

Getting Robbed

What Happens Next - 06.02.2023

Larry Bernstein:

Welcome to What Happens Next. My name is Larry Bernstein. What Happens Next is a podcast which covers economics, finance, and crime.

Today's Topic is I Got Robbed in Midtown.

Last Friday night, my wife was out of town, and I went out for dinner at the restaurant Flemings by Bilboquet on 62nd and Madison in NYC. I dined with very close friends, a married couple and the husband is the president of a major public company. It was a beautiful night, and I requested that we sit outside on the street in one of those outdoor dining facilities built during COVID.

After paying the bill, we left the restaurant at 10:15 pm and walked West towards Madison. As soon as we got up, motorcycles approached the restaurant, and three men raced towards us. I didn't even notice their presence until they were about a foot behind us. Then they grabbed my friend. I said "Hey!" and one of them tossed me into the street, where I landed on my back. I jumped up and ran into Madison Avenue screaming "Help! Help!" at the top of my lungs. So loud that I am still hoarse four days later.

The attackers turned heel and left within a few seconds of the attack. They never touched my friend's wife. The sole focus of the assault was my friend who they took down to the ground. When the attackers left, my friend asked me, "are you okay?" I said "yea, what the hell was that?"

About 30 people approached us. Patrons seated at Amaranth Restaurant across the street came over. So did the doorman at the apartment building across the street, as well as others strolling down Madison. One woman called 911 when she heard my screams.

The first person to greet us at the scene was an ex-Marine. He said it was a good thing that they jumped us and not him, because he would have been killed one of them. I believe him. The marine asked, "did they steal your watch?"

My friend looked at his wrist and with surprise said yes.

"Did it have a spring release watch band?"

Yup.

The police arrived a few minutes later. They asked us a bunch of questions.

“What was the race of the attackers?”

“Dunno, they wore motorcycle helmets.”

“What were they wearing?”

“They wore white motorcycle full body suits. They were pretty fashionable, actually.”

“Were they men or women?”

“They gotta be men because one guy tossed me on my ass with little effort.”

“So, it was inconclusive on gender.”

Did they say anything?

Nope, they never spoke a word?

Did they steal anything?

Yes, an expensive watch.

“Do you think this was an attempted kidnapping?”

“Nah, they took the watch and kidnappings are rare and robberies are common.”

A fellow from London who had been sitting next to us at the restaurant told us that when the motorcycles parked, he knew there would be trouble, so he videotaped the whole event on his iPhone.

The cops also got a video from a security camera from the apartment building across the street. Later that evening, my friend met with a detective who placed the watch’s serial number on the nation’s stolen watch list that is given to all pawn dealers and jewelers.

Our first speaker today is Arnette Heintze who worked in law enforcement and the Secret Service where he worked the detail protecting Presidents Bush and Clinton where he was

awarded the US Secret Service Valor Award for heroism. Arnette operated for 15 years Hillard Heintze which is a security and investigative firm used by many of the country's largest firms. I want to learn from Arnette, what happened last Friday night? Why were we robbed and attacked in one of the nicest and wealthiest parts of NYC with dozens of people in the near vicinity? Is this the new reality, and what can we do to protect ourselves?

In a previous episode of What Happens Next, I did a podcast on kidnapping rich executives. When the attackers grabbed my friend, I thought it was an abduction.

I am going to replay highlights of my previous interview with Tom Sancton who is the author of the book *The Last Baron: The Paris Kidnapping that Brought Down an Empire*. The book is fabulous, and it tells the true story of a targeted kidnapping of one of France's leading industrialists.

Buckle up.

Arnette, welcome back to the podcast.

Arnette Heintze:

Larry, It's great to be back. I'm very sorry to hear about the encounter that you had in New York City with your friend.

