

DESERT MANHUNT: Tucson's 1934 June Robles Kidnapping

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DESERT MANHUNT

Tucson's 1934 June Robles Kidnapping

by
Paul Cool

AT THREE O'CLOCK in the afternoon of April 25, 1934, six-year-old June Robles stepped into an automobile and disappeared from the streets of Tucson. The incident threw the Old Pueblo into a panic and launched a manhunt and investigation that lasted 1,000 days. Eight decades later, the case remains unsolved. It is one of the Southwest's enduring mysteries. And it all started simply enough. . . .



Dora Flores and Ruth Morena were second-grade playmates, so when Dora confided that "You don't know what I know," Ruth was all ears.

"I know somebody that's going to steal a little girl," Dora whispered.

"Who?" asked Ruth.

But, before Dora could divulge her secret, another girl took her hand and off they ran to another spot on the Carrillo Elementary School playground.

Puzzled and concerned, Ruth related her experience to another friend, Betty Elias, who relayed the information to her teacher, Marguerite Collier.

Paul Cool passed away in July 2016. An attorney and independent historian, he was the author of *Salt Warriors: Insurgency on the Rio Grande* (Texas A&M University Press, 2008), and numerous articles on crime and justice in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. His paper on the kidnapping of June Robles won the Barry M. Goldwater Award at the 2014 Arizona History Convention. This article is adapted from his book, *The Girl in the Iron Box: Tucson's 1934 June Robles Kidnapping and the Myth of J. Edgar Hoover's Infallible FBI*, forthcoming from the Arizona Historical Society.

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“Do you know if someone is going to steal a little girl?” Mrs. Collier asked Dora.

Greeted with silence, the teacher instructed her to stay after school.

Asked a second time, Dora silently nodded, “Yes.”

“Is it a girl in the Carrillo School?”

Dora shook her head, “No,” and remained silent.

That same Friday, April 20, 1934 (or it may have been the following Monday), a man phoned the Carrillo school inquiring whether a student named Joan Robles was enrolled there. Unable to place the student’s name, Principal J. H. Rennels interrupted Collier’s class, where he repeated the caller’s question in front of the students: did anyone know a Joan Robles?

Betty Elias spoke up. She knew a *June* Robles, but she didn’t go to Carrillo. She attended Roskruge elementary, in Tucson’s university district.

Rennels telephoned Roskruge and, for some reason, informed the administrative office that they had a student named “June Robles.”

“Why, yes, we know that,” came the reply. “What about it?”

Confused about why he was calling, Rennels abruptly dropped the matter.

That same Wednesday, April 25, Dora Flores and her brother Jesus requested transfer of their records from Carrillo elementary. They explained that they were moving to Los Angeles. According to teacher Collier, the two children were “in a hurry.”¹

At roughly three o’clock that same afternoon June Robles climbed into an old Ford sedan. No one who knew the six-year-old could later imagine why the naturally shy girl would do such a thing. Only the day before, Joaquina Robles had cautioned her granddaughter about kidnappers. Do not walk home from school alone, “Quina” had warned June, and never talk to any stranger on the street. Her family found it amusing when June wondered aloud if a kidnapper might jump from a tree to snatch his victim.²

The man who coaxed June into his car wasn’t a complete stranger to the little girl. Only two days earlier, he had parked his car in front of the McIlroy home at the northeast corner of Fifth Street and Second Avenue. He had approached June and her cousin, Barney Kengla, and engaged them in conversation as they

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were playing on a gravel pile in a vacant lot across the street before resuming their walk from the two-story Neoclassical-style Roskruge school on Fifth Street to Barney's home a half-block north, on Second Avenue.

Peering out of her Second Avenue window, "Johnny" McIlroy, the Georgia-born wife of railroad conductor Harry McIlroy, witnessed the man's conversation with the two children. The three were familiar to her. Indeed, she had seen the man on several occasions, often enough to notice that he had black hair, was "of the Spanish American type," appeared to be in his thirties—no older than forty—had a "full face and neck," and was well built, although she was confused about whether he was six feet in height or "not tall." (A year later she would reckon his height as 5' 9" or 5' 10".) In the preceding week, she had also noticed that he parked his Model T in front of her house prior to school letting out, on one occasion for as long as an hour, while he walked north and south on both sides of Second Avenue.

On April 24, the day after the man had talked to June and Barney, he once again parked his car in front of the McIlroy house. This time, he was wearing a dark hat and "shabby suit," and waited in the vacant lot owned by the First Christian Church. As the children left school, he walked in their direction, speaking to them in passing, before returning to his car. Approaching the vehicle, he noticed Mrs. McIlroy staring at him from her window. He seemed surprised and stared back, with "dark piercing eyes close together," before getting behind the wheel and driving off.

Over the span of three weeks, the man in the Model T stalked the round-faced six-year-old with the brown eyes and brown bob, noting her daily journey to Barney's home. A half-dozen other residents of the middle-class West University neighborhood of stuccoed bungalows, mixed with Spanish Colonial, American Victorian, and other styles, would later claim to have gotten a good look at the man. They all thought that his actions were peculiar. None, however, suspected for a moment that he intended to snatch the little girl. The fact that no two witnesses gave the same description was testimony either to the unreliability of eyewitness descriptions, or evidence that more than one man was watching June Robles.³

On April 25, June's abductor settled on a course of action. At exactly two minutes before three o'clock, the driver of the Ford,



June Robles was kidnapped near the light post in the foreground, across the street from Roskruge school. BN 206674, AHS.

wearing a dark cap, dark coat, and large sunglasses, drove east on Fifth Street toward the Roskruge school.

June exited the building from the north onto Fifth Street. Her cousin Barney did the same, but on this occasion he scooted ahead, in a hurry to get home. Barney later claimed that he looked back and saw June, in her pink gingham dress, talking to the driver of the Model T. Thinking nothing of it, he headed home, eager to play with June's four-year-old sister Sylvia, who spent her days at the Kengla house until June and Sylvia's mother Helen retrieved her girls in the evenings.

Because he never noticed June's failure to arrive at the house, Barney did not mention her absence to his mother, Joaquina Robles Kengla, a sister of June and Sylvia's father, Fernando Robles. Joaquina was feeling ill and was occupied with visitors, including her mother. The ladies chatted while Barney played with Sylvia. For two hours, June was both out of sight and utterly out of mind.

At three o'clock, Marguerite Ronstadt Smith arrived in front of the Roskruge school to fetch her son Ronny. She then drove east on

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Fifth Street to Second Avenue, where she noticed a man standing on the curb side of an old black Model T Ford parked and pointed west on the opposite (north) side of Fifth Street, near the intersection. He appeared to be about forty years old, 5' 10", 170 lbs., and of medium complexion. Stoop shouldered and "emaciated looking," he wore a "gray slouchy suit" and "enormous" eyeglasses, but she could not tell whether he was "American or Spanish-American."⁴

As she turned left to go north on Second Avenue, Marguerite noticed the man speaking to June. Slowing down, she heard him say, in English, "They don't live far from here, they live just down the street," to which June answered, "No," shook her head, and walked away. Marguerite kept June and the man in view as she proceeded up Second Street. She tried to make out the license tag on the Model T but failed, as it was bent forward into "a horizontal position," hiding its number. Concerned about the man's intentions but unsure what to do, Marguerite would later explain, "I thought he might be a relative and that my stopping would be a rude intrusion into something that did not concern me." With June and the man still in view, Ronny urged his mother "to drive faster." A half block north on Fifth Street, she lost sight of them.

