

Marijuana seized from semi

Police arrest 6 in 1,400-pound bust in Lorain County

By MOLLY KAVANAUGH
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

ELYRIA — When a tractor-trailer rig packed with a theatrical set and 1,400 pounds of marijuana pulled into a Carlisle Township warehouse early Wednesday morning, undercover officers posing as drug dealers were waiting to make one of the biggest drug busts in Lorain County history.

Sheriff Martin Mahony said the officers had promised \$1.4 million for the marijuana. Its street value is estimated at \$2.4 million, he said.

The five men who allegedly delivered the marijuana, listing addresses in Arizona and Mexico, were unarmed, and the arrests went pretty much according to plan, said Sheriff's Capt. Dennis Cavanaugh, head of the Lorain County Drug Task Force.

One of the men tried to run away, but was apprehended, Mahony said.

A sixth person, a 42-year-old woman, was arrested a couple of hours later at an Amherst motel. There, police found a suitcase containing more than \$186,000.

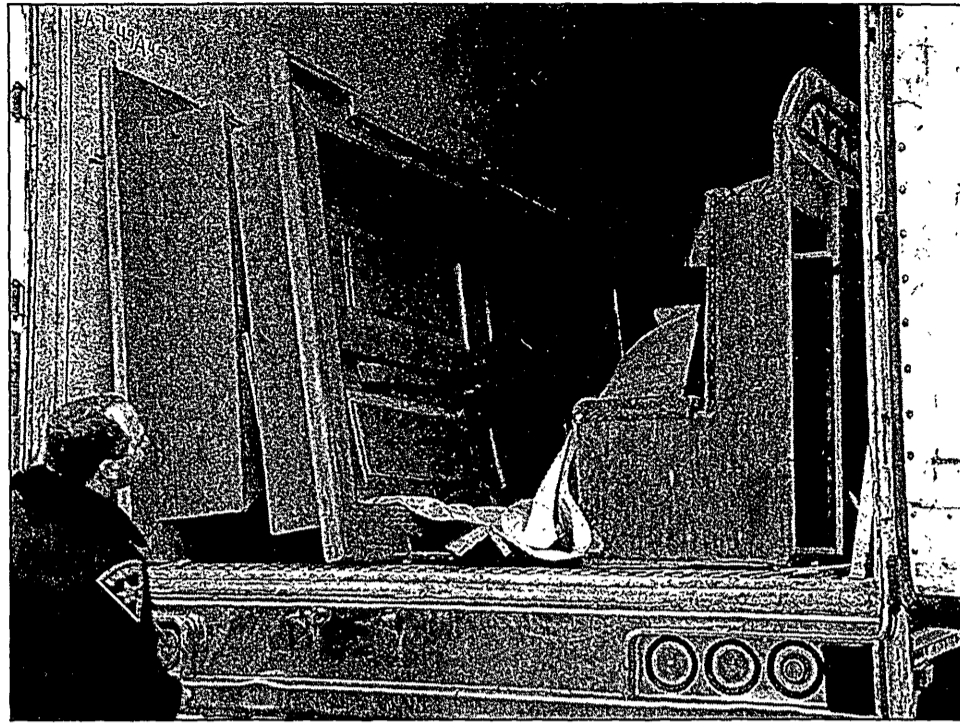
Up to 15 more people, some of whom may be local residents, are expected to be arrested in coming weeks, Mahony said.

"There was a lot of work put into this over the past two years," Mahony said.

The investigation began with tips from citizens, Mahony said. Officers in the Elyria and Amherst police departments and other law enforcement agencies, which routinely loan personnel to the task force, reviewed the tips, established networks and made undercover buys, moving up the ladder to suppliers.

Eventually, their investigation led to the source.

The six people arrested Wednesday have been charged with trafficking in marijuana and engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity. Two of them, Luis Lopez



ANDREW CIFRANIC / PLAIN DEALER PHOTOGRAPHER

A Lorain County sheriff's deputy checks the tractor-trailer rig in which 1,400 pounds of marijuana was found.

Rodriguez, 31, of Mexico, and Hector Janier Bustamante, 46, of Nogales, Ariz., face additional charges of aggravated drug trafficking. That drug, methamphetamine, was not confiscated, but the two men had agreed to the sale, police said.

Also confiscated was about \$12,000 in cash and \$7,000 worth of jewelry, as well as the tractor-trailer, worth an estimated \$80,000 to \$100,000.

