

DRAGNET IN THE DESERT

Danny Ray Horning set off Arizona's biggest manhunt ever

THEY WERE BRITISH, THEY WERE VISITING America on the Fourth of July, and perhaps they should have expected a little good-natured ribbing. This was not it. Sally Edmonds and Caroline Young were sitting in their rented Nissan Sentra near a scenic overlook in Grand Canyon National Park, when they noticed a slight man standing beside the car. "I'm Danny Ray Horning," he said calmly, pointing a .44 magnum revolver at them. "And I want you to take me out of the park."

With that, Edmonds and Young, both 27-year-old medical school graduates from Birmingham, England, were suddenly at the heart of the biggest manhunt in Arizona history. Before it ended, the 55-day quest for Danny Ray Horning had involved some 350 law enforcement personnel from 18 different agencies, tracking dogs and helicopters. Horning, a fit 33, learned about outdoor survival growing up near Winslow, in northern Arizona. One of 10 children of a Pentecostal minister and a homemaker, Horning said his dramatic flight was inspired by Charles Bronson's 1981 movie, *Death Hunt*. Indeed, during the chase, Horning took on aspects of a folk hero, in spite of the fact that he was on the lam from the Arizona State Prison, where he had been

During the search, a member of the FBI's SWAT team scanned a trailhead for the crafty escapee.



JOHN T. BARR/GAMMA-LIAISON(2)



▲ Roadblocks in the park caused monster traffic jams on July 4.

▲ Danny Ray Horning (right) was nicknamed Rambo by admirers.

serving four consecutive life sentences for kidnapping, assault, bank robbery and burglary. Almost everywhere, he played the dangerous-but-charming master bandit with aplomb.

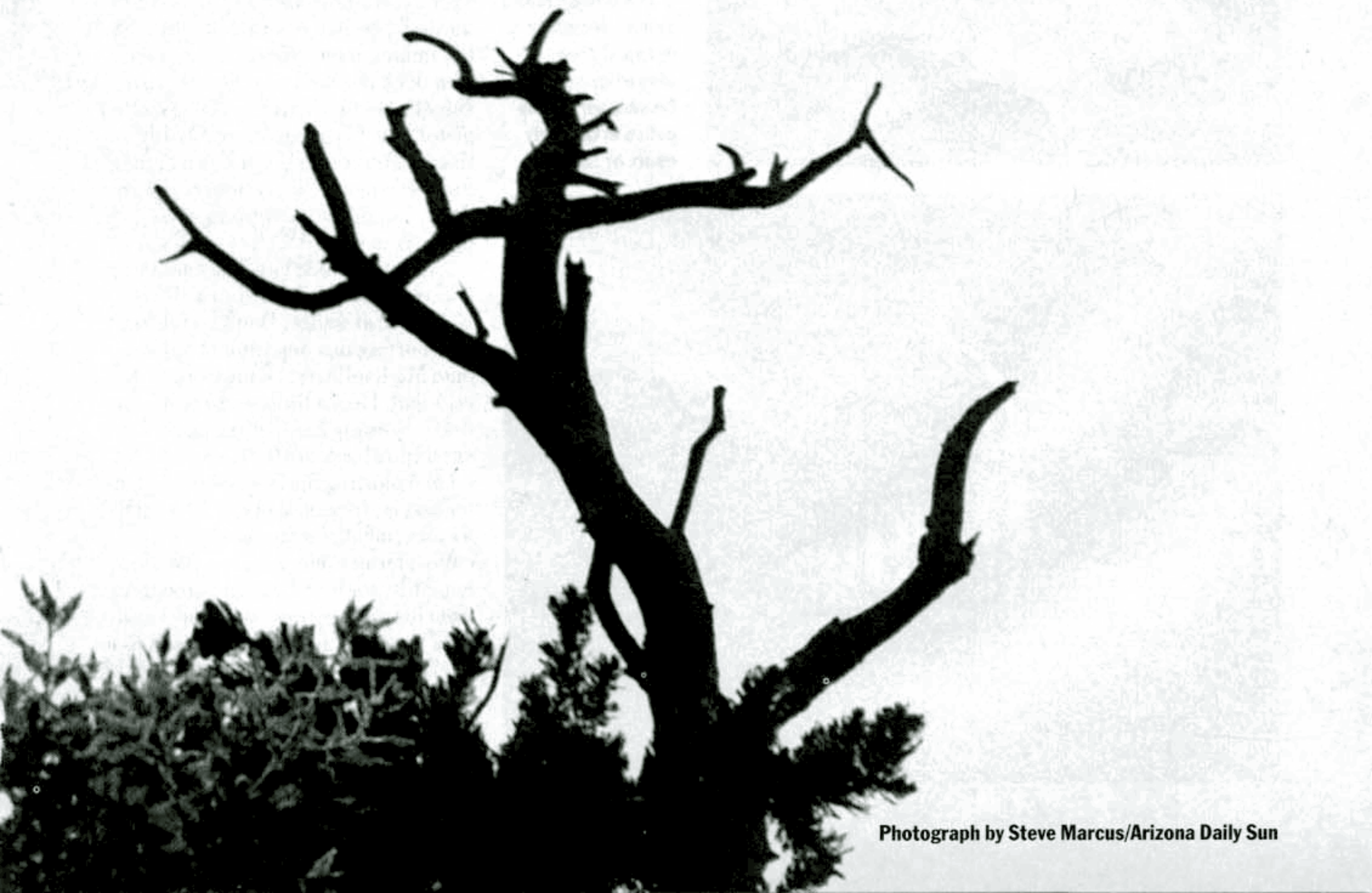
With cool assurance, Horning directed the women out of the park through two police roadblocks. Stopped at the second, the fugitive was calm while his hostages trembled. "Anything wrong, officer?" Horning asked. The officer waved them

through, saying, "Have a nice day."