In New York City alone, there's been a significant rise in robberies for expensive watches. During the height of COVID in 2020, there were 941 reported cases to NYPD for watches stolen of \$25,000 and greater. That number is on the rise. In 2021, 1,242 robberies for watches. In 23, they don't have statistics out on that yet, but I bet you it's above 1500 to 1800 of these cases. Now, during times of economic hardship and especially recessions, you're gonna see crime increase. If you go back to the great recession of 07 to 09, there was a 10% increase in robberies in the country. And then in high urban areas like New York City, that number scaled up upwards of 15%.

Larry Bernstein:

This assault was executed by professional thieves. They staked us out, never spoke, stole the watch and then escaped. This isn't about recessions.

Arnette Heintze:

Even with organized crime, there tends to be an increase in their effort during desperate economic times. You and your friends were at a very nice restaurant in Midtown. It's not uncommon for criminals to target high net worth individuals. They could pay a bounty to a waiter, to a busboy, to a hostess, somebody in a restaurant. And if that individual calls and says,

“Hey, I've got a customer in here with a watch, you might like to know about,” they'll get a little vig for calling their buddies.

Larry Bernstein:

The motorcyclists were clearly tipped off about the watch and when we were leaving the restaurant. Maybe there was a scout or it was an inside job. It makes the pre-employment verification process critical, even for short-term jobs.

Arnette Heintze:

Yeah, that's a good point. Not just for restaurants, Larry, but also business in general. Organizations want to be able to hire with confidence and manage their insider risk. As part of the pre-employment process for any size business, you can find a service that can provide a cost-efficient background investigation, pre-employment check. You're looking for elements in the subject's history that would relate to their character, their integrity and ethics, and make some determination.

The Fair Credit Reporting Act, the EEOC and other federal and state oversight agencies require there to be a nexus to the reason you're gonna not hire somebody based on a criminal conviction. If you're looking for somebody trustworthy, you're looking for conviction information like robberies, burglaries, thefts of that nature.

Larry Bernstein:

How are we supposed to give ex-cons a chance?

Arnette Heintze:

Look, everybody can make a mistake in life, especially somebody young. I do believe in the concept of forgiveness, but how do you bring that person into an environment and protect your business? You really gotta focus on the individual, what their record is and the job that you're placing them in, and the level of trust and access to your valuables. How about the men and women invited into your home to work for you. That's really critical as well.

Larry Bernstein:

During the assault, I ran into Madison Avenue and was screaming help. 30 people converged on us from nearby restaurants, pedestrians, and the doormen across the street. What is the role of the public in protecting the streets? The police didn't show up for several minutes. We often hear about public indifference, but this certainly was not the case here.

Arnette Heintze:

It's heartwarming to hear that 30 individuals responded to your plea for help. Of the 30 people that responded, I guarantee you there would've been a couple that would've jumped into action had you needed it at the time of the physical assault. So that's the good story there.

Larry Bernstein:

The first person at that scene was an ex-Marine.

Arnette Heintze:

Just remember they're never x . It's always a Marine.

Larry Bernstein:

He was a Marine, and he said he was ready to kick-ass.

Arnette Heintze:

I do believe a veteran is gonna respond a little bit quicker than average employee on Wall Street for sure. People get appalled by criminal activity and want a safer America. So that will typically get people to act.

Larry Bernstein:

I was shocked by how much video evidence that the police collected with minutes of the assault. But the robbers were clever, they hid behind their outfits and helmets. These professional thieves seemed prepared for the cameras.

Arnette Heintze:

Well, what the NYPD will do is they'll take a look at other similar crimes. So with the network of highly sophisticated cameras in New York City, they're gonna have some success in tracking that. They also use analytics and artificial intelligence to scour the footage across Manhattan. Your friend, how was he dressed?

Larry Bernstein:

Totally non-descript. He was wearing the standard Friday night uniform. He wore brown khaki pants, a white polo shirt with short sleeves and a tan sports coat. Nothing flashy. I sat next to him at dinner for two hours and never noticed his watch.

