

CRIME

# Police nab Brown

## Woman suspected in 6 bank holdups

## Arraignment set for today in Norwich

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MONTVILLE — A week-long manhunt for a suspected serial bank robber ended Monday with the capture of Heather Brown.

The 34-year-old former Norwich woman was caught at 3:15 p.m. in Hartford, where state police spokesman Lt. J. Paul Vance said state police detectives were able to "intercept and apprehend her."

He declined to elaborate on the circumstances of her arrest other than to say she was not armed and she was taken into custody without incident.

Brown is a suspect in a spree of six bank robberies

that started Monday in Montville and continued on consecutive days at banks in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In all cases, a woman fitting Brown's description passed a note and threatened use of a bomb.

Brown arrived at 5:45 p.m. at Troop E in Montville and emerged from the front seat of an unmarked police car wearing an orange sweatshirt, its hood covering her face. She held her head down as a woman who declined to be identified yelled, "Hi, Heather," from behind a chain-link fence separating media and police.

Brown, with a last known address of 36 Ash Drive,



CONTRIBUTED  
Suspected bank robber Heather Brown was photographed by Waterford photographer and author Mark Mathew Braunstein in March 1997 as part of a project about New London-area prostitutes titled "Good Girls on Bad Drugs."

## Crimes often fueled by crack habit

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Within minutes of robbing a Groton bank in November 2006, Heather Brown was handing over \$300 to a waiting drug dealer

and smoking crack with a friend, police reports show.

The 34-year-old former Norwich woman arrested Monday and wanted in a spree of six bank robberies in three states has a history of crack cocaine addiction and told police at the time

of her arrest in 2006 "that her life always goes downhill when she is bingeing on this drug," police said.

"She's out trying to set some kind of record," said Mark Mathew Braunstein of

See BROWN, A7

## BROWN

Waterford in a recent interview.

### Prostitute project

Braunstein got to know Brown while compiling his literary and photography project called "Good Girls on Bad Drugs," which explores the lives of streetwalkers in the New London area. Braunstein, an art librarian at Connecticut College, began documenting the lives of prostitutes after he discovered some of them were meeting with johns on his private road.

Braunstein speculated that Brown was reveling in the attention and even watching herself on television during her suspected weeklong crime wave.

"This is what she wants," Braunstein said. "She wants the reputation. She enjoyed outsmarting people."

He described Brown as a

cunning, nonviolent, intelligent woman who had no problems stealing from people to fuel her drug habit. Braunstein met Brown in 1997 and later paid \$40 for rights to an autobiography Brown started writing while in drug rehab and continued while in prison. She was a crack addict who worked as a prostitute first at a massage parlor and later on her own on the streets, he said.

"By outsmarting us, Heather thinks she demonstrates that she is smarter than we, and she desperately wants to convince us how smart she is," Braunstein wrote in the introduction to Brown's unpublished story.

### 'She's ruthless'

Brown's lengthy adult criminal record dates back to 1985 and includes charges of prostitution, drug possession, larceny, burglary and assault. Braunstein said she was particularly adept at cashing checks from banks.

"She's ruthless."

Her longest sentence was 18 months in prison — in 2007 upon her conviction for the Nov. 17, 2006, robbery of the Charter Oak Federal Reserve Bank in Groton. She was released in March 2007. She walked into the bank and placed a black paper bag on the counter and handed the teller a note demanding \$50,000.

"There's a bomb in the black bag. Give me the money in bills. And no-one is to be alerted. Don't alert anyone. If you do, all die," the note demanded, according to the warrant affidavit.

According to the warrant affidavit, Braunstein

TALI GREENER/NORWICH BULLETIN  
Mark Mathew Braunstein talks about his decadelong project photographing and interviewing local prostitutes and drug addicts, during which he came to know suspected bank robber Heather Brown.



CONTRIBUTED  
Heather Brown, formerly of Norwich, was photographed by Waterford photographer and author Mark Mathew Braunstein in March 2007.



Heather's  
Bank  
Robberies

1 in 2006  
6 in 2009  
2 in 2024