Also arrested were James Barton, 34, and Mark Cheeseman, 35, both of Tucson, Ariz.; Alexandra Bustamante, 42, of Nogales, Ariz., believed to be the wife of Hector Janier Bustamante; and Rigoberto Bavajas Duarte, 20, of Mexico.

They are being held at the Lorain County Jail, each under \$5

million bond and are to appear in court Tuesday.

Because it is an ongoing investigation, Mahony and others were unwilling to provide complete details.

The investigation began to heat up about two months ago, Cavanaugh said. Undercover officers met with four of the suspects in late January and arrangements were made for the 1,400 pounds to be brought to Lorain County. The four remained here, staying at the Travelodge on Ohio 58 in Amherst, under constant police surveillance.

On Wednesday, two men arrived driving the tractor-trailer. The truck, bearing Arkansas plates with ownership unknown, came from the Southwest, Mahony said.

The truck was refrigerated and had a ventilation system to elimi-

nate the smell of marijuana in case the men were stopped, Mahony said. The marijuana was packed tightly into 37 bales, wrapped in cellophane and white plastic, some decorated with geese.

The bales were in the front of the trailer, sealed off behind a wall. They were hidden by benches and other large pieces of furniture from a theater set.

"You couldn't get in there easy," said one of the undercover officers.

This week's shipment was to be the first of many, Mahony said. He said the men told undercover officers that they could supply 5,000 pounds of marijuana a week, an amount he said could have been disposed of in Lorain County.

City OKs \$8,100 gift as farewell

By PATRICK O'DONNELL
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

WILLOUGHBY HILLS — The city doesn't owe him the money.

It is not in his contract. And he is not threatening to sue.

But Willoughby Hills City Council voted Thursday to give outgoing Finance Director Steven Toth a severance bonus of eight weeks pay totaling about \$8,100. Council members who supported the payout said Toth, who is being replaced by new Mayor Morton O'Ryan, deserved a reward for his 17 years of service as finance director.

"I thought it was merited," said Council President Timothy Manning.

"This is 17 years this fellow has been here," said Councilman Marty Burkhardt. "This guy's invested a major portion of his life in this place."

Toth, who earned nearly \$57,000 last year, has already received \$6,000 for six weeks' work since O'Ryan announced he would be replaced. According to Toth's contract, he is entitled to 30-days notice before he can be removed.

That period was to have started Jan. 1, but because outgoing Mayor John Zur forced a recount of O'Ryan's election win over him, O'Ryan could not take office and start the clock until Jan. 17. Toth's last day will be Thursday, O'Ryan said.

O'Ryan declined to criticize the decision but offered no endorsements either.

"It's within council's prerogative to make this decision," he said. "He has been a longtime employee of the city and council feels it's justified."

But the award, and the way it was handled, have left two council members upset. Councilmen

Peter Pike and George Kraincic both said the award was rushed and amounts to a gift that opens the city up to charges of favoritism.

"I'm worried we're going to set a pretty bad precedent paying one person and not another," Kraincic said. "I just don't know where we've got the right to give money away to people."

Manning said council has offered similar packages to employees in the past, including former Council Clerk Marilyn Monzula. He said he does not expect to grant awards to outgoing Law Director Patrick Ryan or retiring Tax Administrator John Roberts.

Pike and Kraincic said Toth's contract clearly anticipated his departure by including 30 days for transition. Pike added that city employees are already rewarded for loyal service with a longevity bonus they receive each year based on their tenure.

Pike said Toth's bonus last year was \$1,750. Toth pegged it at about \$1,500.

Pike and Kraincic were also upset the proposal was not listed on the agenda and came near the end of a council meeting after most residents had left City Hall during a lengthy closed-door session. Pike had asked to review the proposal in the Finance Committee, which he heads, but was voted down.

Manning said Toth wrote him a letter asking for a three-month severance package, complete with benefits and contributions to the state retirement system. Council reduced the request to two months with no benefits.

Toth said yesterday he is thankful to council for the money because he has not yet found a new job.

"I'm very appreciative," he said.

Chardon district proposes high school on parkland

By ALAN ACHKAR
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

CHARDON — A 43-acre park may hold the answer to two important questions for the village: where to build a new high school and how to provide more athletic fields for the community.

