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Suspected drug dealers busted

By **SUSAN R. HARRIS**
Editor

Alleged drug traffickers in Perquimans County had a head-on collision with law enforcement last week.

Ten locals suspected of operating a drug organization were indicted by a federal grand jury sitting in Raleigh on Aug. 15 and 16. The indictments were unsealed on Aug. 22 and eight suspects were arrested last week. Two remain at large and are now considered fugitives, according to Jane Jolly, a prosecutor with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Jolly said the group is suspected of supplying drugs throughout the entire Albemarle area.

The indictments resulted from an operation that has been in progress for over a year. Coordinating their efforts, local, state and federal agencies worked to piece together sufficient evidence to gain federal indictments and seek long-term incarceration for the alleged dealers. If convicted on all counts, all 10 could receive life imprisonment. They also face the possibility of having to pay fines ranging from \$8 million-\$36 million. In addition, prosecutors will seek the forfeiture of any property which was derived from or used to facilitate drug trafficking crimes, including real estate and personal property.

Jolly said she and fellow

prosecutor Christine Dean will seek a minimum mandatory 20 year sentences with no parole for each defendant. She will try to put defendant Barry Lorenza Ford behind bars for life because of his prior history, she said.

Arrested were:

- Barry Lorenza Ford, 39, of Route 5, Hertford, charged with conspiracy to possess and distribute cocaine base (crack) and four counts of distribution of cocaine base.

- Willie Louis Ford, 36, charged with conspiracy to possess and distribute cocaine base (crack) and 10 counts of distribution of cocaine base.

- James Robert Miller, 27, of Lot 64, Meads Trailer Park,

charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine base (crack); distribution of cocaine base; and distribution of cocaine base to a pregnant individual.

- Ponce Lemont Lee, 30, of 329 W. Market St., charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine base (crack) and distribution of cocaine base.

- Rodney Lightfoot, 30, of Route 1, charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine base (crack) and distribution of cocaine base to a pregnant individual.

- Nicole Montressa Lightfoot, 24, of Route 1, charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distrib-

ute cocaine base (crack) and distribution of cocaine base to a pregnant individual.

- Delaware Khan Hunter, charged with conspiracy to possess and distribute cocaine base (crack) and two counts of distribution of cocaine base.

- James Louis Riddick, 52, of Route 2, charged with conspiracy to possess and distribute cocaine base (crack) and distribution of cocaine base.

Also indicted were:

- Fronzy Levell Miller, 31, of 329 W. Market St., charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine base (crack) and distribution of cocaine base.

- Quandra Demone Downing, 19, of 221 King St.,

charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine base (crack) and distribution of cocaine base.

Jolly said that because pregnant individuals are considered at greater risk from drug use than the general population, the charge of distribution to a pregnant individual carries a double penalty.

According to U.S. Attorney Janice M. Cole, the FBI, SBI, Elizabeth City Police Department, Hertford Police Department, Perquimans County Sheriff's Department and Pasquotank County Sheriff's Department were all involved in the lengthy investigation. Special agents with the IRS assisted with the arrests.

Arrests should slow drug traffic

Hertford Police Chief Bennie Murphy thinks the arrests of eight Perquimans County residents on federal drug charges will stem the county's drug traffic.

"It's going to slow it down quite a bit at least for a while," Murphy said. "It's not going to stop it, but it will slow it down."

Three of those indicted have prior drug convictions in Perquimans County. There are also charges still pending against several.

James Louis Riddick was found guilty of possession of a schedule II controlled substance in Perquimans County Superior Court in March. Charges of driving while impaired and driving while license revoked were scheduled to be heard here this week.

Willie Louis Ford was found guilty in February 1993 of possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine and possession of a firearm by a felon. Five other drug charges were dismissed by the district attorney at that time.

There are also prior convictions and pending charges against Barry Lorenza Ford. Ford's probation was revoked in March stemming from June 1992 charges of possession of a schedule II controlled substance. He was found guilty in district court of resist a public officer in March 1995. That conviction has been appealed to superior court and is still pending. Other pending cases against Ford are November 1993 charges of possession of a schedule II controlled substance, January 1995 charges of possession with intent to sell and deliver a schedule II controlled substance, and January 1995 charges of driving while license revoked.

Delaware Khan Hunter was convicted in 1990 of felony breaking and entering. Charges of assault inflicting serious injury are pending against Ponce Lamont Lee.

Fronzy Miller was convicted of possession of less than 1 gram of cocaine in 1989. There are two outstanding warrants on Quandra Downing dated December 1994 for possession with the intent to sell and deliver a schedule II controlled substance and sell or deliver a schedule II controlled substance.

LAST FLING OF SUMMER



PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

Residents at Hertford Housing Authority enjoyed an end-of-summer picnic and fun day Saturday. District Court Judge J.C. Cole was head cook, serving up grilled hamburgers and hotdogs for neighborhood children. Everyone seemed to have a good time.

Gun thieves plead guilty to federal charges

By **GINGER LIVINGSTON**
The Daily Advance

NEW BERN - Five local men pleaded guilty in federal court here last week to stealing over 100 firearms from an Edenton pawn shop in January.