Arnette Heintze:

The way you described how he was dressed, then he was probably targeted by somebody in the restaurant, whether it was a busboy, waiter, waitress, hostess, because if he wasn't in an impeccable, tailored, really expensive looking clothing, then the subjects that arrived on the bikes came because they were called.

Larry Bernstein:

The motorcycles arrived two seconds after we stood up.

Arnette Heintze:

Yeah. There are spotters out there that are part of these groups that are looking for that couple that are sporting expensive jewelry, clothing. The high-end restaurants, and they'll wait till the moment of opportunity when they're coming out. When you see an individual carrying a \$30,000 handbag and watches and jewelry. With the increase of crime that we're seeing in urban areas across America, it's not just New York City. You look at what's going on in Chicago today, San Francisco, crime is certainly impacting more and more of us every day.

Larry Bernstein:

What I found shocking was that we were walking in one of the richest zip codes in the country, at a reasonable hour with lots of people walking around. Should we reconsider where and when to walk around NYC?

Arnette Heintze:

That's such a difficult question to answer. Be aware of your surroundings. In the situation that you just summarized on your incident, you've made that analysis. You're going to a nice upscale restaurant in Midtown, why wouldn't that be safe? And it just goes to show that crimes of opportunity, where somebody could take a watch and sell it. They're willing to take that chance.

Larry Bernstein:

I've never been involved in an incident like this before. What happened? Why were they so focused on my friend and why did they toss me into the street?

Arnette Heintze:

I guarantee you those three guys, two of 'em decided we're gonna take the watch. You serve as a lookout to interfere with somebody approaching. It was probably something as simple as that. And here you are, the first one to make an effort to respond. He's gonna get you out of the action.

Larry Bernstein:

Do you think they were carrying a gun? Was the situation very dangerous?

Arnette Heintze:

There's no way of speculating on that. My instincts would say thieves are thieves and if they get caught, they're willing to pay the time for stealing, but carrying the weapon is a different story. It really enhances the time in incarceration. I would say the fact that they didn't pull a weapon, they

just did it with brute force because they didn't need a weapon. They knew they could get the watch off in 15 seconds.

Larry Bernstein:

It was less than that. The whole thing was over in like five seconds.

Arnette Heintze:

Yeah. So, five seconds it's off and they're gone.

Larry Bernstein:

After the five second assault my friend asked me if I was okay? And we did an inventory. Yeah, I guess I am. What happened here? We were completely puzzled. I noticed after two minutes I saw that my leg was shaking, I was scared and upset. I didn't sleep well that night. I am still in shock. How do people who get involved in street crime adjust?

Arnette Heintze:

It plays on your mind. I was in a law enforcement, mostly in the secret service for most of my career. 27 years I spent in various law enforcement roles. And then I opened a security risk management business that I've built over 17 years. I currently have a pre-employment background screening service, so I'm still in that space.

My home in the early eighties was burglarized. It was probably kids in the neighborhood. But that little invasion, it's a personal assault. So somebody's attacked on the street and has a physical encounter with robbers, that certainly is gonna weigh on your mind.

It's normal to think what if? But as time goes on, you're gonna get more comfortable. However, your senses are gonna change from this point forward. Every time you go out to a restaurant in New York, you're gonna be thinking, okay, how do I play this? Just from my experience, when I go into a restaurant, I'm very selective about the table. I select my back against the wall so there's a sense of awareness of everything that could possibly come your way.

Larry Bernstein:

In the moment and immediately afterwards, I thought this might be a kidnapping, because they grabbed my friend. They didn't care about his wife or me. How rare are kidnappings of rich executives?

