

STATE SEEKS A FORTUNE FROM DRUG SUSPECT

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Robert Lavon Hawkins claims to be a disabled autoworker **from** Detroit's east side who made good in the city's real estate market.

Law enforcement officials claim he's a big-time **drug** dealer whose illegal enterprises have made him a multimillionaire able to pay cash for a fleet of sleek cars and a \$400,000 West Bloomfield Township home where police in a raid confiscated \$1.15 million, much of it in a hollowed-out table.

Few are willing to speak about him, but the public record reveals parts of the Robert Hawkins puzzle that will be pieced together through a series of court battles over his money and freedom.

Hawkins, 35, is scheduled to be arraigned today in U.S. District Court in Detroit on **drug** and gun charges that could send him to prison for life. But authorities want more than to imprison him. They want everything he owns.

Between forfeiture and back-taxes actions, Hawkins faces the loss of close to \$10 million, including what may have seemed the ultimate insult at the time, his Detroit Pistons playoff tickets that were auctioned for \$2,804.

Robert Kolt, spokesman for the **state** Treasury Department, said its **Drug** Asset Recovery Team (DART) aims "to beat the bad guy to the bank. Our motto is: They make it, we take it."

DART moved in quickly to lay claim to Hawkins' assets after a May 9 narcotics raid at his home on a cul-de-sac near Middlebelt and Long Lake roads in the Wabeek South development.

Where might Hawkins fit into the **drug** empire authorities allege has made the onetime autoworker a rich man?

"Whether he's a No. 1, 2, 3 or No. 4 man, we won't know until we know who all is involved," said Michigan **State** Police Lt. Dorothy McAllen, commander of the Oakland County Narcotics Enforcement Team (NET), which conducted the raid.

Married and the father of children ages 18, 13, 8 and 3, Hawkins has said he lost his right eye in a hair dryer accident and limps because of improper childhood bone development.

He said his money came **from** investments and \$4,000 a month in rent he gets **from** 18 homes and an eight-unit apartment building in Detroit, most of it in direct payments **from** the **state** for tenants receiving welfare.

But law enforcement officials say illegal **drug** profits have fueled his investments through at least 11 banks, credit unions and brokerage houses.

When NET officers raided Hawkins' home on May 9, they expected to find 100 to 300 kilos of cocaine. Instead they found \$1,159,420 in cash stuffed in three suitcases and a hollow table, and, they say, cocaine residue sniffed by their dog.

Elbert Hatchett, Hawkins' attorney, isn't buying it. "Who in the hell knows what the dog is smelling?" he said. "The dog is incapable of cross-examination. . . . It's a bunch of garbage."

A June 1972 graduate of Detroit's Kettering High School, Hawkins worked at Chrysler Corp.'s Sterling Heights Assembly Plant for 16 years.

His own automotive tastes run to Rolls-Royces, Tiffany kit cars and Jaguars rather than the Plymouth Sundances and Dodge Shadows he helped build until he was fired by Chrysler Sept. 16 for an attendance problem.

He also was absent **from** his home the day of the NET raid, although his wife, Pamela, and their children were at the three-story, brick-and-leaded-glass home at 4260 Lakeridge Court when police arrived.

Authorities said they knew then that they had to move fast on the case that court records indicate had been building since Hawkins was arrested on Detroit's east side a year ago.

Officer Jackie Outlaw stopped Hawkins' Dodge Raider for speeding in front of 3822 Garland at 6:10 p.m. on May 19, 1988, and spotted **drugs** on the passenger seat, police said.

Hawkins initially was charged with possession of 1.9 grams of cocaine and 0.5 grams of marijuana, but pleaded guilty that June 16 to a lesser charge of attempted possession of less than 25 grams of cocaine, a felony. Recorder's Judge Dominick Carnovale sentenced him to two years' probation.

On Sept. 29, another piece of the puzzle fell into place.

A man described in court records **as a** Florida real estate associate of Hawkins was arrested at East Warren and Nottingham in Detroit, near Hawkins' parents' home. Police said the man was carrying cocaine, a kilo **drug** package wrapper and Robert Hawkins' telephone number.

Police continued their investigation, culminating in the May 9 raid at Hawkins' home. They found money, but no **drugs**. They found Hawkins' family, but not Hawkins. They found some of the cars they sought to seize **as** illegal fruit of the alleged **drug** trade, but they couldn't find the Tiffany kit car, an Excalibur look-alike.

Days later, a man listed in court records **as** " a known narcotics trafficker," told authorities what they wanted to know.

He said he had hidden Hawkins' Tiffany at the 5051 Nottingham home of Hawkins' mother, Mae Willie Hawkins, and father, Robert L. Hawkins, a disabled former employee of Ford Motor Co.

On May 17, Wayne County Sheriff's deputies, making an unsuccessful attempt to seize the car, arrested Hawkins at his parents' house on a federal charge as a convicted felon in possession of a firearm.

After receiving additional evidence, a federal grand jury on June 22 returned an indictment charging Hawkins with possessing five kilos of cocaine and a firearm.

Hatchett said the charge is a sham. "They bring a charge of possession of drugs without having found any in his house," he said.

"It's a ploy to get the man's money. The fact that he had money is not a crime."

Hawkins has been free on \$75,000 bond awaiting trial before U.S. District Judge George LaPlata in Ann Arbor on Aug. 7 on the gun and drug charges.

DSS RENTAL PAYMENT EVIDENCE SEIZED

In interviews with Wayne County probation workers after his arrest on charges of drug possession last year, Robert Hawkins claimed a monthly income of \$4,000 from rental properties. He said most were leased to welfare recipients for whom he received direct rent payments from the state Department of Social Services.

In a raid on May 9 at his home in West Bloomfield Township, police confiscated receipts from DSS payments to Hawkins for nine homes in Detroit. According to court records, the payments were for these addresses:

* 4868 Chatsworth

* 11700 Corbett

* 5975 Drexel

* 5041 Haverhill

* 14303 Jane

* 4696 Lakeview

* 50 Margarete

* 10271 Nottingham

* 5007 Parker

CUTLINES

Robert Hawkins

Robert Lavon Hawkins' home in West Bloomfield Township

Caption: Photo

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