

HOMETOWN DETROITERS SPLIT PATHS IN COURT, LIFE

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In 1990, Young Boys Inc. founder **Milton** (Butch) **Jones**, the Henry Ford of heroin, had just completed eight years in federal prison and was about to start a state jail term. His lawyer, arguing that **Jones** had reformed, asked a judge to let him out early so he could help young people stay away from drugs.

"Mr. **Jones** has been locked up too long to go back to the old things now," the lawyer said. "I know it's tough to erase the memories. But he has changed. This is not 10 years ago. He's different. It's a reality."

Jones' lawyer was Jeffrey Collins.

In November, Collins was appointed U.S. attorney for Michigan's Eastern District. And, in one of those fluky situations that makes you think Detroit is a small town, he crossed paths with **Jones** again. This time, Collins and **Jones** find themselves on different sides of the courtroom.

Jones, the government contends, did not change. He is the lead defendant in an indictment titled the United States of America vs. **Jones** in which 14 people are charged with running a murderous drug conspiracy between 1994 and 2001.

If convicted, **Jones** could face the death penalty, should the Justice Department decide to pursue that sentence. Officials in Washington, D.C., will make the determination in the coming weeks, after they receive a recommendation from the U.S. Attorney's Office in Detroit.

Because the case is pending, Collins does not want to talk about his past relationship with **Jones**, but he said Monday he has asked his superiors to allow him to withdraw from the case.

Between **Jones** and Collins, it is hard to imagine more different career paths for two men in their 40s, both of whom achieved success at an early age.

Theirs is a made-in-Detroit law-and-order story.

Book tells of murdering people

Jones, 46, is one of the most flamboyant self-professed bad guys to come out of Detroit and Oakland County; he lived in a house with a swimming pool in Oak Park while running Young Boys Inc. If the infamy he acquired in the 1980s wasn't enough, in the 1990s he published an autobiography in which he gleefully told of murdering people, robbing banks, fire-bombing supermarkets and making millions of dollars using underage boys to sell heroin to dope addicts.

Jones grew up around Dexter and Monterey on Detroit's west side. He started dealing drugs when he was 14, according to "Y.B.I.," his 1996 life story.

By 15, he committed his first homicide. "Cold-blooded murder," **Jones** chortled in the 232-page book. "Punk from across Linwood named Stick-up Mike . . . After the first time I did it, killing became second nature to me. I could easily kill someone and not lose a second of sleep."

Before long, **Jones** said he became a killer for hire. He once hid in a Dumpster to surprise a victim who was emptying his trash. "All I wanted . . . was just to see the expression on this guy's face when I did him," **Jones** said.

By 1978, fresh out of prison for manslaughter, **Jones** launched Young Boys Inc., accompanied by west-siders with noms de gang such as Paul Bunion, Pimpin' D, Gene Hackman, Kirk McGurk, Frankenstein, Crooked Mouth Mike, Richie Rich and Eddie Spaghetti.

Jones proved to be an evil genius when it came to marketing and distributing his top-grade China White. He gave junkie-size packets of heroin such vivid names as "P. Funk," "Raw Dog," "Murder One," "Freak of the Week" and "Hoochie Con."

Jones admitted using kids as young as 12 to mix, deliver, sell and protect Young Boys' turf. He offered performance incentives -- diamonds, gold jewelry, concert tickets, bicycles and fur-trimmed leather jackets.

"I'm a wizard at sellin' heroin," he said in his book. "It was just like any other business, such as Ford or General Motors. I had an assembly line."

Police say -- and **Jones** confirms -- that Young Boys' rise was marked by dozens of murders and shootings. They even shot cops.

Jones claimed by 1982 he had saved \$5 million and was looking for investments. He said he hooked up with the late attorney Edward Bell in an unsuccessful attempt to obtain Detroit's cable franchise.

That his riches came from poisoning thousands of people did not concern him. "The Kennedys and everybody else had done their dirt and infiltrated into the mainstream," he wrote.