Arnette Heintze:

Let's just paint it as the risk and threats related to business leaders, especially those leading public companies. Criminal activity has targeted some of our nation's most prominent individuals, you'll run the gamut from Zuckerberg to Musk. In 2023, Bill Ackman's home was

burglarized and significant cash or valuables were obtained from that. He wasn't there, but high-profile individuals oftentimes don't leave people at their home to protect it when they're gone. And frankly, that's a little bit of protection 101, where you wanna always maintain some level of security around the home base, even if it's just one person on a shift. If you're a high net worth individual and you have really expensive items in your home, then you might wanna think about that or either make sure you got enough insurance that you just don't care about it.

Larry Bernstein:

How sophisticated are these professional criminals?

Arnette Heintze:

In most cases, they're not thinking of the bigger picture. They're typically not that sophisticated, and they typically look for opportunistic endeavors where they can score quick and get out. If you get hit by a true professional that has gone through the extra effort of covering their tracks, the case will probably never be solved. But fortunately, most of the people that endeavor into this criminal activity has pretty limited intellectual capability to figure all those steps out. They're opportunistic.

Larry Bernstein:

I do not carry cash; I don't wear any jewelry or a watch. Am I still a target?

Arnette Heintze:

If somebody were to attack you and with the intention of robbery, they're gonna get your phone. There's a lot of robberies that are done just for the phones.

Larry Bernstein:

I have a few friends who hire ex-cops to drive them around. Until a couple of days ago, I thought they were over doing it, now I am not so sure. How should my very wealthy friends who are most at risk protect themselves and their family?

Arnette Heintze:

That's a great question because I do see the rise in protective services for high net worth families. Just the simple idea of having a driver that's a retired police officer that can carry a weapon that can provide a certain level of protection. You increase the level of protection when you not only hire the driver, but you hire somebody to ride in what security professionals call the right front seat, which would be considered the detail leader. And when you put an advanced agent at the site, you've got eyes and ears on the ground at the location that you're coming. If it's a restaurant, that person has already coordinated with the hostess and they've got your table waiting for you.

So, when you arrive, there's no waiting, there's no checking in, your advanced agent has it all worked out that you just walk you to the table. Or if you're going to a New York office building, oftentimes security at the high-rise buildings will cooperate with protective details and they'll have an elevator on hold for the individual. So, arriving on site, you've got an advanced agent there, and you walk straight to the elevator and up. Doesn't mean you're a hundred percent protected, but it does reduce the risk and threats and vulnerabilities against you individually.

Larry Bernstein:

Where I live in Miami Beach, some of my neighbors have built fortresses with really high walls, others have easy access from the street. What would you recommend?

Arnette Heintze:

It's the reality of America, right? That's Leave It to Beaver living, where everybody knows everybody up and down the street. Kids and people can just walk into the neighbor's yards, and that's not the case in all neighborhoods today. Making sure that you have a home that's protected physically with barriers, with fences, with lighting, with proper placement of landscaping. I'll take you back to a crime I worked in the early eighties. It was a serial rapist who targeted attractive females. He'd pick the woman first, but then he'd follow them to their home. And their home had to fit a profile, meaning there had to be good ground coverage, there had to be minimal lighting, and there had to be a way that he could visualize himself getting into the house. Over the course of three years, this guy raped 82 men, women and children in 110 residential armed robberies and all across America. So, criminals have different things that drive their m.o.

Larry Bernstein:

What are you optimistic about?

Arnette Heintze:

I'm very optimistic. So the good news is, I think that most of this impacts a minimal amount of people in America. We've gotta think about our criminal justice system and what happens when individuals are arrested and convicted of these crimes. I think there's a leniency in this country on putting people in jail, and I think that's gotta change. That's making sure we have crimes and sentences that fit. We're less lenient on individuals, especially that have repeated offenses. We just have to have the will and the fortitude to see that through.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Arnette.

When my friends and I were attacked in front of Bibloquet's Fleming Restaurant, I initially thought it was a kidnapping. I am confused why wealthy people are attacked for their jewels but

not abducted for ransom. In Europe, kidnappings were common in the 1970s and I thought it would be useful to review this history.

