

8 Drug Defendants Plead Guilty; Williamson Gets 2-Year Sentence

BY RAHN ADAMS

One month after being indicted in "Operation White Tide," eight drug defendants—including a former Ocean Isle Beach town official—pleaded guilty this week to cocaine trafficking charges and were sentenced.

The eight included former Ocean Isle Beach Commissioner DeCarol Williamson, 37, Arthur Boyd Duncan, 27, and Sheila Jane Edwards, 25, all of Ocean Isle Beach; Jerry Delane Carter, 31, Charles E. Maree, 31, and James Wallace Stone Jr., 27, all of Shallotte; Brian Keith Lewis, 24, of Wilmington; and Randy Lee Smith, 28, of Myrtle Beach, S.C.

They were among 48 individuals named in 270 drug trafficking indict-

ments handed down last month by a Brunswick County investigative grand jury. Special Assistant District Attorney Bill Wolak said Monday that the eight were involved in the same "conspiracy," which occurred in early 1984, according to indictments.

With their cases handled together, the defendants entered guilty pleas Monday in Brunswick County Superior Court and were sentenced Tuesday by Judge Giles R. Clark. Each was convicted through a plea arrangement, according to testimony.

Also, all eight received lighter sentences and fines than are required by drug trafficking laws, after Clark determined that each had been of

"substantial assistance" to the state during the drug investigation. Until that determination, each faced a mandatory minimum sentence of 35 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Williamson—a local businessman and the son of Ocean Isle Beach developer Odell Williamson—pleaded guilty as charged to conspiracy to traffic in more than 400 grams of cocaine and trafficking by possession of more than 400 grams of cocaine.

According to the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office, he was sentenced to a two-year prison term and \$10,000 fine on the consolidated charges. Clark recommended the defendant for immediate work release.

Brunswick County Sheriff John C. Davis said Williamson was in custody at the county jail Tuesday afternoon and was to be turned over to the N.C. Department of Corrections Wednesday.

The other seven defendants each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to traffic in more than 400 grams of cocaine. In keeping with their plea agreements, additional trafficking charges against them were dismissed by the state.

Two others besides Williamson were given active prison time. According to the clerk of court's office, Carter and Maree were sentenced to \$2,500 fines and two-year terms, suspended for three years, with three

years of special probation. In addition, each was ordered to serve four months in the Brunswick County Jail and perform 100 hours of community service work.

Duncan, Ms. Edwards, Lewis, Smith and Stone were sentenced to 18-month prison terms, suspended for three years, with three years of probation, according to the clerk of court's office. Each was fined \$1,500 and was ordered to perform 150 hours of community service work.

Testimony during court proceedings Monday indicated that at least six of the eight defendants signed plea agreements months prior to the April indictments.

District Attorney Mike Easley told the Beacon Monday that the plea

agreements were obtained in that manner "so we can quietly move to the top (of a given conspiracy). That's why we use the investigative grand jury."

The district attorney's office obtained a plea agreement from Stone on July 14, 1987; Williamson, Oct. 26, 1987; Maree, Dec. 24, 1987; Carter, Dec. 31, 1987; Smith, Jan. 5; and Duncan, Jan. 12. No dates were given for the agreements signed by Ms. Edwards and Lewis.

As far as additional indictments in "Operation White Tide" are concerned, Easley said Monday that the investigation is continuing. "We're just working on it the best we can," he said.

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STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

SHALLOTTE RESCUE SQUAD members search for the body of Shallotte businessman Jesse Simmons in a section of the Waccamaw River near Freeland. The body was found after rescue volunteers and divers

dragged the area for about 11 hours last Friday. Pictured here, from left, are Minor Hewett, Danni Moore and Greg White, who is also Brunswick County coroner.

Local Businessman Drowns In River

BY DOUG RUTTER

Investigation into the drowning death of a prominent Shallotte businessman continued Tuesday after his body was recovered from the Waccamaw River last Friday.

Rescue workers found the body of Jesse Oliver Simmons, 58, of Shallotte and Route 2, Ash, last week in the section of the Waccamaw River known as Big Babson Lake.

Brunswick County Coroner Greg White said the cause of death was drowning.

However, Charles Haynes, master enforcement officer with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, said

Tuesday he was still investigating the incident.

He said he was waiting for the coroner's report and results of a blood test. Haynes said there was no reason to suspect foul play.

Simmons, who was owner of R.E. Bellamy & Sons Hardware in Shallotte, was apparently fishing at the time of the drowning.

Brunswick County Emergency Management Director Cecil Logan said Simmons left the house Thursday about 7 p.m. to check fishing nets which he had put out earlier in the day.

Logan said he was called Friday

about 1 a.m., about two hours after Simmons' family became concerned and started searching the area.

Waccamaw Volunteer Rescue Squad, he said, was on the scene when he arrived and volunteers from Shallotte Volunteer Rescue Squad arrived about 2:30 a.m.

Rescuers started the search after the area was lighted with a generator. However, many said the search was difficult before daybreak because of heavy fog on the water.

The 11-hour search ended about noon Friday when volunteers in the

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19 Indicted Monday In Undercover Drug Probe

BY RAHN ADAMS

Local and state law enforcement agencies joined forces in a year-long undercover investigation that resulted in drug indictments this week against 19 individuals described by a local narcotics agent as "street dealers."

"What we're trying to show is, not only are we going after major drug traffickers, we're trying to get the street dealers, too," said Detective Sgt. David Crocker of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department. "We're not forgetting about them."

A Brunswick County grand jury Monday returned 93 true bills of indictment against 18 Brunswick County residents and a Florida man, according to the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office.

The indictments—involving marijuana, cocaine and prescription drugs—stem from the joint probe by the sheriff's department, SBI and Southport Police Department, Crocker said.