The Chardon School District has approached the Village Council with the idea of building a new high school on the property, then making the school facilities available for community use.

The park is near Maple and Chardon avenues, behind Maple Elementary School.

For years, the council has planned to add tennis courts, baseball fields and soccer fields on the property but has lacked the necessary funds. The school district's proposal could solve the village's problem — as well as that of the district, which is looking for a site for its new building.

The proposal, however, hinges on voters approving a bond issue in November for a new high school.

"We're very, very impressed with the proposal," said Mayor John Reid.

School and village officials stressed that the talk is preliminary and that they will continue to meet to hash out details.

"It's an attractive option," said Randy Contienza, assistant superintendent of the school district. "We're just trying to figure out if this is a piece of property we want the planners (of the new high school) to look at."

The property is actually owned by the school district, but it has leased the land to the village since 1964. Under terms of the lease, the village will assume ownership of the property in 2000.

The park has picnic tables, a picnic shelter, a chalet for sled riders, one baseball field, three tennis courts that need renovation and a playground that needs new equipment.

Three years ago, the village paid \$7,500 for a study to determine what to do with the park. The study recommended adding two tennis courts, three baseball fields and two soccer fields and renovating the picnic area and playground.

The price tag was pegged at \$1.2 million, a figure the village has not been able to afford. And village officials are skeptical about the odds of residents approving a tax issue to cover the cost.

The offer to use school athletic

facilities would solve the problem.

"It's well worth the effort to look at it," said Village Manager David Lelko. "I can't tell you if the village would ever be able to afford" the plan recommended three years ago.

The school district is planning to place a bond issue on the November ballot for a new high school to help relieve a serious space crunch. Working with village officials and offering community use of school facilities may help the levy's chances of passing.

Also, school officials are fond of the park location because it is near other district buildings and would allow them to create a campus-type atmosphere.

Words of caution, however, came from Ed Brice, president of a Chardon youth baseball league. Brice urged Village Council at a meeting this week to ensure that the property would have enough room and fields for community sports leagues that are badly in need of more space.

"I like the concept," Brice said. "But before the village goes along with this proposal, there needs to be adequate space to accommodate all of that."

Slaying victims' relatives attend execution in Texas

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A native of Cuyahoga County convicted of killing a brother and sister during a Houston robbery was executed in Huntsville, Texas, last night as the victims' relatives watched.

The execution of Leo Jenkins, 38, was the first time in Texas that relatives of a victim watched the lethal injection of the condemned murderer. Jenkins' hometown could not be determined.

Jenkins, convicted in the Aug. 29, 1988, fatal shootings of Kara Voss, 20, and her brother, Mark Kelley, 25, at their family-owned store, apologized to their family.

"I'd just like to say I believe in Jesus Christ, lord and savior," Jenkins said. "I'm sorry for the Kelleys' loss, but my death today is not going to bring their children back. I think the state of Texas is wrong to execute me. There's no way to justify this."

As he took his final breaths, Jenkins looked toward the victims' mother, Linda Kelley, and appeared to mouth the words "I love you." He then gasped a couple times and lapsed into unconsciousness.

Prison officials later said that Jenkins was mouthing the words to a friend, Debbie Cannon, who was inches away from Kelley but on the other side of a wall and hidden from reporters.

Jenkins asked two attorneys and the friend to attend, but one of the attorneys chose not to attend.

The two groups entered the death house through different doors and were separated in the chamber by a soundproof wall.

Four of the five relatives of the victims held tissues, but there were no tears. They were within six feet of Jenkins' head and could hear his final statement.

"It was easy," Kelley said. "I'm glad it's done and glad it's over and glad he's off this Earth."

The other family members present were Jim Kelley, the victims' father; Robin Kelley, the victims' sister; their 90-year-old grandmother, Angie Kelley; and Lisa Kelley, Mark Kelley's widow.

Jenkins was pronounced dead at 7:29 p.m. EST, seven minutes after the drugs began flowing into his arms.

"It's an experience no one ever

wants to go through, but what's going on here is justice," Linda Kelley said. "I think this is right and just."

"I'm tired of putting flowers on a grave at Christmas time instead of buying Mark tennis shoes."

Lisa Kelley, whose son and daughter were 2 years old and 4 weeks old, respectively, when their father was killed, said: "He took away an excellent father. I'm resentful because I've had to explain this to a 9-year-old," she said.