Our second speaker on this podcast is Tom Scanton who is the author of the book *The Last Baron: The Paris Kidnapping that Brought Down an Empire*. This interview with Tom is a classic from our What Happens Next Archive and I think you will be shocked about how this kidnapping of Wado went awry for everyone concerned.

Tom, please begin with your six minutes of opening remarks.

Thomas Sancton:

On the morning of January 23rd, 1978, Baron Édouard Empain was snatched off the street in front of his home in Paris. The kidnappers promptly cut off his little finger and sent it to the family along with a ransom note demanding about \$70 million. They threatened to send other body parts unless the money was paid immediately.

The French press went ballistic and called it *The Kidnapping of the Century*. There had been dozens of other kidnappings in Europe during the 1970's, the so-called, "Decade of Lead." What made this one special? The identity of the victim and the importance of his industrial empire. The Empain-Schneider group was a sprawling multinational comprising 175 companies ranging from transport, banking, to steel making, armaments, and most important, nuclear energy. It was central to French economic and security interests. So, who was Baron Empain?

Édouard Empain, Wado to his friends, was the 40-year-old grandson of the company's legendary founder. Empain was tall, athletic, and movie-star handsome. He was rich, drove fancy cars, lived in a chateau, and vacationed on the Riviera. But he had two flaws: a weakness for high-stakes gambling and women. During his 63-day incarceration, scandalous details about his private life leaked out into the press, doing permanent damage to his reputation, and ultimately triggering his downfall. The arc of Empain's fall has an aspect of Greek tragedy. It's also a multifaceted saga spanning three generations, and featuring a cast of fascinating characters. The first Baron Empain was a self-made man built on railroads, energy, finance, and civil engineering. His exploits included the building of the Paris Metro, railroad construction, gold mining in the Congo, and the creation of a city on the Egyptian Desert, Heliopolis, "the City of the Sun." His achievements led the Belgian King, Leopold II, to ennoble him with the Baron's title, and a freshly minted coat of arms.

When the first Baron died in 1929, he was one of the world's wealthiest men. The founder's eldest son, Jean Empain nicknamed Johnny, inherited the Baron's title, and his command over the Empain industrial empire. Handsome and charming, Johnny was a hedonistic playboy who preferred cruising around the world on his yacht, and throwing wild parties in his chateau, to

minding the office. Johnny was a boozier, a gambler, and a serial womanizer who counted Josephine Baker among his many conquests.

But the woman he finally fell for was an American exotic dancer from Columbus, Ohio, Rösel Roland. Her specialty was dancing nude, covered only by a thin coat of gold paint, hence her nickname, Goldie. Johnny married her in 1937 after she gave birth to a son, Édouard aka Wado, the one who would later be kidnapped. Johnny and Goldie lived the high life, throwing extravagant Gatsby-like parties at their chateau, and hobnobbing with Europe's rich and famous. During the war, Johnny's guest list included high-ranking Nazi officers, with whom he maintained a cozy relationship throughout the occupation. At war's end, he was investigated for collaboration, but fled the country and died of cancer before he could be tried.

Another fascinating character was the head kidnapper, Alain Caillol.

Caillol had been born into a wealthy family but turned to a life of crime as an act of revolt against his strict father. Caillol was educated at posh boarding schools and nurtured a passion for books and grand opera. After an early career as a burglar and bank robber, he organized a motley band of thugs and misfits with the aim of kidnapping a high-profile figure and holding them for ransom. Wado was then at the apogee of his career, a self-proclaimed master of the universe, whose image as a super-rich capitalist made him an obvious target for the left-leaning Caillol and his band.

While researching this book, I had the good fortune to enlist Caillol as a key source. Now 80 years old, a free man after spending decades in prison, Caillol told me the inside story about how his gang carried out the kidnapping, along with the fly-on-the-wall details about Wado's long incarceration in a freezing stone quarry. He also provided a first-person account of the shootout with police that left him wounded and a fellow kidnapper dead when they came to collect the ransom.

