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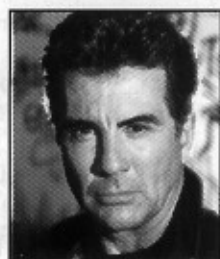


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Up Close with George N. Feder

By T.W. Sell

George N. Feder made a name for himself. Unfortunately it was as one of the top 10 thieves on the eastern seaboard. But, he has changed.

George is a retired jewel thief – “forcibly retired” by the FBI and the State of Florida in 1977. For seven years prior to his grand larceny conviction, he had been a very successful jewel thief. So successful that an FBI agent was once quoted as saying there were only nine other men on the eastern seaboard who could pull off the same heists.

Today, however, George is a successful businessman in Florida, operating a security consulting firm. His advice is good, too. Especially if you manage a high-rise facility. That’s because for seven years, he made high-rise condominiums and executive residences his target.

The Queens, N.Y., native would strike during the day when most people were thinking about grocery shopping, little league games and office politics – not burglaries.

In addition to catching his victims off guard, he used quick wit, intuition and meticulous lock-picking skills to defeat any security system he faced. For George, crime did pay. He drove nice cars, wore the finest suits and ate at the most renowned restaurants.

He soon began to enjoy the excitement more than the payoff. After all, a life of crime was all he ever knew.

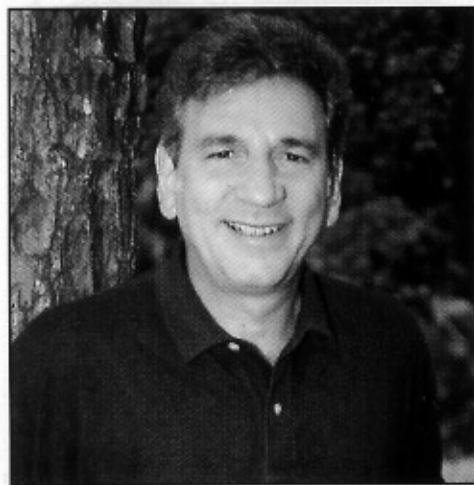
“I grew up in a neighborhood in Queens where everyone knew everyone else,” he said. “People involved in organized crime were around all the time and I didn’t know any different.

“Still, there were many opportunities for a young man there, legit and criminal, but I didn’t even know bookmaking (gambling) was illegal until I was 19.”

After a brief stint in the Army, George attended Northwestern State Teacher’s College in Oklahoma and received a sociology degree during the 1960s.

“Growing up, I always wanted the lifestyle that goes with all types of crime, but I also enjoyed school,” he said.

He owned a restaurant/bar in New York City on the corner where his neighbor was famed comedian Rodney Dangerfield. Although the bar did very well, George turned to crime anyway.



George Feder will soon join the America's Most Wanted Staff.

“I enjoyed the lifestyle of a criminal, such as a jewel thief,” he said. “I liked the money and no amount of it was ever enough. I enjoyed being what I thought was a big-shot. I loved being a burglar, it was a high.”

George began learning to pick locks through a friend who was a professional burglar. His friend would buy several types of door locks from a hardware store and mount them onto a piece of wood in order to practice picking locks. George watched him practice occasionally and eventually talked his friend into allowing him to try.

“I was very successful in picking locks right away and was very fascinated,” George said. “I guess that’s what got me into becoming a jewel thief, fascination with the skill and discipline needed to be successful. But the money and recognition were the biggest motivator.”

George began his career as a full-time, professional jewel thief in 1970. That’s when he sold his bar and moved to Florida to start his criminal operations.

His monthly columns in *Manhunter* often feature burglaries he performed as well as his advice concerning what people could have done to stop him.

After years of hard work by law enforcement, George was eventually caught. In 1975, he was caught with picks in his pockets, but he still got off. He was released on a technicality and fled to avoid the heat. That made it a national case and the FBI became involved.

George spent one year in California and

another in Illinois before police finally nabbed him as he returned to Florida to visit his parents.

Facing 11 counts of burglary, he plea bargained and was sentenced in 1977 to 15 years in prison. They offered him less if he would become an informant, he declined. He still thought of himself as a tough guy and a hero, he said.

He served about nine years in various Florida and federal prisons until being released in 1988. “I wasn’t rehabilitated in prison, nobody ever is. I just knew I didn’t want to go back.”

But the world he faced upon his release wasn’t that kind, either.

He lived with his aging parents in Clearwater, Fla. Parole officers allowed him not to work for a year so he could care for his mother, who had Alzheimer’s, and his father, who was fighting Lou Gehrig’s Disease.

When he started job hunting, he also found that society had few opportunities for a convict. He found work telemarketing, but it took two more years before he received the help he needed through a 12-step program.

This is when, he said, he first began learning all the things he should have learned as a child; treating other people the way you want to be treated, respecting yourself, quelling desires and looking to the future instead of seeking immediate gratification.

“Now, thanks to a lot of good people, I have a second chance. I’m 51-years-old and starting all over again,” he said.

“I hope people can use my experiences and knowledge to help keep themselves from becoming victims from people like who I used to be.

“I also hope to help prevent young people from going to prison. Troubled kids need help to change and stay out of prison.”

In addition to becoming a columnist for *Manhunter*, writing his autobiography and running a consulting firm, George will soon be making a name for himself in front of a camera other than one made for police mug shots. George soon begins his stint as a reporter on “America’s Most Wanted: America Fights Back.” He will provide readers with tips on avoiding crooks. After all, it takes one to know one. At least a former one. 