Jenkins, a 10th-grade dropout who worked as a mechanic and had a long criminal record, ordered that appeals be halted.

Jenkins and an accomplice, Eugene Hart, walked into the Golden Nugget Pawn Shop where Jenkins told Voss he wanted to buy a rifle. Then, according to trial testimony, he shot her in the head with a .22-caliber pistol. He turned and fired three times at her brother, fatally wounding him, then stole rings, watches and jewelry.

Jenkins told detectives he and Hart, high on cocaine, needed some money to buy more drugs.

Call to 9-1-1: 'I just shot my husband'

By ROY S. GUTTERMAN
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

WILLOWICK — In a calm voice, Rosemarie R. Siders relayed to a police dispatcher how she had shot her husband, but was not a threat to turn the gun on herself or police.

Minutes after shooting her husband, Donald R. Siders, on Wednesday, the 67-year-old woman called her daughter, then placed a 9-1-1 emergency call to police.

"411 Maplewood Dr. Please have somebody here. I just shot my husband," she calmly told the dispatcher in a tape-recorded 9-1-1 call made public yesterday.

During her four minutes on the telephone with Willowick police Lt. Michael Lazor, Siders matter-of-factly said she had shot her husband, who was "just always hollering at me."

The shooting took place in the family's home shortly after 1:10 p.m. Donald Siders, a part-time security officer at Randall Park Mall, died several hours later at MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland from a single gunshot wound to the back of his head.

Police have said Rosemarie Siders told them that she was tired of years of mental and physical abuse from her husband. Now charged with aggravated murder, she remained in Lake County Jail in Painesville yesterday under \$100,000 bond.

Her call to police after the shooting included several mentions of the couple's strained relationship.

"You probably know me, I'm known as 'the walker,'" Siders told Lazor during her call. "I walk the streets a lot. I got to get away from the house."

After initially answering the emergency call, Lazor repeated Siders' opening statement and told her to stay on the line. Siders said, "Correct, why do I have to stay on the line?"

During the ensuing minutes, Siders repeatedly questioned Lazor about police procedures. When Lazor asked about her husband's condition, Siders responded: "I don't know, I didn't look at him."

She spoke from the kitchen, telling Lazor that she still had the gun but was not going to use it again. She promised Lazor she would give the .38-caliber pistol to her son, who was outside the home with police.

She also said she tried to use the gun against herself but could not.

"I have it right here; I'm not going to use it," she said. "I'm fine. Don't worry about me."

OSU running back uses sure hands in accepting honor from governor

By KEITH ROBINSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBUS — Eddie George has learned from experience that he will have to be extra careful with his newest trophy.

The Governor's Award is made of glass.

That fact wasn't lost on the Heisman Trophy winner when Gov. George V. Voinovich gave him the award during the Ohio Newspaper Association convention Thursday night.

"At least I don't have to carry that trophy through the airports," George cracked to the audience.

George's Heisman was damaged when the senior Ohio State running back was returning from New York on Dec. 11 after receiving the Heisman. The trophy got stuck in an X-ray machine at LaGuardia Airport. It lost a tip on

the right index finger, on the hand of the straight-arm pose.

The Governor's Award is the highest honor the governor of Ohio can bestow upon an individual or group. Governors have given the award, co-sponsored by the newspaper association, since 1949 as a way to recognize contributions to society.

"This will definitely rank up there with the Heisman and the other awards I received," George said.

George is among three Heisman Trophy winners from Ohio State to receive the Governor's Award — Howard "Hopalong" Cassidy and Archie Griffin are the other.

Other Governor's Awards recipients this year:

✓ Roger Ailes, a native of Warren who was a media consultant to Presidents Ronald Reagan and

George Bush, and Voinovich. His career in television journalism spans 30 years, and he is an award-winning theatrical producer and writer.

✓ Lydia Harris, native of Cleveland. As principal of St. Adalbert Elementary School in Cleveland, she has achieved a 100 percent high school graduation rate, and 92 percent of the students went on to post-secondary education.

✓ Arthur Kobacker, a native of Columbus who founded Kobacker Co. He was recognized for his business leadership and civic involvement.

✓ Bishop Anthony M. Pilla of the Cleveland Catholic Diocese, honored for his humanitarian and civic service.

✓ Ronald Rosser of Roseville, who earned the Medal of Honor, the Purple Heart and other medals during the Korean War.