Caillol's arrest led to Wado's release and set in motion the manhunt that finally netted his eight co-conspirators. But for Wado, it was anything but a happy ending. Because of the revelations about his private life, he emerged from his long captivity as damaged goods, lost his family and his control over the Empain group.

Within a few years, the industrial empire built by his grandfather was spun off in bits and pieces, and the Empain name disappeared. Wado never kicked the gambling habit, and it ruined him. When he died in 2018 at the age of 80, he was practically penniless. As I wrote in the preface, this is a cautionary tale about a man who threw caution to the wind. That's my six minutes.

Larry Bernstein:

We don't hear stories of kidnappings in the US and Europe today. Wado is kidnapped in 1978 and this was part of a pattern of kidnappings?

Thomas Sancton:

The 1970s were riddled with kidnappings, especially in Europe: Italy, Germany, France. In the US, the Petty Hearst kidnapping was a year or two before the Empain kidnapping. The Getty kidnapping. Hanns Martin Schleyer in Germany was the head of the employer's association in Germany, very powerful industrialist. He was kidnapped and assassinated by the Red Brigades. You had two different kinds of kidnapping. There was the ideological kidnapping anti-capitalist, radical left kidnapping, and there was the kidnapping for money. Schleyer was the radical political kidnapping. So was Aldo Moro, former prime minister of Italy kidnapped by the Red Brigades and assassinated.

When Empain was kidnapped, the police assumed that it was political because he was a high-profile industrialist. It was only after the ransom note was received that it was for money.

Larry Bernstein:

The kidnapers get no ransom. One is killed in a police shootout and the others go to prison for decades. Is Wado the end of the run of kidnappings because it's perceived not to be worth the effort?

Thomas Sancton:

Wado's ransom was not paid, his kidnapers were foiled, one killed, one badly wounded, and the others tried and jailed. The French police considered that an end to the spate of kidnappings in France because it just showed it wouldn't pay. The police chief Ottavioli had this absolutely no ransom approach to kidnappings.

Larry Bernstein:

The police chief has this ingenious plan to arrest one of the kidnapers and then subsequently exchange the criminal for Wado. Tell us about this unconventional idea.

Thomas Sancton:

Pierre Ottavioli, a legendary figure in his own right, his plan was to lure the kidnapers to a rendezvous and to grab at least one of them and hold him as a hostage. Ottavioli assigned a Eurasian martial arts master to immobilize the kidnapers with his bare hands.

When the martial arts expert stopped his car along the highway where he was supposed to meet the kidnapers, a tow truck pulled up behind him onto the emergency lane. Thought he needed to have a tow. And he got out of the car to wave him off, and then all of a sudden, two of the

kidnapper's leap over a wall, jump in the car, start the engine and take off with the fake ransom in the trunk.

And they were immediately set upon by police. Ottavioli had set this ambush to grab one of these guys and hold him hostage. There was a huge shoot out. One of them was killed. The other head kidnapper Alain Caillol was badly wounded. He became the hostage.

The police said if anything happened to Wado, he would've been held responsible, and France still had capital punishment by the guillotine. They put enough pressure on him to make a phone call and have Wado released.

Larry Bernstein:

How did they come to choose Wado as their kidnapping victim?

Thomas Sancton:

He was an easy target because he had very regular habits. They knew where he lived. His fancy apartment building on Avenue Foch was parallel to a service road. And they figured a way to trap him in that narrow service road.

Larry Bernstein:

The police response to Wado's kidnapping was mind boggling. The police literally closed off the city using roadblocks searching for Wado. Why did the French do this?

Thomas Sancton:

The Empain-Schneider Group employed 150,000 people and was central to French economic and security interests.