And with that, June Robles vanished.



For June's parents, that Wednesday began much like any other. Fernando Robles left home at 8:00 a.m. to open the Robles Electric Company a few blocks away. Helen Robles readied her daughters for the day before dropping them off—Sylvia at the Kengla home, June at Roskrige school—after which she joined her husband at his shop on Church Street, between Congress and Pennington, in downtown Tucson. Fernando was in and out during business hours, sometimes making customer calls using the family's pickup truck, while Helen remained in the office until shortly before 5:00 p.m., when she left to retrieve her children. Helen, a Kansas transplant, did not speak Spanish, so Fernando conversed in English with his bilingual customers, ensuring that she understood as much of his business as possible.⁵

It was nearly time for her to leave when, around 4:30 p.m., a boy entered the store. "Here," he said, handing Helen a plain



Fernando, June, Sylvia, and Helen Robles in the family's back yard. BN 206693, AHS.

white envelope with the word "Instructions" scrawled across it.

Moments before, eleven-year-old Gregorio Estrada had been walking near the corner of Congress and Church streets when an Anglo-American male tapped him on the shoulder. "Take a note across the street to the electricity store," the tall, slender stranger commanded, pressing a silver quarter into the boy's palm. Give the note to the woman sitting in the chair." Armed with the man's envelope, Gregorio headed across the street, entering the shop as Helen approached from the rear.

Taking the envelope from the boy, she asked, "What is this for?"

"I don't know," Gregorio replied. "The man said to give it to the lady sitting in the chair."

From his perch behind the shop's front counter, Fernando pressed the boy. "What man?"

"A man outside." Gregorio displayed the quarter, as if that explained the mystery.

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Opening the envelope, Helen began reading the numbered "Instructions." "We must have \$15,000 for return of your child," the first item read. To Helen, the words made no sense. "What's this?" she asked, handing the papers to her husband.

Reading the few lines regarding the ransom amount, Fernando assured her, "It's only a joke." But when Gregorio started for the door, Fernando ordered him to wait.

"I have to go," Gregorio insisted. "I have to see the man again."

Redirecting his attention to the note's contents, Fernando read something that spurred him to run after the boy. Catching up with him, he instructed, *Ven conmingo* ("Come with me").

Back in the shop, Fernando invited Gregorio to have a seat while he scrutinized the documents—there were two—in their entirety. Gregorio, squirming in his chair, protested. Helen, no longer trusting that the mysterious message was a joke, left the shop "all excited."

The "Instructions" consisted of seventeen steps. The first four ordered Fernando to put \$15,000 in unmarked, small bills in a sack, which he was to place in a car without a roof or doors so that the kidnappers could satisfy themselves that no one was hiding in the vehicle when he delivered the money. He was instructed not to employ spies or to alert the police. "You must keep this secret forever," the kidnappers warned.⁶

And then there was instruction #13.

"Your child," Fernando read, "will be killed—if you don't obey."

Instruction #17 directed him to "drive where and when you please day and night within the city limit[.] we will stop you and ask you for the money." The document was signed, "X.Y.Z. OBEY."

Inside the second envelope, Fernando discovered a second letter labeled:

STRICTLY – PRIVATE
INSTRUCTIONS FOR
CHILD'S FATHER
ONLY

This document included nine more points, the first of which read, "This only for Child's father to read. Don't tell wife or anyone else." But it was the third point that addressed the heart of these "private"

instructions. Contrary to step #17 in the first document, it directed Fernando to follow a specific, precisely mapped route. Beginning at his home, he was to drive every night, alone and in the stripped-down car, leaving at 9:00 p.m., passing designated checkpoints at designated times, until 10:45. When he saw a “white cloth being dragged across the road,” he was to toss the money sack at the cloth and return home. “Don’t stop, don’t speak, don’t change or dim lights,” he read. “Don’t blow horn, don’t give any signal, drive slow [and] don’t have a gun.” If he followed these orders and kept his mouth shut, June would be safe.

The document also cautioned that, as others might try to collect the ransom, he would recognize the authenticity of any future messages by the signature “OBEY.”

Even before he had finished reading the two notes, Fernando was on the phone to his twin brother, Carlos, who worked just one block north of Fernando’s shop. A Pima County deputy attorney, Carlos G. Robles spent his days in the county courthouse, a massive Spanish Colonial Revival building, of strong Moorish influence, covered in pink stucco and graced by arches.⁷

Carlos happened to be away from his second-floor office, so County Attorney Clarence E. Houston fielded Fernando’s call. Fernando was careful to withhold his true purpose. Ten minutes later, Carlos was back at his desk. Before he could return his brother’s call, Fernando rang again, urging him to come right away.

Upon his arrival at the shop, Carlos became the third person to put his prints on the kidnap notes, even as he interrogated young Gregorio. No, the boy had never seen the man with the envelope before. He wore a gray cap, yellow work clothes, and black shoes. Gregorio was supposed to meet the man in the parking lot thirty minutes after delivering the message. More time than that had passed. Nonetheless, Carlos hastily jotted a note reading, “Come over to my office and talk this over, Fernando Robles,” and handed it to Gregorio, who returned after ten minutes, having failed to make contact with the man who had handed him the envelope.

Grabbing the ransom note, but leaving the “private” instructions with Fernando, Carlos headed back to his office, with Gregorio in tow. Deputy Sheriff Maurice Guiney later claimed that he saw Carlos striding across the courthouse patio holding the note, “laughing and joking,” before spotting Undersheriff Colby Farrar

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and calling him over. At virtually the same moment, Carlos caught his boss, County Attorney Houston, exiting his office. Carlos asked him to wait. The group gathered in Houston's office, where Carlos directed his chief's attention to the ransom note.⁸

"I don't know," Carlos admitted, "whether it is a hoax or the work of a crank, or just what to think."

After reading the note, Houston quizzed his deputy. "Has the kid come home from school?" Carlos said "no", whereupon Houston replied, "Well, we have a real kidnapping case."

At this point, Houston handed the note to Undersheriff Farrar. Carlos, meanwhile, fetched *Arizona Daily Star* reporter Fred Finney, husband of Houston's secretary, Emma Finney, to join the conclave. Once Finney had read the note, Carlos handed it to Emma, instructing her to make a copy for the reporter's own use.

Turning his attention to Gregorio Estrada, Houston asked the boy to recount his experience with the kidnapper. Houston then penned his own message, ostensibly from Fernando: "Come to the store immediately. I want to discuss this ransom with you." Houston ordered the boy to deliver this note to the gray-hatted stranger.

When Gregorio failed to return after some twenty minutes, the group of county officials went looking for him. Meeting up with Deputy Sheriff Guiney on the way, Undersheriff Farrar advised his fellow lawman of the kidnapping. As the group approached the parking lot across Church Street from the Robles Company, they saw Gregorio looking around expectantly. They next sent him up Congress, then down Meyer Street, then up and down other streets, all without result. Finally, Gregorio pleaded that he had to go home, and he was at last permitted to leave.

