

# Ronnie Crocker's Bio

Ronnie Crocker was born in Long Island, New York, but his family moved to South Florida where he grew up with his two brothers and two sisters. It was generally a good family with a hard-working father and a devoted mother. The big thing lacking in his early years was any spiritual training since the family was virtually unchurched.



Upon reaching the age of seventeen, he followed the example of many of his peers in the sixties and experimented with drugs – beginning with nicotine, alcohol, marijuana and ending up with LSD, cocaine and heroin. Ronnie was not a “functional” addict, and, more often than not, he got caught in the activities surrounding drug addiction. This resulted in a legal record that grew through the years. He often says he was doing a life sentence on the installment plan – 3 months here, 6 months there, and when he got out of jail, he would go right back to the drug scene. His parents tried everything to help him – counselors, psychiatrists, and about every drug program available in South Florida – but still there was something missing in his life. He attempted suicide on several occasions.

# Gunman Took Hostage To Get Drugs

## Confessed Addict Says Need for Methadone Triggered Abduction of Officer

● Family Thankful for Officer's Safety, A8  
By Tony Wharton  
Staff writer

LAKE WORTH — A confessed heroin addict will appear before a judge today on charges that he held a Lake Park police officer at gunpoint during a six-hour, 60-mile ramble yesterday morning that he said began because he was starved for methadone.

The standoff between Ronald G. Crocker, 31, and Palm Beach County sheriff's deputies ended in an impromptu press conference he summoned to a toll plaza on Florida's Turnpike.

Crocker told 15 reporters and cameramen assembled at 4:25 a.m., "I didn't want to hurt anyone. It was my only way out. If I had gone to jail without the methadone, I would have died."

Palm Beach County sheriff's officers said Crocker kidnaped Lake Park patrolman Michael

Micochero at gunpoint when Micochero, responding with two other officers to a motel manager's complaint that Crocker had not paid his bill, learned of a warrant against Crocker for violation of probation for a burglary charge.

The incident came one week, almost to the hour, after a siege in Palm Springs that ended only when Sheriff Richard Wille went on live television to urge gunman Jerome Erickson to release his five hostages.

During the press conference Crocker denied any knowledge of the Palm Springs siege, but police were skeptical that his demand for television coverage, so soon after the earlier incident, could be a coincidence.

When he surrendered, Crocker had in the police car two .357-caliber Magnum police revolvers, his own .25-caliber semiautomatic pistol and a police shotgun, police said.

Crocker was disarmed and handcuffed before he spoke to reporters. After speaking for less than 10 minutes, he was pulled away by sheriff's SWAT team members, searched and put into the back of a patrol car.

Charged by the Sheriff's Office with two counts of aggravated assault on a police officer, one count of false imprisonment and one count of kidnaping, Crocker was being held in the Palm Beach County Jail in lieu of \$10,500 bond.

Sheriff's Lt. Rick Paulus said that by 7 a.m. Crocker was sleeping soundly in a holding cell at the Sheriff's Office. He attributed it to a combination of exhaustion and the methadone tablets Crocker had demanded and received.

In his statements to reporters, Crocker said the need for methadone triggered the abduction.

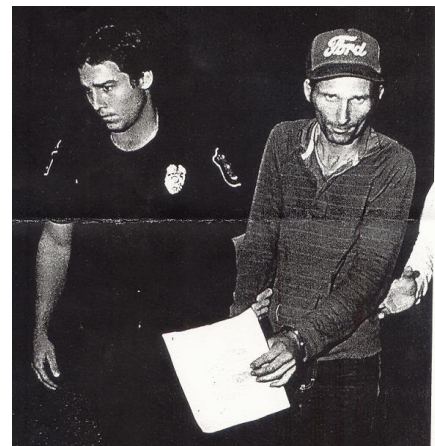
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Eventually, while staying in a hotel, the police were called due to his non-payment of the hotel bill. As their custom is, the police ran a background check and found the long list of crimes against him. Ronnie had just shot up with cocaine when the police knocked on the door. He submitted to the arrest but asked to get some medicine out of his bag. They made the mistake of allowing that move, so he pulled a gun out of his bag and disarmed the policemen. He forced one of the officers (the smaller one) to drive him out of there, and they drove for 6 hours. Unknown to Ronnie, the swat team was called in, helicopters were circling and an all-points bulletin was put out. A green light was issued which meant "if you have a shot, take him out." Oblivious to all that was taking place, Ronnie was coming down from his cocaine high.



