

If you purchased this book without a cover, you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported 'unsold and destroyed' to the publisher and neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this "stripped book."

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination and are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental or with permission.

How to Rob a Bank

Peter Sharp Legal Adventure #13

All rights reserved
© MMVIII Gene Grossman

This book, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the author. For written permission, contact: Gene Grossman c/o Magic Lamp Press, P.O. Box 9547, Marina del Rey, CA 90295.

Magic Lamp



Press™

www.petersharpbooks.com

ISBN: 1-882629-05-1

The Complete Peter Sharp Legal Mystery Series

Single Jeopardy

...By Reason of Sanity

A Class Action

Conspiracy of Innocence

...Until Proven Innocent

The Common Law

The Magician's Legacy

The Reluctant Jurist

The Final Case

An Element of Peril

A Good Alibi

Legally Dead

How to Rob a Bank

All available in print and/or Kindle versions

www.LegalMystery.com

FOREWORD

If this is the first Peter Sharp Legal Mystery you're reading, it might help you to know a little background information about the characters.

Peter Sharp's wife threw him out of their home (which she actually owned), due to a conflict of their philosophies about legal representation: Peter being a defender of those poor, unfortunate people 'wrongfully' accused of crimes, and his wife Myra a prosecutor with the District Attorney's office.

Peter ultimately wound up living on a dilapidated old boat in Marina del Rey, and when his former classmate/employer Melvin Braunstein died in a plane crash, Peter inherited a failing law practice, an

office manager (Melvin's twelve-and-a-half-year-old little step-daughter Suzi, a Chinese computer genius) and her 200-pound Saint Bernard, *Bernie*

Peter was appointed legal guardian, and after a series of misfortunes that miraculously worked out well, wound up living with Suzi and her dog on a beautiful 50-foot Grand Banks trawler-yacht, docked in the world's largest private yacht anchorage: Marina del Rey, California

When Peter isn't swilling Patrón margaritas at one of the marina's local watering holes, he's usually involved in some losing legal case that little Suzi will inevitably solve, leaving Peter with the impression that he's really as good as he thinks he is.

Along the way in each legal adventure, Peter usually winds up butting heads with his ex-wife, who Suzi adores and is constantly scheming to get back into the Sharp household. There's also Stuart Schwartzman, Peter's old friend and frequent client, who is the most entrepreneurial person in Southern California, and Jack Bibberman, the best private investigator Peter ever met.

All of the Peter Sharp Legal Mysteries are summarized at the end of this book, and if you're curious about them, more details (plus photos) are at

[**www.PeterSharpBooks.com**](http://www.PeterSharpBooks.com)

Magic Lamp Press
Venice, California

www.MagicLampPress.com



INTRODUCTION

The sinking of the Titanic in 1912 affected me, because even though I hadn't been born yet, I lost a good friend... someone I respected, admired, and wanted to be just like in some ways.

His name was Jacques Futrelle, and at the age of 37, he was travelling with his wife in the Titanic's first-class cabin number C-123.

When the boat sank, Mr. Futrelle managed to get his wife into one of the lifeboats. She survived... he didn't.

Other than the fact that he was a human being and didn't deserve the fate that befell him, he was also a talented author, and wrote the story that influenced my life from the day in high school that I first read it: one of the most famous locked-room

mysteries of all time, ***The Problem in Cell 13***.

If you're a fan of locked-room mysteries, then I strongly suggest that you read Futrelle's Cell 13 story as well as John Dickson Carr's ***The Hollow Man***, which was the main inspiration for one of the other Peter Sharp Legal Mysteries in this series.

The above-mentioned stories of Futrelle and Carr, along with E.A. Poe's ***the Gold Bug*** and all the *Sherlock Holmes*, *Nero Wolfe* and other detectives, got me hooked on mysteries - and to my delight there is no known cure for this addiction.

All of the locked-room mysteries I've encountered have involved a victim who either died in a room that was allegedly inaccessible, unescapable from, or with a misinterpreted timeline. That's why I decided to eliminate all the excuses: in this story, the locked room was on a television screen, and the viewers were able to watch in real-time who was in the locked room... but when the room was opened - it was empty.

Got you hooked? Good! Start reading now, and see if you can figure out the solution to this baffling locked-room Peter Sharp Legal mystery before little Suzi does.

