

Two Get Active Prison Terms For Local Church Break-Ins

BY TERRY POPE

Two men charged with the larceny of more than \$12,000 worth of amplifier and music equipment from five Brunswick County churches were sentenced to prison last week in Brunswick County Superior Court.

Ira Douglas Mathis, 18, and Thomas Elmor Wright, 30, were arrested in July at the Town and Country Motel in Belville by officers from Brunswick and New Hanover County sheriff's departments.

Mathis was sentenced to 25 years in prison by Judge Lynn Robinson and Wright was given a 20-year sentence after the two men entered guilty pleas to some of the charges last Thursday.

The two men were also charged with breaking and entering and larceny involving 10 churches in New Hanover County and three churches within the city limits of Wilmington. The five churches broken into in Brunswick County were Peace Memorial Baptist Church in Winabow, New Hope Free Will Baptist Church near Leland, Lettie's Grove Pentecostal Church in Shallotte, Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Bolivia and First Baptist Church of Woodburn.

Mathis had been charged in all five break-ins while Wright was not charged in the break-in at Woodburn. The men had been held in the Brunswick County Jail under \$65,000 bond since their arrest in July.

Judge Robinson, resident Superior Court judge in Cumberland County, ordered that the men receive credit for time served in jail while awaiting trial. He also ordered that Mathis receive substance abuse counseling and that he not benefit as a committed youthful offender.

Mathis pleaded guilty to five counts of breaking and entering and larceny while Wright pleaded guilty to count of breaking and entering and larceny and no contest to two counts. Each count carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a minimum of three years.

Brunswick County Sheriff detectives recovered some of the property following a search of the Belville motel room where the men were staying. Some of the items taken were believed to have been sold through a fencing operation. The items included musical equipment, amplifiers, guitars, public-address systems, speakers and cassette players.

Judge Robinson also heard the following cases during a special criminal session of Superior Court last week:

■Brenda Gale Todd Crocker, 28, of Route 6, Shallotte, was given a five-year suspended sentence after pleading guilty to 34 counts of embezzlement. Crocker was indicted in November on charges that she embezzled amounts ranging from \$10 to \$30 on 34 separate occasions

while employed with the Minute Man Food Mart, which has stores in Calabash, Shallotte and Seaside. She was placed on five years' supervised probation and ordered to repay \$690 to the food store and pay \$350 in attorney fees.

■David Crummy, 28, of Wilmington, was found guilty by a jury of assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious bodily injury and discharging a firearm into occupied property and was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Crummy's half-brother, John E. McGhee, 25, of Wilmington, was also on trial, but the jury found McGhee not guilty of the charges facing him stemming from an April 8 shooting at a Navassa night club. Steven Earl Grady and Terrance Stokely were hit by gunfire during an argument outside Valentino's.

Crummy was convicted in New Hanover County Superior Court earlier this year on eight counts of trafficking in cocaine from New York. He was accused of leading a 40-member gang that allegedly brought in 77 pounds of "crack" cocaine to New Hanover County between July 1987 and July 1988. He was sentenced to 280 years in prison and fined \$2 million. One of the men shot in Navassa was a key witness for the state in that trial. Crummy's attorney, Michael Ramos, filed notice that he will appeal the case to the N.C. Court of Appeals. Crummy is being held under \$1 million bond.

■David Christopher Beacham, 21, of Charlotte, pleaded guilty to possession of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and received a prayer for judgment continued until Jan. 14. Beacham was arrested March 10 by Shallotte Police Officer G.J. Semek for possession of LSD and drug paraphernalia. He is a student at Central Piedmont Community College, the arrest warrant stated.

■Jerry Lee McNeil, 37, of Airport Road, Shallotte, was given a three-year suspended sentence and placed on five years' supervised probation after pleading guilty to possession with intent to sell and deliver "crack" cocaine. McNeil was also fined \$300 and ordered to perform 200 hours of community service.

He was stopped in May by the Shallotte Police for driving left of center on N.C. 130 west. When he stepped from the vehicle, a medicine bottle containing 29 pieces of "crack" cocaine fell onto the ground. Another bottle containing four pieces was also confiscated along with \$1,067 in cash. The drugs were valued at \$3,300. The cash seized in the case is to be turned over to the Brunswick County Schools. McNeil was ordered to enroll in a substance abuse program.



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