sheriff's SWAT team members take Ronald G. Crocker to patrol car after his surrender and speech



Eventually, he agreed to give himself up if they met his demands. He wanted a chance to speak to the media, as well as a Hershey bar, some cigarettes and Methadone. His demands were met that night at an I-95 toll booth closed to traffic and packed with Police cars, S.W.A.T. team members and media from newspapers, radio and TV. He was allowed to air his grievances for a while, but when it went on too long, he was slapped with the handcuffs and escorted to the back seat of a police car. It seems even at that point, Ronnie had the potential to preach and, as we all know, occasionally preachers have a tendency to go too long.

During his 21 months in jail waiting for trial, he began to read the Bible. After a week-long trial, he was sentenced to twelve years in prison. In the prison environment, he looked around and saw men who would spend the rest of their lives there. He determined he didn't want that for his life. He began attending every church service available to the inmates. He was confused since they were all teaching different things. There were some who stood out to him because they brought cookies and ice cream. But there was one that especially stood out because the teaching was distinctive.



Frank Parker was a Christian mailman who had an active prison ministry. He remembers Ronnie as the one who had all kinds of questions. He spent many hours answering his question from the Bible, and Ronnie would go back to his cell and study constantly. After two and a half years, Ronnie was baptized in prison which began years of changing and growing. His prison epistles became somewhat like the apostle Paul's. They were circulated among the brotherhood and published in church bulletins.

After almost five years, Ronnie was released from prison. He was on probation for a while but eventually given back all his rights and privileges – except for owning a gun. Before his release, he had become extremely evangelistic, reaching out to many in prison. He had already taught his older brother who had come for a visit. He was the first in the family to follow Ronnie's example, but in time, his other brother, parents and sisters were all baptized. Ronnie set out to reach as many as possible and started bringing a station wagon full of folks from the half-way house to church. There were so many responses to his teaching that the elders sent him to Memphis School of Preaching. It was a difficult two years since subjects like Greek didn't come easy to him, but he worked hard and amazed all the church members back home with his good reports.

Upon his return to South Florida, he took a job as associate minister at a local congregation. He filled in for the preacher, worked with the young people and conducted Bible studies in jails and prisons in the area. He called this work "Project Rescue". He was even teaching a women's class in the Martin County Jail which made him uncomfortable. He asked one of the women at the church if she would be willing to take that class - to which she quickly agreed. They began working together in the jail, on the

church bulletin, Vacation Bible Schools, Bible Bowls, Prison Ministry Workshops and World Mission Events. All during this time, Ronnie was forever on call from families dealing with their relative's drug issues. He would work with them and help come up with a plan to bring them back to God and save them from the throws of addiction. His phone rang constantly since many parents didn't have a clue what to do next. He would guide and try to encourage them.

After eight and a half years of this exciting and stressful work, Ronnie and his co-worker were married. He preached for 3 different congregations, but they began to realize his real calling, which was to minister to those caught in the clutches of addiction. It seems God had been preparing him through all the struggles of his life for this very cause. The couple started their first residential program for men in a little town in South Georgia. It grew quickly with men coming from all over the country. Project Rescue quickly outgrew the little town, so when asked to move the operation to Alabama, it soon became a reality.



A new board of directors was formed, the 501©(3) was transferred and a name was suggested. It didn't take long for the board to agree on the name "Project Rescue". Ronnie has been the program manager for PR for almost 12 years, nine of those in Alabama. He continues to agonize and struggle over all the issues that arise every day. Right now he concentrates on each of the 24 men and their particular problems – ever searching for solutions and plans to help each of their lives. He mostly wants to give them what he was given – the opportunity to embrace Christianity and make it their reason for living.

This bio was written by his co-worker and wife – Jeanie Crocker