Forty-five miles away, Horning ordered the hostages out of the car. All he needed, he explained, was their car and time to escape. The women discovered that they had been lightly bound, untied themselves and found help. Horning, meanwhile, was again on the loose.

In May, Horning had almost as casually strolled out of the state penitentiary

at Florence, Ariz., after disguising himself as a medic. Robbing a Tucson bank of \$2,300—a bicycle served as his getaway vehicle—he then hid out in the rugged Blue Ridge Reservoir area of northern Arizona. On June 2, Horning introduced himself to Britton Scalf, 18, and two friends near Payson, Ariz., and paid them to buy him some provisions. When he noticed Forest Service rangers scouting him out, Horning melted into the woods. "I



Photograph by Steve Marcus/Arizona Daily Sun

don't want to say this," says Scalf, "but he was a really nice guy." Scalf was fascinated by Horning's talk of the military. "He said he was [in the] Special Forces. He could live on nothing in the woods." In fact, Horning's brother Rodney said, Danny Ray was just a tank mechanic with no special Army training. "He's just smarter than all those people looking for him."

Danny Ray, who had become the object of a statewide search, burglarized empty houses for food and weapons. Often he left cheerful missives behind. One note said: "Thanks for the use of your home! You can tell the cops to send my backpack to my folks' house. And stop following me."

By late June, Horning had begun abducting hostages. Kathryn Falk and

Adam Lakritz were forced to drive him from Flagstaff into the Grand Canyon park, where he booked a room at the exclusive El Tovar Hotel. "He was very hungry and ordered room service right away," says reservation clerk Deidre Aitken, who gave the trio a \$151-a-night room. "He said, 'Could I have a hamburger, french fries, soda?' Then he said, 'No, I'm going to go for it. I'm going to have a T-bone steak, New York strip steak and baked potato.' I think he ordered wine too."

The next day Horning attempted to kidnap a family of four, but when their son screamed, the bandit bolted. Later, recognized by rangers, he was chased. Slipping into the woods, he walked in figure eights to confuse bloodhounds. Police rescued his origi-

nal hostages and found an audiotape and note in the car. They outlined Horning's plan to abduct victims, collect \$1 million in ransom and secure the release of his brother Jerry, 40, serving a 29-year sentence for child molestation. After another failed kidnapping, Horning decided it was time to leave. On July 4 he found his British exit visas—Edmonds and Young.

By then—despite the checkpoint goof-ups—the dragnet was closing. After tying up Edmonds and Young, Horning was spotted on Interstate 17 by a policeman. Horning fired a shot at the cop from the stolen Nissan and swerved into an embankment. Fleeing on foot, he traversed 9½ miles of rock cliffs and streams into Oak Creek Canyon. But it was exhausting. At about 10 P.M. on July 4, Barry and Jo Ann Campbell, who live near Oak Creek, noticed a man behind their garage, slurping water from a garden hose. His hair matted with sweat, his speech slurred with fatigue, Horning identified himself as a lost hiker. Barry pointed him to the trailhead, while Jo Ann, who recognized him, grabbed a pistol and dialed 911.

The search intensified, and shortly after 2 A.M., a bloodhound named Judy howled. She had scented her prey. Six law enforcement officers descended on a deck perched on a nearby hillside. Beneath, curled up with a loaded pistol, was Horning. Darrel Welsh, a Border Patrol agent, put a gun to the fugitive's head. "If you move, you're dead," said Welsh. Horning gave up without a word.

"I'm just a nice guy," Horning later told reporters, trying to burnish his Robin Hood image. Don't be fooled, said corrections department spokesman Michael Arra: "This is a low-life criminal. He's a little sleazebag." Indeed, Horning has a criminal record stretching back to 1979, was convicted of molesting his 5-year-old daughter and is suspected of the 1990 dismemberment of a Stockton, Calif., catfish farmer. Horning has pleaded not guilty to the 12 charges stemming from his most recent adventures and says he views his return to prison as a challenge, not a defeat. "I enjoyed the hell out of it," Horning said of his escape. "Gotta do it again."

■ ALEX PRUD'HOMME

■ WENDY BLACK in northern Arizona

◀ A suspicious Jo Ann and Barry Campbell discovered Horning behind their garage near Oak Creek and called the police.

▼ The Denton family look over their redwood deck, where Horning was finally cornered by police in the early hours of July 5.



JOHN T. BARR/GAMMA-LIAISON



DAVE CRUZ/MESA TRIBUNE