Noticing the commotion, a second eyewitness to the hand-off now approached, identifying himself to the county officials as Ray Orcutt, the parking lot attendant. He had seen a man give the note to the boy, after which he had watched the man walk north on Church before turning west on Pennington. The officers could extract nothing else of use from Orcutt.

In the meantime, Helen Robles had frantically searched for June, first at Roskruge school, then at the Kengla home. Only then did it dawn on Joaquina Kengla and her visitors that none of them had noticed June's absence during the previous two hours. Only

now, Barney volunteered that he had seen a man talking to June.⁹

Her mission a failure, Helen returned to the shop, where she discovered Fernando with his twin brother Carlos and older sibling Alfonso. Fearing “leaks,” Alfonso advised Fernando to cut the telephone line extension to a gambling establishment located above the electrical shop.¹⁰

Shortly before dark, Bernabé Robles, June’s wealthy grandfather, arrived at the shop, where Fernando, still dazed by events, informed him of the kidnapping and ransom demand. Ten minutes later, after listening intently, Bernabé left the shop.

Over in the courthouse, Colby Farrar was convinced of the need for immediate action. Before 7:30 that evening, the Pima County undersheriff launched one of the biggest dragnets in Arizona history.



June and her parents lived in her grandparents’ home on West Franklin Street. Dinner at the house on the night of June’s abduction was tense as the family discussed who might be involved and what they could do to get June back. Suspicion immediately fell on relatives who desired a share of Bernabé’s fortune. The Robles clan tossed other names around, including that of a former schoolmate of Fernando and Carlos, but no firm conclusion was reached.¹¹

Inevitably, the discussion turned to June’s ransom. It has been said that nothing divides a family like money. Bernabé had it. His children didn’t. The kidnappers wanted money, and Bernabé’s children wanted their father to give it to them. The argument began that first evening with Alfonso joining Fernando, Carlos, and older sister Maria in pleading with Bernabé that paying the \$15,000 ransom demand was June’s only chance for survival.

Bernabé saw things differently.

Reminding his children of the Charles Lindbergh case—in which it was later discovered that the Lindbergh baby was already dead when the ransom was paid—Bernabé labeled a fool anyone who thought payment would lead to rescue. No amount of pleading would change his mind. “Irritated,” he refused to raise the money.

Dinner was still on the table on the second night after June’s disappearance when the argument resumed. Bernabé pointed out



June's family waited for news of her rescue in Bernabé Robles's large home. BN 206672, AHS.

that he would have to mortgage \$100,000 worth of property to raise the \$15,000 in cash, something he “emphatically” refused to do. He was not about to go “on bond” for anyone. June’s Uncle Barney defended his father’s position. “It was not right to mortgage property for one child,” he maintained. “If it was necessary to sacrifice one member of the family to avoid the payment of a large sum of money, June could and should be sacrificed, just as well as any other member of the family.”¹²



A kidnapper’s goals are as obvious as they are simple: rapid payment of ransom and a clean getaway. Like any well-constructed business letter, the ransom note conveys information essential to the completion of a successful transaction. Pay the ransom in old, unmarked bills of small denominations. Drop it where instructed. Tell no one, especially the cops. Follow all instructions. Do these things and the victim will be returned, unharmed. Obey or else.¹³

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The ransom notes delivered to Fernando Robles carried the trademark language—"Keep this secret forever. . . . Obey"—but Fernando did neither. Instead, he reached out to his twin brother, a law enforcement official, who proceeded to share the sensational news with a small army of people, two of whom succeeded in turning the city of Tucson upside down in their quest to rescue June.

It was largely *Arizona Star* reporter Fred Finney who transformed what should otherwise have remained a quiet abduction into a headline-shrieking crime. Inappropriately privy to the initial courthouse discussions, Finney leapt at the opportunity to score a "scoop" by writing the first news report. That evening, the *Star* published an *EXTRA* edition announcing, "Six Year Old Girl Seized When She Leaves Roskrige For Home." The precipitous announcement not only complicated the kidnappers' scheme and the parents' ability to control June's fate, it fueled one lawman's over-the-top response to the crime.

Pima County undersheriff Colby Shrock "Jake" Farrar was a natural-born peace officer ambitious for higher office. Confident in his deep-rooted knowledge of the area's criminal element, Farrar seized the opportunity to launch "the greatest manhunt ever staged in the west."¹⁴

Already in charge of the county sheriff's deputies, Farrar also assumed temporary command of the city police from Chief Gus Wollard, who was absent in Phoenix. Farrar quickly asked the local postal inspector and telegraph companies to "place a cover" on all mail addressed to the Robles family and alert him to any further communications from the kidnappers. The local phone company agreed to record the origin of all calls made to the Robles home and to Fernando's business.¹⁵

Aware of the miles the kidnappers might already have covered in the hours since the abduction, Farrar telephoned his deputies throughout the county, as well as U.S. immigration and border patrol officers, asking them to stop and search all vehicles in their vicinity. Unaccountably, he failed to ask for Highway Patrol assistance, and he forgot, or deliberately declined, to call the FBI.¹⁶

To bottle up Tucson, Farrar issued a summons for "every available man" to report to him at eight o'clock the following morning.

Fifty American Legionnaires responded before daylight. As a result, no more than two hours after reading the ransom note,

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Farrar had deployed armed volunteers, alongside law enforcement officers, to block the roads and search every vehicle at countless checkpoints. One fruit truck owner was stopped and searched four times as he headed into Tucson.¹⁷

Fred Finney's story in the *Star*, augmented by the menacing presence of armed men prowling the city and beyond, helped swiftly spread word of the kidnapping. "Wild excitement and strong feeling permeated the city."

Rumors flew. A man on Congress Street overheard exclaiming, "Well, I hope they get the money," was hauled in for questioning. Another citizen told officers he had spotted a woman driving a coupe "containing a small child, about six years old, with a rag over its face." Around 9:30 p.m., a woman claimed she heard a child screaming less than a half mile from her home. She called the police, who were "inclined to believe [it] one of their best clues." Her tip was "carefully probed."

The comfortably cool air of Thursday morning, April 26, carried the heated words of Tucsonans rushing downtown. Some of the people clogging the streets were responding to Jake Farrar's call for volunteers, while others anxiously sought news of the "sweet-faced baby." Other, angrier citizens seemed intent on emulating the mob that had lynched a pair of kidnappers in San Jose, California, the previous autumn. Tucsonans took June's abduction very personally.¹⁸

More than 300 men, many armed with rifles, pistols, or shotguns, responded to Undersheriff Farrar's call for volunteers. Police Chief Gus Wollard, back from Phoenix, organized them into four-man teams assigned to search every one of Tucson's 8,000 dwellings, but to do so with prudence and restraint. "Don't shoot," he told them, "unless someone attacks you. Put one man in the alley and another in the street. Approach the houses and ask permission to go through. If permission is refused, call the sheriff's office and [await] further orders."¹⁹

The searchers spread out across the city. Armed with guns, bricks, and clubs, they pounded on doors, asking or demanding to inspect every dwelling "from cellar to attic." Most occupants acquiesced, but a few refused, prompting Wollard to dispatch "emergency squads" of uniformed police to force entry.²⁰

Tucson soon resembled a "garrison." In the countryside, local game hunters, cowboys, and prospectors joined sheriff's deputies.