There was a panic. Leftist kidnapping and terrorist strikes were taking place. The then president, Giscard d'Estaing, who was a personal friend of Empain, was concerned because he was facing parliamentary elections in a couple months. And the leftist coalition led by François Mitterrand was threatening to gain a majority in that election. They had to make every effort to find Empain, put a stop to this, and make a show of force.

This motivated Giscard to order one of the biggest manhunts in French history.

Larry Bernstein:

There is a conflict of interest between the family and the state. The family wants Wado back. The state wants to end kidnappings for the future and is willing to risk Wado's death. Describe the conflict of interest on whether to pay the ransom.

Thomas Sancton:

The days immediately following the kidnapping there was tension between the police position, which was no ransom, and the family's position. The family wanted to pay. The family members didn't know the state of Wado's finances. Most of his fortune was in stock. They couldn't pay the equivalent to \$70 million today.

What happened was the kidnapers, during phone exchanges, they said, "You have the money?" And he said, "I have \$30 million. And they said, "No, it's \$80 million." And they said, "I'm sorry all we have is \$30 million. That's a lotta money. You can have it." And the guy on the phone said, "Tomorrow morning, you'll have a cadaver," and he hung up the phone. And that was the end of the attempt to pay the ransom, or part of the ransom. And from that point the police position of no ransom payment prevailed.

Larry Bernstein:

Wado is held naked, chained by the neck to a wall in a damp and freezing cave with a bucket to piss in. The Press have Wado on the front page every day with new revelations leaked by the Police about his multi-million-dollar gambling debts and his mistresses. You can't make this stuff up.

How could the police have violated their duty to leak this personal information to the press in his most vulnerable moments. This is gross.

Thomas Sancton:

That's an excellent question. I was able to get to five of the police detectives involved in this case, and one who had had his fingers in every aspect of it. He claims that they didn't intentionally leak.

There were 80 detectives involved in the investigation. The press had a press office in the police headquarters at the time, so there was this fraternization between journalists and police officers. They go out have a meal together and talk. And so probably in this unofficial, unintended, unfortunate way, some of these details just kind of leaked.

Larry Bernstein:

New Topic, the Pinky. Wado's kidnapers sent the police the top joint of his pinky in a formaldehyde solution within hours of the kidnapping. In the Getty kidnapping, they sent his ear. Why the body mutilation when you can send a photo with him holding that day's newspaper?

Thomas Sancton:

Well, when I asked the kidnapper Caillol that question, he said that they had made a game plan right from the beginning, how they'd grab him, where they'd take him, how they'd watch over him in this tunnel, the ransom and to cut off the tip of his little finger.

I asked him why they did that, and it was not to prove that they had him, identification. He said, "the stun effect." They wanted to stun the police, the family, the group, and show they meant business. It was to get their attention and show that they were ruthless. And with the threat of other body parts to follow meant time was of the essence and that if the money wasn't forthcoming, things could get a lot worse than the tip of his pinky. It was a conscious decision. This is serious. You guys better do what we say.

Larry Bernstein:

Another Getty snatch comparison is the kidnapper's remote hideout. It was impossible to keep the prisoner there for a long period. It was cold and damp. Everyone was miserable.

Thomas Sancton:

Absolutely. They expected this to be over in two or three days. And they thought for a couple of days the guys can hang out and eat canned food. And then it went on for weeks and then after a month people were grumbling, threatening to defect.

Three or four of them just kind of just went AWOL. They said, "We've had it." It was kind of like herding cats. They all had their own motivations, their own temperaments, their own degrees of intelligence. Caillol was very intelligent, others were like borderline retarded. It was difficult to keep the group together over that long period.

Caillol told me they never planned for anything beyond four days. After that, everything was improvisation.

Larry Bernstein:

Family dynamics are challenging in the best of times for wealthy families. You saw Succession. Now with a kidnapping of the leader under stress, bad things happen. It is as if a bomb has been thrown into the living room.

