots at JAMIESON. JAMIESON returned fire, shooting four shots at SILVER (actually JAMIESON fired five shots, but one was a misfire). JAMIESON's last round struck SILVER in the left side of the chest. SILVER collapsed and JAMIESON approached SILVER slowly. As JAMIESON approached, SILVER spoke, "O.K., I'm a dead man". SILVER died shortly after that on the spot.

Later Detective James AYRES and the other members of the Detective Division executed search warrants at SILVER's residence at 591 Sherburn Street and on his safety deposit box. Police recovered over \$7,000.00 in stolen furs, jewellery and other goods.

Thus ended the crime sprees of Martin SILVER.