Volunteers drove or rode along the state highways, desert trails, dry riverbeds, mountain foothills, and canyons. Airborne spotters surveyed the landscape.²¹

The Pima County Courthouse remained the epicenter of activity. Farrar and Wollard dispatched “flying squads” in response to hundreds of tips that poured across their desks. Despite the long hours and unabated tension, city and county lawmen worked harmoniously. C. R. McDowell, superintendent of the Arizona Highway Patrol, registered the first discordant note. He only learned of the crime in a Phoenix newspaper. Had he been promptly notified, McDowell protested, “We could have blocked all the roads leading out of Tucson within an hour and a half.”

Then, a possible break. A second ransom note was delivered to Bernabé Robles shortly after noon and to the newspapers soon after. “Mr. Robles,” it read, “Child safe. We are willing to reduce the ransom to \$10,000 if you act quickly. Child will be returned safely as per your instructions. Obey instructions. Signed Z.” Bernabé walked the letter to Undersheriff Farrar, who judged it “authentic.”

Around 6:00 p.m., as the volunteers lined up for grub at the American Legion post, FBI Special Agent Carlton Endres arrived from Phoenix and headed straight to the courthouse, where Jake Farrar brought him up to speed. When Endres asked to see the ransom note, Farrar reluctantly removed a “wadded up” paper from his vest pocket. Stunned to learn that the sole physical evidence in the law’s possession “had been handled by innumerable persons,” the agent realized that the chance of lifting any latent fingerprints from the note was “too remote to consider.”

What the undersheriff told him next was no less astonishing. Farrar had fabricated the second ransom note, hoping that the publicity it generated “would result in another contact by the kidnapers.”

Clearly, Farrar was winging it. By now, June Robles had been missing for more than twenty-four hours, there had been no new contact made with the kidnapper, and, with armed squads patrolling the streets, it was unlikely there would be. To recover June safely, law enforcement had to replace armed posses with systematic investigative work.

To ensure that this took place, Special Agent Endres “suggested” that Farrar arrange a meeting with the police chief, the

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county attorney, and the postal inspector that very night, just as soon as FBI Special Agent Lewis Taylor arrived from Los Angeles.²²



On the morning of April 26, 1934, the press, and not his own men, notified FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover of the Robles kidnapping. Embarrassed and infuriated, he dispatched a telegram to find out just what was happening.²³

The recipient was Special Agent in Charge at Los Angeles Joseph Edward Patrick Dunn. Dunn, too, had been ignorant of the crime until he read about it in the morning papers. He immediately telephoned Gus Wollard and asked the Tucson police chief to keep the Bureau “constantly advised.” After hanging up, Dunn ordered Special Agents Endres and Lewis Taylor, the latter his best



New York Times *headline*, April 26, 1934.
NARA.

man, to take charge in Tucson. The kidnapping would take precedence over all other FBI cases in the Southwest.²⁴

Taylor arrived in Tucson by ten o'clock that evening. He promptly learned that, thirty hours after the kidnapping, Tucson lawmen had yet to interview June's family or any witnesses to the abduction. Nor had they placed officers in the likeliest places for the kidnappers to make contact—the Robles home and electric shop.²⁵

At the FBI agents' behest, Farrar and Wollard agreed to "demobilize" their citizen posse, order their officers to resume normal investigative and patrol duties, and inform the press of these moves in the hope of reestablishing contact with June's kidnappers. Going forward, all law enforcement officers would coordinate their investigative activities and properly collect, handle, and record evidence. Endres would take up residence inside the Robles home, while a sheriff's deputy would be stationed inside Fernando's shop. These "inside men" would monitor all "suspicious" contacts.

A long day became longer when the FBI agents undertook to interview the Robles men inside the county courthouse. Twin brothers Fernando and Carlos adamantly refused to sit in the same room with their father, preferring to wait while Bernabé was interviewed alone. The agents quickly realized that this large, secretive, fractious family was more likely to hinder than help with the investigation.

Questioned about his background, family, and finances, *el patron*—worth a quarter million dollars in assets—"steadfastly maintained that he is not a wealthy man." Bernabé insisted that he had no enemies, then admitted that a grandnephew had struck him a few months earlier, and a nephew (actually an illegitimate son) had demanded and received money from him.

After securing Bernabé's agreement to the placement of Agent Endres in his home, the two agents interviewed Fernando and Carlos together. "Both expressed bitter feeling toward their father," and insisted that they could not raise the \$15,000 ransom. Their father could raise it, but refused. Neither brother could provide clues to the identity of the kidnappers. With that, the interviews ended at 3:00 a.m.

On the morning of April 27, Carlos Robles, flanked by Houston, Farrar, Wollard, and brother Fernando, announced to

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the press that authorities had withdrawn the citizen posses to better facilitate negotiations. One of the twins confided to the *Arizona Daily Star* that June's mother, Helen, was praying constantly for her daughter's return, but that her emotional state "grew dangerous last night," hastening the family's decision to open the road to negotiation.²⁶

Teacher Marguerite Collier now reported to Deputy Sheriff James Abbott her conversations with students Betty Elias and Dora Flores regarding the "stealing" of a little girl. Abbott informed his boss, Undersheriff Farrar, who dispatched deputies to the Flores family's last known address. The deputies learned that the family had left town. No one knew where they had gone.

The responsible thing for Farrar to have done at this point was honor his just-made pledge to share information with the FBI, so that the feds could explore the possibility that the Floreses had indeed moved to Los Angeles. Instead, the lead remained stuffed deep in Farrar's pocket, unworked by anyone.²⁷

Special Agent Taylor was able to retrieve the actual ransom note from Undersheriff Farrar, who had so far refused to share it even with Police Chief Wollard. Taylor immediately mailed the scrap of paper to the FBI forensics lab in Washington, D.C. He then pressed both Wollard and Farrar to begin interviewing any and all witnesses to the crime. Marguerite Smith, who had observed the exchange between June and her kidnapper, had already told her story to the local press. Only now, more than forty hours later, was she questioned by law enforcement.²⁸

Special Agent Endres, meanwhile, spent the day in the sitting room of the Robles home, within easy listening distance of the telephone and out of sight to everyone but the family. His eavesdropping proved pointless. Most of the conversations were in Spanish, which he neither spoke nor understood.

At roughly six o'clock that evening, Special Agent in Charge Joe Dunn arrived in Tucson from Los Angeles, along with agents Walter Bott and C. D. White. Taking rooms at the upscale Pioneer Hotel, Dunn checked in using the alias, "Joseph E. Patrick," in an effort to hide his identity from the public and the press. Intending to keep the FBI presence as quiet as possible, it made sense to use the eleven-story hotel, rather than the federal courthouse, as task force headquarters.²⁹

All the while, local law officers pursued endless leads. Police sped 25 miles southeast to Colossal Cave (the reputed refuge of Old West outlaws), but found no sign of June or her captors. A pilot flying south of Tucson reportedly “saw a cowboy get off his horse and sneak to where someone was hiding in the brush.” A Tucson doctor rushed to the courthouse late Friday to report a man entering an abandoned house north of town. As Police Chief Wollard remarked to journalists, “I have never worked on a case in which we have had so little authentic information.”³⁰

Anyone entering or exiting the Robles home braved a small army of frustrated reporters and cameramen camped outside, wilting in the oven-hot air rising from the cooking asphalt at the lot’s edge and itching with impatience. In a city raised on tales of fast horses and faster draws, not to mention the lightning-fast capture of John Dillinger’s gang just three months earlier, the abduction of little June Robles presented police, press, and citizenry with the slow crawl of nothing new.