The men will be sentenced sometime in November on multiple counts of firearms theft and possession of stolen weapons, said Gloria Dupree, spokeswoman with the U.S. Attorney's office in Raleigh.

Robert Mallory Jr., 22, Henry Mallory, 44, and Tylvoice Coston, 24, all of Hertford, pleaded guilty to stealing and unlawfully carrying away firearms from a federal firearms licensee and

receiving, storing and concealing stolen firearms.

Leo Downing, 18, of Elizabeth City pleaded guilty to those charges and to conspiring to steal firearms from a federal firearms licensee.

Sylvester Twine, 18, of Hertford pleaded guilty to stealing and unlawfully carrying away firearms from a federal firearms licensee; receiving, storing and concealing stolen firearms; conspiring to steal firearms from a federal firearms licensee; and the charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

The men pleaded guilty to the Jan. 5 theft of rifles and shotguns from J&H Pawn Shop on Virginia Road in

Edenton. The Mallorys were arrested two days later when off-duty Elizabeth City police officers hunting in the Chapanoke area observed two suspicious-acting men near a shed in the Five Bridges Road area. The officers examined the shed area and discovered approximately 10 weapons they suspected were taken from the pawn shop. The Chowan County Sheriff's Department was called to investigate along with agents from the SBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Within days Twine and Downing were arrested. Coston was arrested when federal indictments were handed down on Jan. 24.

Hertford men say the accused are considered guilty until proven innocent

By **SUSAN R. HARRIS**
Editor

In America, you're supposed to be innocent until proven guilty. Two Hertford men say that's not the way many people think.

Sidney Sheldon and Kenneth Owens were served with criminal summonses charging them with breaking and entering on July 18. The men contend that they are not guilty and hope to prove it in court if they need to. But both say that hasn't stopped people from treating them like criminals.

Sheldon, the owner of Sheldon's Mini-Mart in Winfall, said he's even lost customers since his name appeared in the newspaper in the arrest report.

In separate interviews, both men told the same story of how they came to be served with papers summoning them to Perquimans County District Court on Aug. 31.

Sheldon owns a mobile home in the Snug Harbor area which he rents. He said the renters were two months behind on their rent as of July 1 and also still owed him some

money on the security deposit. The renters stopped by his store in late June and said if the rent was not paid by July 1 to "consider them gone."

Owens was there and verified that he overheard the conversation. The rent was not paid on July 1 and the renters had not made further contact with Sheldon.

On July 5, Sheldon hired Owens to help him clean out the mobile home. Both men said the home was infested with roaches, fleas and maggots.

"If Sid hasn't been a friend

of mine, I would not have gone in that trailer for any amount of money," Owens said.

The two men boxed and bagged personal property left by the renters and set off bombs to try to kill the insects. They removed pets left inside the mobile home and chained them up outside. The locks were changed. They pair left the property at approximately 2:30-2:45 p.m., Sheldon said.

At about 6 p.m., Sheldon said he got a call from the renters demanding to be allowed back into the mobile home or they would have him

arrested. Sheldon denied the request.

In about 10 more minutes, Sheldon said he got a call from the couple, who had gone to the Perquimans County Magistrate's office, asking Sheldon to allow them to rent the mobile home. Sheldon again refused, telling them he would not rent to them because they had damaged the mobile home and had not paid the rent owed.

Sheldon said he spoke next with magistrate Todd Tilley, who told him he had to rent **Please see Guilty** Page 3

Suspects to await trial in jail

By **JOHN JACKSON**
The Daily Advance

Five of the eight Hertford residents arrested last week on federal drug charges will remain in the custody of federal marshal until their trials, Federal District Court Judge Terrence Boyle ruled last Thursday.

James Robert Miller, Ponce Lemont Lee, Rodney Lightfoot, Barry Lorenza Ford and James Louis Riddick appeared separately in U.S. District Court in Elizabeth City. Following testimony at their first court appearance, Boyle ruled all five would remain in the custody of U.S. marshals.

Of the other suspects, two are already incarcerated on related charges, two are still at-large and are considered fugitives and one has yet to make a first court appearance.

U.S. Prosecutor Jane Jolly presented the evidence against each of the alleged dealers and asked the court that they be detained until their trials.

Jolly said she considered all five a risk to the community who would possibly flee the

area. She said Fronzy Miller, one of those indicted who remains at large, is believed to be in New York. He is the brother of James Miller and the cousin of Rodney Lightfoot.

According to the evidence gathered since 1991, Barry Ford is the apparent ring-leader of the suspected organization which primarily sells and distributes crack cocaine in Perquimans County. Jolly said she will seek a mandatory life sentence for Ford.

Miller is also suspected of being a leader within the organization, in charge of getting the cocaine from sources in New York.

Riddick is an alleged facilitator within the organization. Jolly said Riddick would take interested buyers to the Fords who would allegedly sell them the crack cocaine.

Lee is a suspected local runner within the organization.

Lightfoot is an alleged lieutenant within the organization. Jolly said that agents spent \$11,000 this past June purchasing drugs from Lightfoot.

Outside

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
 High: 90s Low: 60s FAIR	 High: 90s Low: 60s CHANCE OF RAIN	 High: 90s Low: 60s CHANCE OF RAIN