He said the investigation—dubbed "Operation Beach Sand"—was coordinated by the sheriff's department and involved undercover buys made by an SBI agent and a Southport officer between April 1987 and March in the Ocean Isle Beach, Holden Beach, Long Beach and Southport areas. The buys ranged from at least one-quarter ounce of marijuana to as much as two ounces of cocaine.

Sheriff John C. Davis said Tuesday afternoon that officers were attempting to round up the defendants. Information on the number apprehended Tuesday was unavailable at presstime.

"This has been kept behind closed doors, as of this date," Crocker said Monday. "The ones we know will flee, we will be picking them up first."

According to the clerk of court's office, individuals indicted Monday included the following:

•Tony Brown, Bolivia, sale of marijuana, and possession of marijuana with intent to sell and deliver.

•Lori Ann Busby, Southport, sale of dextropropoxyphene, hydrocodone, chlorthalidone and alprazolam, and possession with intent to sell and deliver each of those prescription drugs.

•Stephen Reese Dean, Shallotte,

three counts of sale of marijuana, three counts of possession of marijuana with intent to sell and deliver, and three counts of maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of distribution.

•Jeffery Mark Harden, Holden Beach, sale of marijuana, and possession of marijuana with intent to sell and deliver.

•Freddie Hewett, Shallotte, sale of marijuana, possession of marijuana with intent to sell and deliver, and conspiracy to sell marijuana.

•Michael Hampton Hewett, Shallotte, sale of marijuana, possession of marijuana with intent to sell and deliver, and conspiracy to sell marijuana.

•Weldon Paul Hewett, Shallotte, felonious possession of marijuana and maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of distribution.

•Robert Hicks, Southport, sale of alprazolam, chlorthalidone and hydrocodone, and possession with intent to sell and deliver each of those prescription drugs.

•Bubba Howard, Southport, sale of marijuana, and possession of marijuana with intent to sell and deliver, and conspiracy to sell marijuana.

•Ellery Charles Jett, Holden Beach, four counts of sale of marijuana, four counts of possession of marijuana with intent to sell and deliver, two counts of conspiracy to sell marijuana, and four counts of maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of distribution.

•Stacy Earl Leonard, Holden Beach, two counts of sale of cocaine, two counts of possession of cocaine with intent to sell and deliver, and

two counts of maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of distribution.

•James McClain, Leland, two counts of sale of cocaine, two counts of possession of cocaine with intent to sell and deliver, two counts of conspiracy to sell cocaine, and two counts of maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of distribution.

•Frank Simmons, Leland, two counts of sale of cocaine, two counts of possession of cocaine with intent to sell and deliver, two counts of conspiracy to sell cocaine, and two counts of maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of distribution.

•Marshall Eugene Starnes, Yaupon Beach, sale of cocaine, and possession of cocaine with intent to sell and deliver.

•Rodney Wayne Suggs, Holden Beach, sale of marijuana, possession of marijuana with intent to sell and deliver, and conspiracy to sell marijuana.

•Connie Blackwelder Underwood, Long Beach, sale of cocaine, possession of cocaine with intent to sell and deliver, and maintaining a vehicle for the purpose of distribution.

•Jerry Varnam, Southport, sale of marijuana, possession of marijuana with intent to sell and deliver, and conspiracy to sell marijuana.

•Boyd Walter, Ocean Isle Beach, sale of marijuana, possession of marijuana with intent to sell and deliver, and maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of distribution.

•David Boyer, Orlando, Fla., three counts of trafficking in cocaine and maintaining a vehicle for the purpose of distribution.



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Feels Like Dancin'

Ashley Marshall of Shallotte tap dances to a medley of show tunes during Saturday's Junior and Teen Miss Brunswick County Pageant at Shallotte Middle School. Miss Marshall was later crowned Junior Miss Brunswick County, while the title of Teen Miss went to Leslie Causey of Supply. The story and more photos are inside this issue.

Holden Beach Boy Found Floating In Canal Dies

BY DOUG RUTTER

A Holden Beach child lost his battle for life Tuesday night after he was found floating in a canal outside his mother's home Monday morning. William Derek Williamson, the four-year-old son of William Williamson and Pauline Williamson, died Tuesday at 8:14 p.m. at North Carolina Memorial Hospital in Chapel Hill, a hospital spokeswoman said.

The child, who was found in the canal east of Sand Dollar Drive about 10:30 a.m. Monday, was flown to N.C. Memorial early Tuesday morning after first being treated at The Brunswick Hospital in Supply and New Hanover Memorial Hospital in Wilmington.

He had been in critical condition for more than 33 hours. According to Brunswick Hospital spokesperson Francis Williamson, the child arrived at the Supply hospital in a Coastline Volunteer Rescue Squad ambulance at 11:15 a.m. Monday and about an hour later was transported to New Hanover Memorial Hospital with the help of a hospital critical care team. She said the boy's condition was critical at the time of arrival and departure.

New Hanover Memorial spokesperson Audra West said Williamson was still in critical condition when he was transported by helicopter to N.C. Memorial early Tuesday morning.

Holden Beach Mayor John Tandy, who chairs the board of commissioners on which the child's father serves, said early Tuesday, "Everybody and his brother was at the hospital yesterday afternoon. It's really bad news."

Although details of the incident were still sketchy Tuesday evening, Tandy and Allen Dameron, another friend of the Williamson family, both said they heard reports that someone with a background in nursing was present when the child was found in the canal and that she played some part in restoring his breathing. Tandy also said he heard that a neurologist was called in Monday night before the child was transported to Chapel Hill.

Repeated attempts to get information on the accident from the Holden Beach Police Department were unsuccessful. Officers told The Brunswick Beacon the matter was still under investigation.