The police had nothing to share. The press had nothing to report or film. Nothing to show for three days of baking in the Sonoran Desert heat. The magnificent shade trees in front of the Robles home provided a measure of relief from the sun, but the press, unhappy with their lot, whined, wheedled, whetted their thirst, and, sometimes, fabricated stories. As early as April 27, a Hearst reporter wrote that Bernabé Robles had withdrawn \$8,000 from his bank before meeting with the kidnappers. (Not true.) The United Press International reporter submitted a tale that Fernando Robles, after raising \$10,000, had spoken by telephone to the abductors, who told him to “stand by.” (Also not true.) One motion picture cameraman attempted to persuade some policemen to act out “a feigned search for kidnappers.”³¹

On Saturday evening, April 28, Special Agents Dunn and Taylor shouldered their way through the press gauntlet for a late-night interview with Bernabé Robles. It was Dunn’s second attempt to persuade June’s grandfather to pay the ransom. This time Bernabé agreed, but only on condition that the exchange of money and girl would be simultaneous. That was not how things worked, Dunn explained. Payment first, return of victim second. In that case, Bernabé committed himself to nothing.³²

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Hours earlier, sometime around 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, a letter addressed to "B. Robles" had been postmarked in Tucson. Postal agents did not notice that the handwriting on the plain white envelope matched the handwriting on the note handed to Helen Robles three days before.

At 10:00 a.m. on Monday morning, April 30, the mailman delivered the letter to the Robles home. Fernando had the presence of mind to hand the unopened envelope to Special Agent Bott. Carefully using small pliers, the G-Man placed its contents in a cellophane envelope.³³

As before, there were two messages. The outer envelope contained a note warning Fernando and Bernabé not to let anyone else read it. The inner envelope contained a two-page printed message penciled by the familiar hand of "X.Y.Z." Its contents indicated that the kidnapper was exasperated by the family's failure to keep the matter quiet. "You do not regard what we say," he or she wrote. "You better listen to us we are not fooling with you and the officers. Don't think we are suckers. We know what we are doing. . . . You have been dirty in this. Look what a stir, but child's life is in your hand."³⁴

Reiterating that they would hand over June only after the \$15,000 ransom was delivered, the kidnappers now ordered Fernando to drive to Gila Bend, 125 miles northwest of Tucson, and to wait there for June. In between driving the 24-mile Tucson ransom drop route and the 125 miles to Gila Bend, Fernando was also commanded to drive northwest to Red Rock, Sasco, and back and, on alternate nights until June was delivered, follow a meandering route southeast to Vail, southwest to Continental, and back home again. X.Y.Z. was firm. "This is your last chance you will not get other instructions. . . . Keep all secrete [*sic*]. Obey and child will be O.K. . . . You better get spies and cops clear away this time. . . . Good-bye. X.Y.Z. Obey."

The kidnappers had blundered. While the FBI had entered the case early on, there was no evidence that June had been transported across state lines, which would have triggered federal jurisdiction. By using the mail to send this note, the kidnappers had committed a federal crime. The FBI now had unquestioned authority to bring June's abductors to justice.

The local press published Fernando's response to the new ransom note, declaring himself "ready and willing to follow faithfully any and all instructions," even though he had yet only raised \$5,000 through a mortgage-backed loan.³⁵

The Lindbergh kidnapping provided Fernando and Helen with a cautionary lesson. In the so-called "crime of the century," piggy-back extortionists had attempted to play on the parents' fears in order to misdirect the ransom payment. To ensure that he was talking to the right people, as well as to ensure that June was still alive, Fernando requested that the kidnappers provide a piece of his daughter's dress and her answers to four personal questions. "We must get her back," Fernando told reporters. "Nothing else matters."³⁶



Thursday evening, May 3, marked the eighth day since June's disappearance, the third without a reply from her abductors. Investigative leads at a standstill, Fernando had finally decided to acquiesce to the groundswell of officials urging him to drive the ransom drop routes, a task more easily prescribed than pursued. The original drop route was nearly 24 miles long, much of it desert. The directions outlined in the second note were more convoluted, specifying that once he had driven the original route, he was to drive nearly 100 miles more, through uninhabited, difficult, and at times impassible landscapes. In the dark.³⁷

At 9:30 that evening, one-half hour later than commanded, Fernando set out. He was \$10,000 short of the specified \$15,000. Instead, his money bag would include just \$5,000 and a note explaining the reason(s) for the shortfall. Driving along rural roads, unlighted save by a moon four days past full, Robles's headlights illuminated no white cloth nor anything else suspicious. Not that the drive was uneventful. At one point the road was fenced off and the lone alternative route would have added at least another 20 miles. Instead, Fernando sputtered back, reaching his home at 2:40 in the morning. June's bone-weary father confided to his twin that he would rather lose the child than drive such roads again.

Nevertheless, the next night, Friday, May 4, he was back on the road by nine, this time failing to complete even the original route when his Chevy's fuel line broke just four miles north of downtown.

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Saturday, May 5, marked Fernando's third attempt. Toward the end of his downtown loop, he noticed a man wearing dark sunglasses, standing at the corner of Meyer and McCormick streets, a man who made no move to contact Robles. Sunday night, May 6, Fernando observed a different man standing at Main and Sixth streets, trying to conceal his identity by pulling his cap low.

Over four nights, Fernando had not seen the single thing he was looking for, a white rag strung across the road.

Sometime between Sunday evening around six and seven the next morning, Monday, May 7, someone crossed the grand plaza of the Pima County Courthouse, climbed the outside stairs, walked unnoticed down the open-air corridors, and, stopping outside County Attorney Clarence Houston's office, slipped beneath the door a three-page letter printed in pencil and signed "X.Y.Z. Obey." The visitor then left the building, crossed the grounds, and disappeared.³⁸

A janitor discovered the letter on Monday morning, twelve days after June's disappearance. By 8:00 a.m., it was in the hands of Carlos Robles, who unwisely opened and read it before giving it to the FBI agents at the Pioneer Hotel.³⁹

X.Y.Z.'s message contained the responses to the four questions posed by June's father six days earlier, answers that provided the first hard evidence that June was still alive:

What do you do with your bunnies in the morning? *Give them water and feed them.*

What do you call Corney? *A stool pigeon.*

What is the name of Betina's maid? *Antonia.*

Where is your little box with the key in it? *Lawyer Lecchie [Carlos] has it at his office.*

The note alternated threats with reassurance. "Your child is OK. . . . We told you to be alone and drive slow and keep spies away. Why don't you do as you are told? You will never get your child until you do as we say. . . . Are you driving car we told you to? We can't see that you are alone. . . . Take the doors off car so we can see you. We are not going to keep telling you."⁴⁰

The "boldness of delivery" puzzled G-Men working the "toughest" case Special Agent in Charge Joe Dunn had ever encountered. Why run the risk of making such a public drop-off?

