

Cantonite nabbed in drug raid

By Alice Collins
staff writer

The U.S. Department of Justice went public in Detroit this week announcing federal drug charges against former Birmingham businessman Stephen Hagerman and his brother-in-law accused of heading a massive cocaine smuggling ring for the past five years.

The indictment alleges that Hagerman, 31, and John H. McCann III, 44, of Pittsburgh headed the operation, buying cocaine in several South American countries and smuggling it into Michigan and Pennsylvania.

Among the 22 people indicted along with Hagerman and McCann are their wives, Hagerman's mother and sister who live in Troy, his brother Douglas Hagerman of South Carolina, a Canton resident, and five men who live in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area.

The Canton resident indicted was James Johnston, age 38.

Also included are a Colombian diplomat and others in Michigan and Pennsylvania who allegedly participated in the illegal activities.

BIRMINGHAM POLICE Chief Edward Ostin said that the department wasn't directly involved with the investigation, "but we were aware that it was going on and cooperated with the FBI on it."

A uniformed Birmingham police officer was asked to accompany federal drug enforcement agents early Monday morning when they

made arrests at residences in the city.

All of those named in the indictments have not been taken into custody. While some have been arrested and arraigned in Detroit, arrangements have been made with some of the defendants to report in on their own.

Neither the indictment nor federal officials have revealed how and how much, if any, of the cocaine came into the Birmingham-Bloomfield area as well as the rest of the state.

However, during much of the time the operation was allegedly going on, Hagerman operated sporting goods stores in Oakland and Macomb counties, including Hagerman's Warehouse Sporting Goods on Hunter Boulevard which went bankrupt at the time he fled the county in 1984.

Hagerman, also a race car driver, owned a house on Westwood in Birmingham; one on Elmgate in Orchard Lake; the Smoke House Sally's Restaurant in Petoskey as well as cars, boats and a variety of other assets. The government has seized his assets.

HAGERMAN, who was living in Vancouver, Canada, after fleeing U.S. Customs Service agents in the fall of 1984, was arrested Friday by Royal Canadian Mounted Police and is in jail awaiting a hearing on extradition to the United States.

McCann, former mayor of Somers Point, N.J., was arrested in February at the Canadian border at Sumas, Wash., allegedly carrying false identification.

The most serious charge against Hagerman and McCann is that of being federal drug kingpins. The kingpin law carries a maximum penalty of life in prison without possibility of parole.

The case was developed by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force which investigates major drug trafficking rings, drug kingpins and money launderers, according to U.S. Attorney Roy C. Hayes.

The drug conspiracy involved bringing the cocaine into the United States by airplane, boat and pickup truck, the indictment said.

In one instance, the indictment alleges that in 1982, Hagerman and McCann were involved in the lease or purchase of a fleet of six jet aircraft to aid in the smuggling.

THE INDICTMENT includes 12 counts, with the 24 defendants named under various counts including conspiracy to possess with

intent to distribute cocaine, conspiracy to import cocaine and conspiracy to defraud the United States by obstructing the Internal Revenue Service collection of taxes owed by Hagerman and his wife, Sally, and McCann and his wife, Leah B. McCann.

Sally Hagerman is reported to be in a North Vancouver hospital this week where she gave birth to the couple's second child last Thursday night.

Sally Hagerman and Leah McCann are sisters. Leah McCann's whereabouts have not been disclosed.

According to Hayes, the agencies taking part in the case were the IRS; FBI; Drug Enforcement Administration; Customs Service; U.S. Marshal Service; police departments from Birmingham, Harbor Springs and Petoskey; Grand Traverse Sheriff's Department; Michigan Liquor Control Commission; and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

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District may benefit from change in law

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools could gain \$25,000-\$30,000 from the state, thanks to changes in how the state funds student transportation.

"It appears as if we may come out somewhere in that area," said Dale Goby, Plymouth-Canton director of transportation and safety. His estimate follows the state Board of Education's approval earlier this month of a new transportation funding formula.

Phillip Runkel, state superintendent of public instruction, said: "In some instances, the old reimbursement system did not reward the districts which operated their pupil transportation most efficiently."

"Each district received a fixed percentage of their total costs... whether its system was efficient or not," Runkel said. Under the new formula, some districts can recover a higher percentage of actual costs if a district is efficient in assessing costs.

The new formula bases funding on three major factors: miles traveled per pupil transported, depreciation cost of buses, and regional variations in costs and overhead.

"Some of these factors are controllable which can lead to more efficient districts receiving a higher percentage of their actual costs," Runkel explained.

"We've been using computers to route buses for seven or eight years," Goby said, explaining that efficient planning in Plymouth-Canton should result in increased state funding.

The rules were developed as part of the 1985-86 State Act for Transportation. "Because of the major shift in emphasis in this year's state aid act," said Runkel, "we have been able to simplify pupil transportation accounting and eliminate a number of complex, time consuming reporting activities of the local and intermediate school districts."

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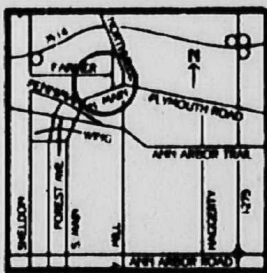
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