1

I've been out of town for the past couple of weeks, hanging out at the Lahaina Yacht Club in Maui. As with all other members, they've put an updated picture of my boat, complete with the LYC flag flying on the bow in the most recent club mailing, and because it's a nice 50-foot Grand Banks trawler yacht, members of the club seem to have the mistaken opinion that I actually know how to start the engines and drive the darn thing.



The ***Suzi B***

With my new-found yachting reputation, I seem to be getting a little more respect here at the club, and since the bar has finally acceded to my pleas and they now stock Patròn Tequila, I believe the margaritas taste much better - notwithstanding the fact that they cost a little more than ones made with the stuff they pour from that mysterious 'well' behind every commercial bar.

Ever since reading Jacques Futrelle's *The Problem in Cell 13*, I've been hooked on 'locked-room' mysteries, and this situation with Brodini the magician has certainly attracted not only my attention, but also that of most thinking people who watch television.

A little while ago I was involved in another locked-room mystery that took place in the steel-encased panic room of a paranoid rich guy who lived out here on the Peninsula, an exclusive ocean-side neighborhood that adjoins Marina del Rey California, where my yacht is parked - and from where I operate my small law firm, assisted by little Suzi, a 12-½ adorable Chinese computer genius who I let help me out with solutions to my criminal cases. But this one seems a little more intense than the last one,

because here we have a witness who saw the defendant enter the vault, and many other witnesses who watched the defendant commit what looked like crimes on the vault's camera monitors.

The fact that the supposed defendant was nowhere to be found when the authorities entered the bank's vault have no bearing on the matter, other than to raise the question of how he escaped. Legally speaking, either a crime was committed or it wasn't: the defendant's escape or non-escape doesn't erase the fact that a crime may have taken place. All I can say at this point is that the plane ride back to LAX is a pleasant one, and I'm glad I'm not involved in this vault mess. As the matter stands, here's everything I've heard about the case, and it's about the same amount that everyone else in the world knows, with the exception of the Great Brodini. This is an excerpt from a local news reporter's article. She happened to have been on the scene at the time these events took place and also interviewed persons present to prepare her article.

The Great Bank Robbery:

The Great Brodini is a creature of habit. He gets up at the same time each day, calls the

Scharf Limousine Company for a Lincoln Town Car to be sent to his condo building, and after dressing impeccably is driven to his office, or wherever else his career requires that he appear.

On this particular day, Scharf's best driver, Raul Wainer, pulled into the Beverly Hills Wilshire Boulevard underground parking garage beneath Brodini's luxurious condo complex at 8:45 AM, called his client to let him know he was waiting near the elevator, and several minutes later took the magician on a 15-minute drive to the Marina del Rey branch of Myerson Savings & Loan... one of the few lending institutions that is still financially healthy, because it avoided getting involved in the sub-prime lending mess. Jules Beider, the bank's CEO, just *didn't understand* the *new* way that real estate finance worked: He couldn't figure out how to make a profit by making low-interest adjustable-rate mortgage loans to people with no down-payment and no substantial reliable income or other means of making payments when he loans would re-set with new higher rates, on the inflated and over-priced property that they just were not qualified to purchase... but he knows of many other banks that *did understand*

how things worked – and he’s now entering into negotiations to buy one or two of them at their bankruptcy sales.

- - - - -

Brodini goes to this bank several times a month for two reasons: first, he wants to visit his safe-deposit box to either pick up or drop off plans for an illusion he’s working on or updates to the book he’s in the process of writing – and secondly, to drop in at Rottman’s Haberdashery next door to the bank, where he will purchase a new silk tie to wear later that day during whatever luncheon he’s been invited to.

Due to his celebrity status as a popular nightclub act in Las Vegas and many west coast venues, Brodini is afforded some perks, in an attempt to avoid awkward situations that usually crop up whenever people of his fame are thrust in the general populace. One of those perks is being allowed to enter the bank at 9:00 in the morning, when Bryce Chalem the manager opens the front door to go in.

Thanks to this perk, Wainer was allowed to park the Town Car right in front of the

Bank. As usual, their timing was perfect, because just as Brodini got out of the car, he met the manager opening the front door. They both went inside together and Chalem then locked the door behind them, not planning to open it again until 9:30, when the bank's employees would be arriving for the day's work, and also to allow Brodini to exit.

While Wainer waited outside the bank, he sat there grumbling to himself about what he considered to be terrible landscaping around the building. The only reason that Scharf kept him on is because of the well-known secret that Raul always carried a small loaded gun – and Brodini, who was aware of this, enjoyed the additional security. When Wainer wasn't driving, he was exercising his gambling habit, and felt better being armed after frequent large Texas Hold'em winnings at private card games.