The kidnappers' renewed demands gave Dunn fresh reason for pessimism. Carlos and his siblings still had failed to raise more than one third of the demanded \$15,000, and Bernabé still adamantly "refused to put up any money." June's father still had not driven the entire ransom route, nor had he stripped his car of its roof and doors as the kidnappers demanded.⁴¹

But, if nothing else, June's answers shook loose, at least in some measure, her grandfather's intractability. Still refusing to take out a loan, he withdrew \$5,000 from one of his personal accounts. The federal agents recorded the serial numbers before delivering the money to Fernando, who finally agreed to strip down his car as instructed. Unfortunately, Bernabé refused to back off the demand that his contribution was contingent upon June's simultaneous release.⁴²

To convince June's abductors that he was acting in good faith, even as he failed to follow their instructions, Fernando issued another public plea aimed at reconciling the kidnappers' and his father's positions. He admitted to raising only \$10,000 that could only be paid upon simultaneous delivery of the child. He asked the kidnappers to contact him to make a new plan for the exchange. Fernando promised "no double-crossing, no spies, no officers, and no betrayal [*sic*]."⁴³

News that June was alive lifted the Robles family's spirits, so much so that during a May 11 visit school teacher Thelma Ochoa was struck by Helen's changed attitude. Giddy with optimism, Helen assured Ochoa, "I am not worried about June, she is all right and will turn up in a few days." Helen left the house a few minutes later, cheerily waving, "Toodle-doo, I will be seeing you soon."⁴⁴

At exactly 8:30 on Thursday morning, May 10, even before Fernando had a chance to respond to the kidnappers' third message, a fourth letter entered the mail, deposited in the general post office in downtown Chicago, Illinois.⁴⁵

Four days later, on Monday, May 14, it reached the office of Arizona governor Benjamin Mauer. Herbert H. Hotchkiss, the governor's secretary, reviewed the letter and almost immediately relayed its contents by phone to Pima County Attorney Clarence Houston. Hotchkiss then handed the letter to Highway Patrol Sergeant Riley Bryan. Confiding that it was "extremely important" and instructing



Robles family, May 15, 1934. (Front row: Sylvia and June. Second row: Fernando, Helen, Carlos, Joaquina, and Bernabé Robles, and Barney Kengla). NARA.

him to tell no one, Hotchkiss dispatched Bryan to deliver it “with all possible haste” to the county attorney in Tucson.⁴⁶

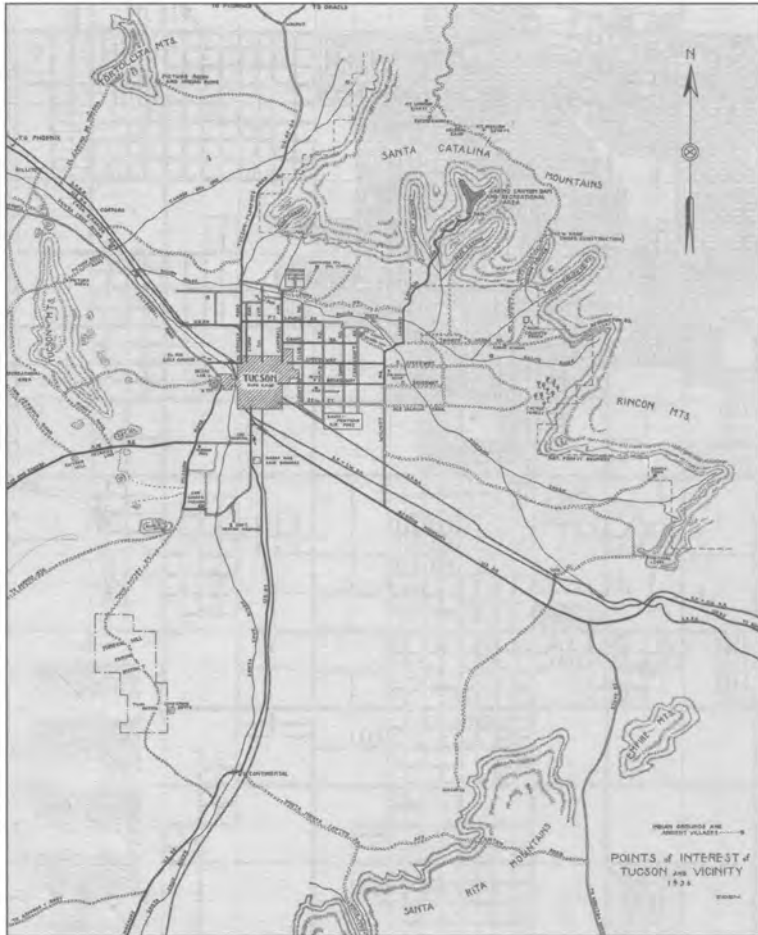
Clarence Houston found Sergeant Bryan waiting in his office when he returned from lunch around 1:30 p.m. The Pima County attorney treated the letter casually, telling Bryan, “maybe there [is] something to it and maybe there [is] not.” He then dismissed Bryan, who went to find the FBI agents in town.

Houston immediately called Deputy County Attorney Carlos Robles into his office, handed him the letter, and softly announced, “Carlos, I have bad news for you.”⁴⁷

Carlos read the letter:

GOV. TELL B. ROBLES WHERE HIS CHILD IS. ¼ MI. E.
WHERE RINCON WAY CEASES TO BE STRAIT, THEN
150 STEPS N. CHILD IS UNDER SOME OLD CACTUS
BURS. CHILD IS ABOUT 1 MI E OF WILMONT ROAD
AND 150 STEPS N. OF RINCON WAY—X.Y.Z. OBEY

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“Old Spanish Road” on this 1936 map corresponds with Rincon Way on the kidnapper’s map. AHS.

A line drawing and directions were underwritten with the signature, “X.Y.Z. OBEY.”⁴⁸

Both men’s attention was drawn to June’s location “under some old cactus burs.” Robles exclaimed, “My God, Clarence, what must we do?”

Houston advised his deputy to accept that June was dead. Acutely wishing to avoid further public spectacle, Carlos declared, “I hate for everybody to gaze upon the child’s body.”

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Houston reassured him, "You and I will go out there and have it prepared for burial before the mother sees it." And, apparently, before the coroner could see it as well.

Contrary to established procedure, the county attorney notified neither the city police nor the sheriff's office. Despite all pledges of cooperation, neither did Houston call the FBI. Instead, he and Carlos headed into the desert alone, to the spot where "Rincon Way ceases to be strait." They searched for more than an hour, trudging across the rocky soil in 98-degree heat amidst the cholla and prickly pear cacti, creosote bushes, occasional palo verde trees, and the giant saguaro of the scrub desert nine miles east of downtown Tucson. In desperation, they separated to cover more ground.

Neither man thought to bring water. Disorientation began to set in. Resting in the shade of a palo verde tree, Houston noticed "a piece of torn white cloth" tied to a key, lying atop what appeared to be a metal lid held down by a bent nail acting as a latch. He raised the lid and immediately saw June's feet. Peering inside, he asked, "Honey, are you dead? Are you all right?"

"Hello there," came the shocking reply.



