

Durham's Dark Drug World Features Deals and Death

By Isaiah Singletary
Stanley Smith, Jr., and James Wood ran together in Durham's illegal drug scene.

For the most part, according to those who knew both men, Smith was a user, mostly cocaine and marijuana; while Wood, whose nicknames "Minnesota" and "New York City" indicate his penchant for travel, was a dealer.

"I've known Minnesota for about five years," said one of Durham's more prolific pushers who refused to be identified, "and we've sold some drugs together. Yeah, Minnesota was into drugs."

Smith, too, was into drugs, and sometimes worked as a contact between local and some out-of-town suppliers and Durham's pushers. According to sources on the street, Smith had helped Minnesota turn some deals in the past.

Thus were drugs the link that tied Smith and Wood together. It was also the link that caused Smith to be shot to death in a patch of woods off Fayetteville Road about five weeks ago. And it was this same deadly link that has Wood facing either the gas chamber of a life sentence for murder in Smith's death.

This incident of random, but almost acceptable violence gives a clear, but rare look into Durham's dark world of drugs, revealing that all is not partying and getting high. There is the much darker side of lies, doublecrossings and double-dealings.

The drug scene is a hard world. It is a violent world.

There are no hard statistics on how many deaths in Durham are directly drug-related, but police generally say that much of all the violence in a city this size can be traced directly or indirectly to the proliferation of narcotics.

Drugs are addictive in more ways than one. First, there's the drug itself, and according to police sources, Durham's main drugs are marijuana, cocaine, hashish and a broad variety of pills — uppers, downers and in-betweeners.

But the money that drug trafficking brings is even more addictive. The money can be fast and plentiful.

For example, right now, with the market a little slow, a pound of top quality marijuana could bring you \$1000 a day, according to certain street sources.

And with cocaine, you can make much, much more money, if you have the right contacts.

But the combination of a high demand market and the quick, easy money produces a deadly mixture.

Smith, 33, learned that the hard way and it was a tragic lesson — one that need not have ever happened.

According to Mrs. Jane Smith, Smith's mother, her son had recently returned to Durham after traveling with his uncle whose business is supplying concession stands for touring recording artists.

"We were trying to get him set up in some type of business," she explained, "because he just didn't like regular jobs."

On the Sunday before Smith was shot to death the next night, he had been scheduled to leave Durham with his uncle to begin another business tour.

But, according to Mrs. Smith, his sister and his girlfriend talked Smith into staying in Durham for a couple more days.

That proved to be a fatal decision.

By piecing together testimony in a preliminary court hearing where charges were dropped against three of the five men originally charged with kidnapping and killing Smith, and

conversations with a broad variety of street sources, *The Carolina Times* has patched together a picture that shows the daily uncertainty of life in the drug world, the short fuse that can explode almost without warning.

One glaring irony is that in the drug world, lives can be blown away on a whim of suspicion, without even a hint of proof. Justice, on the other hand, comes only after a clear case of proof.

But proof comes hard. According to the prosecution's chief witness — Richard Conrad — in a preliminary hearing last month, Smith and Wood fought over a drug dispute in the parking lot next to the Party Sac convenience store in the 3000 block of Fayetteville Street.

Another witness, Ms. Anita Harris, Smith's girlfriend, who said she called the police after seeing Smith forced into a car following the fight with Wood, told the court that one of the men with Wood, Michael Chavis, held a shotgun to keep the crowd from interfering in the fight.

Later, according to Conrad, he, Wood and Wilbert Richmond and Smith got into a car with Richmond driving and heading south on Fayetteville Street. Chavis, Kendrick Bagley and Kenneth Holloway followed in another car.

Street sources say that the fight was about some drug money. There are two stories on the street, one as acceptable as the other.

One story says that

Wood, with the other four men chipping in, had given Smith either \$3000 or \$5000 to buy a supply of cocaine.

The other story says that the men gave the money to Smith, and another man, known only as Thad.

But whoever had the money, it disappeared, and no cocaine replaced it. In the drug world that's an unpardonable sin.

Sources estimate that quality cocaine sells for about \$100 a gram on the street (retail), or about \$2800 per ounce. These sources say that if a group of guys, such as these five, had put together about \$5000 to buy some cocaine, they were probably making a wholesale purchase. With there being about a two for one profit margin on cocaine, a \$5000 purchase would translate to more than \$11,000 worth of dope on the street.

What is not clear, either from police reports, court testimony, or interviews on the street, is what the men thought had happened to the money. There is no indication whether they thought Smith had kept the \$5000, or if he had bought the cocaine, and kept it, hoping to hog the profit.

But whatever the case, according to Conrad's court testimony, the five "investors" drove into a patch of woods, and when they left, Smith was fatally wounded and dying in the back seat of one of the cars.

He was pronounced dead at Duke Medical Center about 11 p.m.

Monday, July 12.

Originally, kidnap and murder charges were filed against all five men: Wood, Bagley, Chavis, Richmond and Holloway. But following a preliminary hearing, District Court Judge J. Milton Read dropped charges against Bagley, Chavis and Holloway. Wood and Richmond, both out on \$15,000 bonds, are still charged with murder.

But more than anything else, this case graphically shows the deadly demeanor of the drug world, where deals are part of the day to day activity, and death is often the bottom line.

Black Voting Age Population Now 17 Million

[NNPA] The number of voting age blacks rose 44 per cent from 12 million in 1970 to 17 million in 1980, with four states reporting a black electorate of one million or more, according to a new report from the Commerce Department's Census Bureau.

In 1980 New York had the largest number of voting age blacks (1.6 million) followed by California, Texas and Illinois. The increase reflects the lowered voting eligibility to 18 years in all states, and growth of the black population, up 17.5 per cent from 1970.

Two-thirds of the District of Columbia's



ST. LOUIS—Rep. William L. Clay, the only black congressman in Missouri's history, is mobbed by supporters after winning the right to seek an eighth-term by defeating the stiffest opposition of his 14-year political career. State Sen. Allan G. Mueller of St. Louis, who is white, waged a vigorous fight against Clay. UPI Photo

electorate is black. States with the highest proportion of voting age blacks are Mississippi (31%), South Carolina and Louisiana (27%), Georgia (24%), Alabama (23%), Maryland (21%), North Carolina (20%) and Virginia (17%).

In 1980, blacks comprised 10.5 per cent of the total voting age population nationally, with 53 per cent living in the South. In 1980, 9.8 million blacks reported being registered while 8.3 million reported voting in the 1980 election.

The black outmigration from the South that began in World War I

and which spread settlement of blacks throughout the United States until the mid-70s considerably equalized the regional distribution of blacks. Nevertheless, in 1980 one in every six persons of voting age in the South was black.

The Spanish-origin voting age population comprised about 5.5 per cent of the total electorate in 1980. California and Texas together contained half of the Spanish-origin electorate (2.8 and 1.8 million), followed by New York (1.1 million) and Florida (629,000). Nearly 70 per cent of the Hispanic voting age population

resided in these four states.

The report notes that women are the majority of the voting age population in all states except Alaska, Hawaii, Nevada, and Wyoming. It projects that the nation's voting age population will reach 170 million in November 1982, a five million increase over the total for the 1980 election and 29 million more than in November 1972.

Copies of the report, *Projections of the Population of Voting Age for States: November 1982, Series P-25, No. 916, (GPO Stock No. 003-001-91411-5)*, are available for \$2.25 each prepaid from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or from Commerce district offices in major cities.

Ellis Media Report

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