Thomas Sancton:

Yeah. The family was very divided over how to deal with this. First the money wasn't there. Wado's mother was a real piece of work, Goldie a former exotic dancer, stripper. She immediately remarried after her husband's death Wado's father's impotent cousin to retain her fortune and title and she was just ruthless in pursuing her own interests. In the first discussions about trying to gather the money for the ransom, she said, I'm not going to pay a penny."

Silvana, the wife offered to sell her jewelry. The kids said sell a few companies. A son-in-law, the husband of the eldest daughter, who was an American, wanted to jump in and seize control of the company by having Wado declared dead and then somehow come in and take over it.

One of the effects of the kidnapping was to reveal tensions in this family. The eldest daughter and the son-in-law were estranged from Wado after his release. Wado is estranged from his mother when he found out what her attitude had been. And the wife, Silvana, decision to divorce.

Larry Bernstein:

Next topic, Stockholm Syndrome in kidnappings. Patty Hearst was a teenager when she was abducted and ended up sleeping with her kidnapper and joining their terrorist activities. What happened with Wado?

Thomas Sancton:

Stockholm Syndrome in this case had a strong effect. After he was released, he was immediately interrogated by the police, he gave them very little specific information about the kidnappers. He felt some strange lingering sense of loyalty to his former jailers. To the point where he tried not to cooperate too much with the investigators.

Larry Bernstein:

This was more complicated. The jailers had threatened Wado that they would create violence after he was released unless he did what they said.

Thomas Sancton:

He feared that the kidnappers were going to come after him after he was released. They made him sign IOUs saying that he would personally pay them ransom. They even had him put his thumbprint on the documents. They would call him with a certain code word that meant that he had to pay off within 24 hours. If he didn't do it, they would shoot somebody at random in the street.

Larry Bernstein:

Was Wado angry with the police for ruining his reputation?

Thomas Sancton:

He was very bitter towards the police and particularly the revelations about his private life. And they had not been particularly competent liberating him.

Two branches of the police that were involved. One was the investigative police, and the other was the intervention squad, the commandos who showed up on the highway who took part in the

shootout with the kidnapers. He respected them; they were the guys who were risking their necks. They were the heroes who led to his liberation. The ones who were back in the office, pushing paper, making phone calls, he had much less respect for.

Larry Bernstein:

Wado comes out of this experience a broken man.

He leaves France, he's disillusioned. He leaves with one of his mistresses. After six months, he's finding his footing and returns to Europe to reclaim his position in the Company.

How does the kidnapping affect his life?

Thomas Sancton:

He wrote his autobiography on this experience and lessons learned. It had been an enlightening. His values had been all wrong. He didn't appreciate things like family and the simple things in life.

He felt that he'd come out of it a better person. Unfortunately, he never got rid of the gambling addiction and ultimately ruined him.

That's what gives it this Shakespearean tragedy aspect, which is that you're seeing the fall of a powerful man, not simply due to this unexpected event. But also due to his own flaws and it's a cautionary tale about a man who threw caution to the wind. He was a victim of his own weaknesses and his own flaws.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks to Arnette and Thomas for joining us today.

If you missed last week's show, check it out. The topic was 8 Billion People, oh my!

Our guest was Jennifer Sciubba who wrote the book entitled 8 Billion and Counting. I am fascinated by the field of demographics because population growth is critical to determine a nation's future political and economic power.

I would like to make a plug for next week's podcast with Betsy Devos who is the former Secretary of Education and the author of the book Hostages No More: The Fight for Education, Freedom, and the Future of the American Child.

I want to find out from Betsy about the challenges to implementing school choice programs and the issues she faced when she managed the Department of Education during the heights of COVID.

You can find our previous episodes and transcripts on our website whathappensnextin6minutes.com. Please subscribe to our weekly emails and follow us on Apple Podcasts or Spotify.

Thank you for joining me, good-bye.