Nineteen days had passed since the brown eyes of six-year-old June Robles had had to adjust to the world inside a small metal cage buried beneath the Sonoran Desert. Nineteen days since the strange man had told her to quiet down and stop crying for her mother, or he'd give her a whipping. "I didn't cry anymore," June recalled. "I didn't want them to hurt me."⁴⁹

June had just exited Roskruge school, she said, when "a big American who wore a cap" obscuring his face told her that her father wanted her to go with him to his house. After getting into his old, black car—she thought it was all right—she was surprised when they headed into the desert. Saying very little to her, the man drove for what seemed to her a long distance, motoring off the road "for quite a ways." Before getting out of the car, he pulled on a pair of white gloves. That's when she saw another man.

"Well, here she is," the driver told the man as he ordered June out of the car.



FBI Special Agent Lewis Taylor, Pima County Attorney Clarence Houston (in cap), Deputy Sheriff Maurice Guiney (kneeling), Undersheriff Colby S. "Jake" Farrar, and Tucson Police Chief Gus Wollard at the scene of June Robles's imprisonment, May 14, 1934. BN 206665, AHS.

The air temperature that day was 94 degrees, hotter still on the desert floor. The two men walked June to an iron lid on the ground, pulled open the 2' x 2' trap door, and told her to climb in. One of the men jumped in behind her to fasten her leg to a dog chain. He placed a lock on the chain, then shut and locked the lid. The men covered the box, except the hatch, with three inches of dirt and brush, some of it scrounged from a nearby wood rat nest.

And then they left June alone in an underground coffin, less than six feet long, thirty inches wide, and about a foot shorter than her own four-foot height. Six or seven hundred nail holes perforated the iron hatch door, so that, while there was little light, June was able to make out supplies left by her captors, as well as the desert denizens that occasionally dropped in to visit.

Near the entrance, she noticed a ceramic waste bucket perched next to a pair of galvanized water cans, the contents of one tasting "like slop." Later she was provided with other liquids—she liked the Welch's Grape Juice, but not the apple cider—and food: French

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rolls (too hard), sliced bread (much better), graham crackers, wafers, jars of strawberry preserves and apple butter, fresh dates, bananas, oranges, apples, raisins. One day, a third man she had not seen before brought her a mix of peanut butter, egg, and ham sandwiches.

And yet, as June later told the *Citizen*, "I did not eat very much" because of the red ants. "They got in my jam and jelly and everything. When I went to eat, I had to brush the ants away. They brought me some bananas in a sack, but . . . when I tried to get one of the bananas I got my hand all covered with ants." They crawled over her, biting her and causing her to scratch, which irritated her skin. A green lizard frightened her, but fortunately no snakes or scorpions appeared.⁵⁰

June's padlocked dog chain had been so tightly bound around her left ankle that it dug deeply enough into her flesh to leave impressions. When June complained to her kidnappers, one of them transferred the chain to her right leg, fixing it less tightly. "It didn't hurt so much," she recalled, but it was never comfortable. June limped when she was finally rescued.

June's life underground was a sleep-deprived ordeal. Nights on the bare-dirt floor were the worst. Her captors briefly provided a child's mattress and an uncovered pillow, but they were soon removed and replaced with four filthy, bad smelling, burlap gunny sacks. And then there was the cold. Save on the hottest nights, when the mean temperature was in the 80s and the interior remained so hot that June could not sleep, on most evenings the outside temperature plunged into the 40s and 50s. While it was warmer inside the box, for a six-year-old child clad only in a muslin petticoat and pink gingham dress, it was cold enough. Some nights she remained awake for another reason. "I heard noises," she explained later, "recalling the frightening sounds of animals she could not name."⁵¹

Sheer exhaustion sometimes caused her to fall asleep during the daytime, June explained, but the heat was so intense on some days that "I couldn't touch the sides without burning my fingers." The outside temperature broke 90 degrees on sixteen days of her captivity; on four days it rose past 100 degrees. It was much cooler inside the cage beneath a metal roof insulated by three inches of dirt topped by a scattering of desert debris, but



Pima County Undersheriff Jake Farrar, FBI Agent Lewis Taylor, and Pima County Attorney Clarence Houston inspect containers, bedding, and other materials removed from June's iron box. NARA

to what extent is difficult to estimate. The exposed metal hatch absorbed the desert heat and projected it inside. A photograph of June taken shortly after the rescue shows “a mass of burns” where her forehead accidentally scraped the iron roof as she tried to walk stooped inside her cage.

To relieve her boredom, June turned to the cellophane wrappers from a box of dates she had been given, dressing up the seeds as “pretend dolls.” She also “recited lessons learned in school, remembered bedtime stories told by her mother or sang short songs.” June’s kidnappers checked on her three or four times, but it was never enough. “I was sure lonesome,” she lamented.

As the days passed, conditions inside the box materially deteriorated until they threatened her survival. However sanitary the

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ceramic “clop [*sic*] bucket” was on day one, it was less so as the weeks rolled by. June’s clothing (and food?) inevitably became contaminated with her own waste.



Extending his arm, Clarence Houston clutched June’s hand and pulled her through the opening. Calling, “Carlos!” while June shouted for “Uncle Lechi,” Houston led June toward his car. Her legs were weak, but she refused to be carried. Carlos Robles wiped away tears of relief and hugged his niece tightly. He, too, attempted to carry her, but she was determined to walk, stumbling all the way. Suddenly she remembered, “I want my report card.” She had gotten good grades and wanted to show her mother. No, the attorneys told her, the card could wait in the iron-encased pit strewn with rubbish. What June needed was to go home.⁵²



In one respect only, June Robles was a lucky girl. The 1930s experienced a shocking wave of ransom kidnappings. Most adult victims returned home alive. Most kidnapped children died. The FBI investigated the case for another thirty months, at the end of which they had narrowed the suspects to forty-three. It was the first major crime of the Public Enemies era that J. Edgar Hoover’s G-Men failed to solve, although they might have, given the clues. In the end, Director Hoover looked for a way to salvage a public relations disaster. With FBI blessing, the local U.S. attorney convinced a federal grand jury to declare the case a hoax, and it disappeared from the Bureau’s own account of its storied past.

June Robles died in 2014, never speaking to journalists or historians about the closed case, except to say that she’d forgotten it. June’s family protected her privacy to the end.

NOTES

1. See Enos Sandberg Report, June 4, 1936, FBI Records, June Robles File 7-826 (hereinafter indicated by the FBI case code name, “JUJOB”), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
2. Sandberg Report, November 25, 1935, JUJOB document #782.