Inside the bank, Chalem went to his desk, removed some keys from a drawer, and then changed into his Myerson blazer, a bright green hopsack item bearing the Myerson crest - a required garment for all bank officers. Myerson's founding partner, Jules Beider's father, was a stickler for

formality and his son kept the tradition going. Fancy dressing was always a family trait, and both Beider's wife, and his Cuban mistress appreciated their separate times being out with the generous, big-spending, well-dressed businessman. He loved to spend money on his women.

Chalem and Brodini walked to the rear of the bank, where Chalem used his key to open a lock and slide open a steel gate, a security measure about ten feet from the vault entrance. The time-lock on the vault door allowed it to be opened at 9:10 AM, and when the large thick door was swung open, the manager and the magician both walked into the vault.

Once inside the small 7-foot wide by 20-foot long room, Chalem used another bank key and along with Brodini's key, they opened up the small locked cabinet door behind which was the magician's safe-deposit box. At this time, Brodini made a strange request. "Bryce, I don't think I'll be going into one of the small rooms outside the vault this morning, so if it's okay with you, I'll just stay in here and do my box business. I'll call for you in a while, when it's time for you to come in and lock the box

compartment.”

The manager agreed and Brodini was grateful. So grateful in fact, that he put his arm around Chalem and thanked him for his cooperation over the many months that the box was being used. As the manager was leaving the vault, Brodini shook his hand vigorously and made one other request: “Oh, by the way, since I’ll be staying here in the vault for another few minutes or so, would you please slide the metal gate closed on your way out? I’d rather not have any early-arriving bank employee wander in here while my box is open and some of my magic trick blueprints are out in the open.”

Chalem didn’t mind this second request either, and after leaving the vault, he slammed closed the security gate behind him as he entered the main bank lobby. It locked automatically.

About 20 minutes later, the bank’s security guard was let in the front door, and when he went to his station and turned on the small set of monitors, one of them caught his attention and he called Chalem over to look at it. It was the vault camera, and to their amazement there was a beautiful,

clear view of Brodini holding a ring of keys, and systematically opening one safe-deposit box after another and emptying their contents into a large sack.

Chalem excitedly told the guard to call the police, as he hit the alarm button that automatically notifies the authorities and the FBI, who also investigate crimes against federally chartered institutions. He then rushed to the sliding metal gate, and when reaching into his pocket for the key, he discovered that it was missing. In its place was a small computer-printed note:

Bryce:

Sorry to inconvenience you for a while, but I've got some things to do here in the vault this morning.

Brodini

Chalem then realized that Brodini had picked his pocket earlier, and that now everyone was locked out of the vault until they could get the security gate open again. Towards that end, Chalem called Beider, who tried to get him to relax. "Bryce, take it easy. Brodini may be up to some shenanigans in the vault, but where's he gonna go? He's in the vault now, and the steel gate behind him is locked. Even if he's

got the key, when he tries to unlock it to leave, you'll have a whole squad of police and FBI guys waiting for him. We can't lose with this: there'll be no loss of client assets, and the publicity of us foiling a robbery attempt will enhance our security capability in the mind of the public. It's a win-win for all of us."

The vault camera's image was put up on the large screen monitors placed in various strategic locations around the bank lobby, and the bank employees, police, and FBI were all entertained for while, waiting for the locksmith's crew to arrive and open up the sliding metal gate. The one thing on everyone's mind was 'what the heck is he thinking?' They couldn't figure out why Brodini would risk his career and his freedom with such a dumb stunt. There would be no getting away, no profit from the theft, and nothing left of his career... absolutely no upside. He's got nothing to gain and everything to lose.



It took about a half hour before the vault company's locksmith crew arrived, and then another half hour for them to use welding torches to break through the metal

security gate's lock. When they finally got the metal gate open, the law enforcement people used a bullhorn to communicate with Brodini. "Mister Brodini, this is special agent Wilkinson, with the FBI. We don't want any problems here, and certainly don't want you to be hurt in any way, so please pick up the telephone in the vault so we can discuss your safely coming out of the vault. I'm sure you know there's no getting away from here, so please, let's do it the easy way. No one will be hurt, and we can all leave here safely."

Silence. No response from inside the vault. Everyone looked over towards Chalem, who was sitting behind his desk with the private vault phone extension to his ear. He looked toward the cops and nodded from left to right, indicating that Brodini hadn't picked up the vault phone.