Federal authorities broke up Young Boys in the early 1980s. **Jones** went to federal prison in 1983 after pleading guilty to conducting a criminal enterprise.

Collins' star soars

In addition to being a defense attorney, Collins, 42, served as a judge on Recorder's Court and the Michigan Court of Appeals. A rare black Republican in Wayne County, Collins ran unsuccessfully for the state Supreme Court in 1998 and was targeted by a Democratic Party commercial that berated him as a "former drug-kingpin lawyer."

As U.S. attorney, he has gotten widespread praise for reaching out to the Middle Eastern community during the post-Sept. 11 terrorist investigation.

The son of a pediatrician, Collins grew up in tony Palmer Woods, just a few miles -- but an immeasurable psychic distance -- from **Jones** ' neighborhood. In 1977, about the time **Jones** was starting Young Boys, Collins was graduating from exclusive Detroit Country Day School in Beverly Hills.

Collins attended Northwestern University and Howard University Law School. He joined Bell's Detroit law firm upon graduation and quickly began making his mark in courtrooms and gaining the respect of prosecutors, judges and clients.

"The more I get exposed to defendants, the more I realize that only by the greater grace of God I might be sitting on the other side of that table in the courtroom," Collins told the Free Press in 1989.

That conversation took place after a victory in Recorder's Court on behalf of **Jones** , when Collins convinced a jury to reject a first-degree murder charge in favor of the much less severe verdict of accessory to murder after the fact.

"I love him. He's the greatest," **Jones** said of Collins.

In 1990, Collins asked Judge George Crockett III to reduce **Jones** ' sentence on the accessory conviction or assign him to a prison apart from his enemies. **Jones** planned to work with kids.

Jones said: "I want to tell them that they don't have to go out on the streets and sell drugs and carry guns."

Selling drugs and carrying guns, coincidentally, are exactly what federal authorities charged **Jones** with in the indictment announced in June.

He is accused of conspiring to distribute large quantities of heroin, cocaine and marijuana; targeting competitors with armed robberies, kidnapping and murder, and running a continuing criminal enterprise.

Committing murders in carrying out a continuing criminal enterprise makes **Jones** eligible for the death penalty. In court papers, his current lawyer, Harold Gurewitz, argues that regardless of who might have committed the murders, they had no relation to the criminal enterprise or drug trafficking.

Love of lawyering

While members of the U.S. attorney's staff were handling the indictment of **Jones**, Collins was becoming U.S. attorney. As a Republican, Collins was well-positioned when George W. Bush entered the White House. Collins assumed his new position Nov. 19, and since then has dealt mostly with the terrorism probe.

While he declined to discuss the **Jones** case, Collins said last week that to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest, "I think I should step back . . . It would be better if I was not the U.S. attorney on that particular case."

Collins' track from defense attorney to U.S. attorney is unusual; a more common route is for young lawyers to serve as prosecutors, then enter private practice, where there is big money to be made.

"I love being a trial lawyer," Collins said. "I think if you're a trial lawyer, it really doesn't matter which side you are on. You're using the same skills: how to cross-examine a witness, how to get rapport with the jury."

Until recently a professor of trial advocacy at the Wayne State Law School, Collins said he told students: "A good lawyer's a good lawyer. You should be able to articulate either side."

In terms of the philosophical and emotional aspects of switching from defense to prosecution, Collins said it must be remembered that to make the American system work, everyone has a role to play.

"There was nothing better when I was a trial judge to see a good defense attorney, a good prosecutor, who were both laser sharp," he said. "It was like watching fencing. I mean, this is beautiful."

'I know you're tired of me'

In the file of one of **Jones**' old criminal cases is a letter **Jones** wrote to Collins in the late 1980s. He asked for help, saying: "Man, I know you're tired of me."

Jones, the self-proclaimed murdering, fire-bombing, heroin-pushing Dexter Avenue gangster, decorated the letter with two smiley faces.

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Caption: Photo

The long relationship of **Milton** (Butch) **Jones** , left, and Jeffrey Collins has changed. Butch **Jones** autobiography gleefully recounts bank robberies, firebombings and murders.

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