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3. FBI agents interviewed McIlroy and other neighborhood eyewitnesses on several occasions. Their statements regarding the stalking and kidnapping are found in Dunn Report, May 8, 1934, JUROB document #42; Lewis C. Taylor Report, May 25, 1934, JUROB #88; James G. Findlay Report, April 11, 1935, JUROB #401; and James M. O'Leary Report, May 18, 1935, JUROB #473. The 1930 Federal Census for Tucson provided additional biographical details.
4. Mrs. Smith's account is drawn from *Arizona Daily Star* (hereinafter *Star*), April 26, 1934; *Tucson Daily Citizen* (hereinafter *Citizen*), April 26, 1934; JUROB #42; JUROB #401.
5. See JUROB #42 for Fernando and Helen Robles's actions this day.
6. The complete text of the first ransom note (in two documents) is located in JUROB #42.
7. Anne M. Nequette and R. Brooks Jeffery, *A Guide to Tucson Architecture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002), pp. 79–80.
8. The statements of Farrar, Guiney, Houston, and Carlos Robles are recorded in JUROB #42, JUROB #401, and JUROB #782.
9. JUROB #401; JUROB #782.
10. JUROB #782.
11. Findlay Memorandum, April 27, 1934, JUROB (no number).
12. In November, 1935, Bernabé admitted to FBI agents that he was "worth \$150,000," with \$10,000 in banks, \$20,000 in government bonds, and the rest in real estate. Barney Robles was the primary source for the conversation at this dinner. JUROB #782.
13. See Bryan Burrough, *Public Enemies: American's Greatest Crime Wave and the Birth of the FBI* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), pp. 35–37, 193–195; Lloyd C. Gardner, *The Case That Never Dies* (Rutgers, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 27.
14. Unless otherwise indicated, the details of Farrar's manhunt are taken from the *Star* and *Citizen*, April 26–27, 1934.
15. A "mail cover" is the process by which the U.S. Postal Service makes a "nonconsensual" record of the outside cover of mail, or of the contents of unsealed mail, for one of several legally permitted reasons, including acquisition of evidence of the commission or attempted commission of a felony. See "USPS Procedures: Mail Cover Requests," U.S. Postal Inspection Service Publication 55 (March 2006). See also JUROB #42.
16. JUROB #42.
17. FBI records of Farrar's manhunt are found in JUROB #42; Taylor Report December 14, 1934, JUROB#265; JUROB #473; and Sandberg Report, February 10, 1936, JUROB #937.
18. John Durham Diaries, April 26, 1934, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson; Harry Farrell, *Swift Justice: Murder and Vengeance in a California Town* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).
19. *St. Paul* (Minn.) *Dispatch*, April 27, 1934. 1930 Federal Census, Population, vol. 6: Families, Table 21.
20. *Washington* (D.C.) *News*, April 26, 1934.
21. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 27, 1934; *New York Herald Tribune*, April 27, 1934.
22. JUROB #42.
23. J. Edgar Hoover to Sam Cowley, April 26, 1934, JUROB #2.
24. Joseph E. P. Dunn to Hoover, April 26 and April 27, 1934, JUROB #10 and 8.
25. Endres and Taylor's actions during their first days in Tucson are detailed in JUROB #42.
26. *St. Paul Dispatch*, April 27, 1934; *Star*, April 27, 1934. One visitor to the Robles home "always found Mrs. Helen Robles praying in her room." Sandberg Report, July 18, 1936, JUROB #1066.
27. Sandberg Report, June 4, 1936, JUROB (no number).
28. JUROB #42; *Star*, December 4, 1930.

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29. Cowley to Hoover, April 28, 1934, JUROB #4.
30. *Star*, April 28, 1934; *Citizen*, April 30, 1934.
31. For an array of fabricated press stories, see *Citizen*, April 28, 1934; *Washington* (D.C.) *Times*, April 27, 1934; *Washington News*, April 28, 1934; *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 28, 1934; *Star*, April 29, 1934.
32. JUROB #42; Harold E. Andersen Report, December 16, 1935, JUROB #853.
33. JUROB #42.
34. The complete text of the kidnapers' message is found in JUROB #42.
35. *Star*, April 30, 1934; *Citizen* Extra edition, April 30, 1934; *Citizen*, May 1, 1934; JUROB #42.
36. *Star*, May 1, 1934.
37. The FBI repeatedly interviewed Fernando regarding his first ransom drop drives. See JUROB #42; Hoover to Cowley, May 8, 1934, JUROB #56; Taylor Report, May 13, 1934, JUROB 7-826-59; Taylor Report, May 25, 1934, JUROB #88; JUROB #782.
38. Dunn Report, May 11, 1934, JUROB #59.
39. Clarence D. White Memorandum, May 11, 1934, JUROB #59; JUROB #782; JUROB #853.
40. The ransom note text is in JUROB #59.
41. JUROB #56; Attachments of Agents Endres (May 11, 1934) and White (May 11, 1934) to JUROB #59.
42. Bernabé had about \$8,000 in cash or bank accounts. His wife had a few hundred dollars in the bank. JUROB #59; JUROB #782.
43. The full text of Fernando's reply appears in the *Arizona Daily Star*, May 11, 1934. See also JUROB #59.
44. JUROB #401.
45. JUROB #88; Report of SAC, Chicago, December 12, 1935, JUROB #841; Report of SAC, Chicago, December 24, 1935, JUROB #857; Report of SAC, Chicago, January 9, 1936, JUROB #901.
46. Sandberg Report, February 10, 1936, JUROB #937; JUROB #88; JUROB #401; O'Leary Report, June 19, 1935, JUROB #518; O'Leary Report, May 16, 1936, JUROB #1003.
47. Bryan told the FBI in February 1936 that the trip took two hours, allowing him to reach Houston's office by 12:30 p.m. Three months later, he stated that he arrived sometime before 1:00 p.m. The FBI interviews with Bryan, Houston, and Carlos Robles regarding their actions on May 14, 1934 are found in JUROB #401; JUROB #937; JUROB #1003; Sandberg Report, June 20, 1936, JUROB #1038. See also *Citizen*, May 17, 1934.
48. JUROB #88.
49. Unless otherwise indicated, details of June's experiences and the conditions in which she survived are drawn from the following sources: *Citizen*, May 16, 1934; *Star*, May 15 and 17, 1934; *Lowell* (Mass.) *Sun*, May 15, 1934; *St. Paul Daily News*, May 15, 1934; *Washington Herald*, May 17, 1934; JUROB #88; Taylor Report, July 9, 1934, JUROB #143; JUROB #401; O'Leary Report, May 18, 1935, JUROB #473; JUROB #782. In the *Citizen's* "exclusive interview" with June (published May 16, 1934), her answers appear as complete sentences and paragraphs. It is unlikely that she was this articulate. Carlos Robles told the *Star* that it was "difficult to secure any information from June about the time she lived in the tin box. . . . she recoils when asked a direct question." June's natural terseness is demonstrated in a filmed "interview" by a questioner she trusts, her father, currently online at <http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=49759>.
50. Tucson is home to a wide variety of red ants, some of them aggressive. Some species in the area bite, others sting. The sources refer to June receiving both bites and stings. Chris A. Schmidt, "Common Backyard Insects of Tucson, Arizona," http://tolweb.org/treehouses/?treehouse_id=4421#Hymenoptera.

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51. Carlos Robles stated, "She told me . . . that she had her mattress and pillow for one week before the kidnapers came and took those away and replaced them with sacks." The FBI, however, recorded that, "The man who abducted her was the last to see her, and on that occasion he removed the small mattress and pillow which had been in the cave, and had given her the four gunny sacks to sleep on." *Star*, May 15, 1934; *Citizen*, May 16, 1934; JUROB #473.

52. "Lechi" was short for *caliche*. *Star*, May 15, 1934; *Citizen*, May 16 and 17, 1934; JUROB #401.