The law enforcement contingent decided that they would rather not rush into the vault. Instead they made arrangements to fire a tear gas grenade into the vault and force Brodini out to them. To avoid the gas affecting people outside the vault, they set up some fans blowing towards the vault door, to keep the gas vapors concentrated inside the vault. As a last result, they tried

to coax Brodini out again with the bullhorn. “Mister Brodini, this is special agent Wilkinson. If you don’t come out of there with your hands in the air, in about 30 seconds we’re going to be firing a tear gas grenade into the vault. I suggest that if you decide to stay in there for a while that you get as close to the ajar vault door so that you won’t be injured with the gas grenade is fired in there.”

Still no response. They looked over to Chalem, and once again he nodded in the negative that the vault phone wasn’t being used.

Bang! The rifle was fired and the grenade flew into the vault. The fans were turned on blowing towards the vault, and even though a small amount of gas seeped out, no one outside the vault was affected by it. The SWAT leader motioned to his crew, and completely covered in their armored uniforms with gas masks on, five of them rushed into the bank vault, guns drawn. A second or two later, we heard the SWAT team’s leader tell the sergeant in the lobby the word that stunned everyone, as it was broadcast on his walky-talky: “Clear!”

Everyone there exchanged looks of amazement as the five SWAT officers came back out of the vault, removing their gas masks and holstering their weapons. They told their sergeant that the bank vault was empty. Brodini was gone. There was no one in there.



That was the end of her article



About the Author

Gene Grossman worked his way through high school, college, and law school as a shoe salesman, welder, process server, bail bondsman, tire changer, saloon piano player and 'extra,' appearing in seven motion pictures. He then spent 20 years as a trial lawyer, during which time he served as Dean of a small local law school, where he also taught several classes.

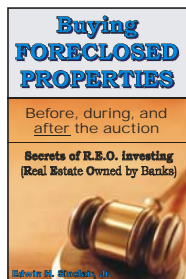
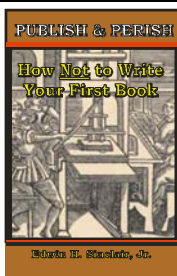
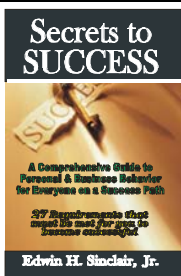
His film & video company produced over fifty special interest DVD titles on everything from boating, to bankruptcy. Now retired from the practice of law, Gene writes aboard his yacht in Marina del Rey.

You can see pictures of Peter Sharp's boats, yellow Hummer, Suzi's e-cart, and Laverne's houseboat at

www.PeterSharpBooks.com

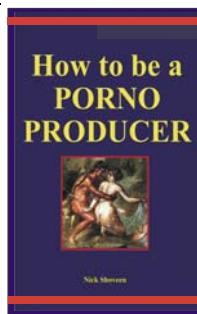
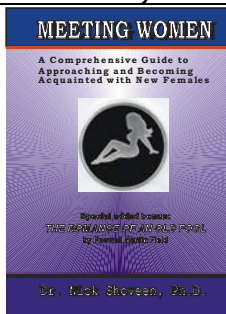
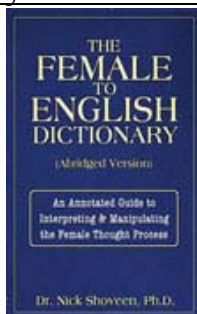
Other books from **MAGIC LAMP PRESS:**

By **EDWIN H. SINCLAIR, Jr.**



*SECRETS TO PERSONAL SUCCESS
PUBLISH & PERISH
BUYING FORECLOSED PROPERTIES*

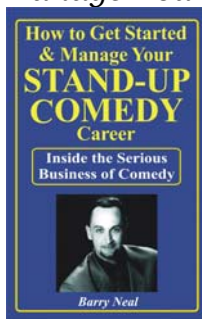
By **Dr. NICK SHOVEEN, Ph.D.**



*The FEMALE-to-ENGLISH DICTIONARY
A GUIDE to MEETING WOMEN
HOW TO BE A PORN PRODUCER*

By **BARRY NEAL**

Get Started & Manage Your Comedy Career



Magic Lamp Press also offers several classic books that are now available for your pleasure.



Full details for all of these books, as well as the entire 10-book set of Peter Sharp Legal Mysteries are at:

www.magiclampdigital.com

Pictures on the next page are of the author working on another book – in his Marina del Rey dinghy, and in Avalon, on Catalina Island.

