By Russ Pankonin, The Imperial Republican Co-Publisher

Just this week another attempted bank robbery occurred in our area—this time in Wallace. Last year it was in Palisade at their Credit Union. Remember the 2001 robbery at Enders when First State Bank still operated there?

All of these have one thing in common—it didn’t take long to apprehend the suspects of those crimes.

For some reason, people intent on robbing a bank seem to think it must be easy to stroll in to some little rural Nebraska town and their bank without raising much suspicion. WRONG!

If a person wanted to rob a bank, a small Nebraska town, like Wallace or Palisade or Imperial, should be the last place they come—if they were smart.

It’s a lot easier to mix with the hordes of people in the city. What they don’t seem to realize is that when somebody strange comes rolling into town and pulls on a ski mask before walking into the bank, people notice.

That’s just what happened in Wallace earlier this week. A pickup pulled up, stopped, and a passenger got out, pulled on a ski mask and proceeded to head into the bank.

Alert customers heading into the bank saw a masked man inside and immediately called 911. Another passerby raised his eyebrows when the pickup just sat there in the street, without even a license plate. To the locals, especially in a small town, that means trouble of some kind.

By the time the suspects hit the road, after failing to get any money from the bank, it didn’t take long for them to be spotted. Police Sergeant Ryan Wisnieski saw the vehicle and he called Sheriff Kevin Mueller for assistance. They pulled the vehicle over on the edge of Imperial and apprehended the suspects.

When the robbery occurred in Palisade, accurate descriptions of the suspect and car by locals aided in that arrest as well.

When the Enders bank was robbed, the robber was just driving down the highway when then-Sheriff Delbert Ewoldt spotted him and apprehended him.

In Monday’s attempted robbery in Wallace, a bank executive told the suspect that the money was all locked up. So, the suspect turned around and walked out. What kind of bank robber is that?

Fortunately, the outcome in all three of these incidents didn’t result in anyone being taken hostage, shot and/or killed.

We only have to think back to the bank robberies in Norfolk or Big Springs when robbers turned into killers.

Even in those cases, the vigilance of locals played a key role in the apprehension of those responsible.

That’s one of the advantages of living in a small town—we all look out for each other and things like this just don’t get by us.