

EX-CON CARRIED TOOLS OF A LETHAL TRADE ARREST BRINGS GLIMPSE OF CAREER CRIMINAL'S DEADLY WORLD

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Chester Wheeler Campbell once described himself as "one of God's unfortunate creatures."

But law enforcement officials are a little more earthy when asked about Campbell. Many answer with two chilling words.

Hit man.

"He's absolutely incorrigible . . . a dedicated recidivist . . . a heavy-duty criminal," said Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson, whose office convicted Campbell as a habitual criminal 10 years ago.

On the morning of July 22, federal agents took Campbell, 56, into custody for carrying a weapon, an ordinary parole violation. But by that evening, after having searched his car and home, the agents had a glimpse into the extraordinarily lethal world in which **Chester** Campbell lives -- one of drugs, pistols with silencers and sophisticated eavesdropping devices.

"This time, I'd hope the (federal) prosecutor puts him away for good," Patterson said. "This guy clearly fits the description of a career criminal. He's a threat to society. Of that, I don't have one bit of doubt."

In some respects, **Chester** Campbell is an enigma.

HE WENT to prison for the first time in 1946 after being convicted of burglary. He was 15 years old. In the ensuing years, he has been sent to state prisons and federal penitentiaries for murder, unlawful possession of firearms, carrying concealed weapons, violating Michigan's drug laws, being a habitual criminal and possessing unregistered firearms.

Campbell has spent 30 of the last 40 years viewing the world from behind bars.

But he is bright enough, Patterson notes, to have become a pretty fair self-taught lawyer.

"He's not stupid. He's not some dumb street person," Patterson said.

In the years after his office "put away" Campbell in 1977, Patterson said he "received three reams, and I'm not kidding, of legal documents" from Campbell.

Patterson said many of Campbell's "self-initiated, self-written pleadings" were well done, and "at least two of which, if my memory serves me, went as far as the U.S. Supreme Court."

A man who was formerly associated with Campbell, who spoke on condition that he not be named, agreed that Campbell is "fairly knowledgeable about the basics of criminal law, but that's primarily because he's been involved in criminal activities for so long. He's literally got an awful lot of firsthand knowledge, particularly about how to conduct himself in court."

CAMPBELL is "a very intelligent person who ordinarily is not given to emotional outbursts," the former associate said. "He's very cool and conducts himself like a businessman and relates to everything in his life that way. It's always a matter of business with him."

It was in the early 1970s that law enforcement officials began making Campbell their business.

During those years, Campbell was charged with assault with intent to murder a star witness in what became the longest criminal trial in Detroit history, the so-called "Pingree Street Conspiracy." At the end of the seven-month trial, a group of police officers and civilians was convicted of operating a heroin sales operation on the west side of the city.

Campbell had been one of the 28 defendants originally indicted in the heroin conspiracy. But the indictment against him was dropped for insufficient evidence, as was the assault with intent to commit murder charge.

By then, law enforcement agencies had begun collecting information that led them to believe that Campbell was a hired assassin who acted as an enforcer for various drug dealers.

And then Campbell gave investigators a gift on an icy ribbon of road in Keego Harbor at 3:30 a.m. on Feb. 6, 1975.

AFTER SIDESWIPING a police car, Campbell was arrested when officers found a cocked and loaded .45-caliber semiautomatic pistol on the front seat of his car. They also found a .44-caliber Magnum rifle, .25-caliber semiautomatic pistol, a sawed-off shotgun and 15 packets of heroin in the car.

But the biggest prize was the notebooks, which were found in the trunk. They contained the names, home addresses and car license plate numbers of 300 law enforcement officials, undercover narcotics officers and the victims of execution-style slayings. One notebook had detailed drawings of the homes of several of the people on the list. Another listed the secret locations where witnesses scheduled to testify in the "Pingree Street Conspiracy" were living under police guard.

Oakland County investigators, working closely with their counterparts from the Wayne County Organized Crime Task Force, concluded that the 300 names were possible "hit list" victims.

One of the names scrawled in the notebook was that of L. Brooks Patterson, who said he was provided information that satisfied him that **Chester** Campbell was a contract killer.

"A lot of that was never made public, but there was so much there . . . his activities and files . . . yes, I was convinced that he was exactly what they said he was," Patterson said.

HE SAID that during his 18 years as a prosecutor, the only instance in which he had "ever taken extra precautions and used extra security for my family and myself was with this guy."

Campbell's 1975 arrest prompted a flurry of activity. Investigators searched his home in the 5200 block of Ivanhoe in Detroit and found \$280,000 in cash as well as more weapons and documents. A search of his girlfriend's home in Commerce Township in Oakland County uncovered more drugs and documents. And numerous internal investigations, to determine how Campbell got secret and sensitive data from the files of police and state agencies, were ordered.

Campbell was convicted of drug and weapons charges, and of being a habitual criminal, in Oakland County. Later, he was convicted of weapons violations in U.S. District Court in Detroit. He was released on parole in September 1984.

Campbell's arrest on July 22 was, in some respects, a carbon copy of the Keego Harbor incident in that federal officials were shocked by what they uncovered.

As he was leaving his home on Ivanhoe, agents from the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) surrounded the 1981 black Dodge Diplomat he was driving and ordered him from the car.

A loaded two-shot .32-caliber derringer was found in the right rear pocket of Campbell's slacks. A gun that looks like a ballpoint pen and fires a .22-caliber bullet was found, loaded, in the breast pocket of his suit coat.

INSIDE the car, agents found six more guns; one of them a .25-caliber semiautomatic pistol with a silencer. They also found drugs, money and several memo books, one of which contained "numerous names and addresses as well as the names of subjects who are currently being investigated by law enforcement," according to documents filed in U.S. District Court in Detroit.

Inside Campbell's house, agents found a tie-clip microphone, a pair of "Bionic Ears" for overhearing conversations from a distance, and more drugs, weapons and documents.

The agents also found a room that looked like a law office, filled with books, legal briefs and a typewriter. On bookshelves nearby were more than 200 volumes, most of which dealt with a single subject: homicide.

According to court documents, found together in the house were: a gray false beard and mustache, a "Design a Face" disguise kit, a .25-caliber semiautomatic pistol with a silencer attached, a pair of plastic gloves and a pair of leather gloves.

Campbell, who has been charged with federal drug and weapons charges, is being held in a 10-by-10-foot maximum-security cell in the Wayne County Jail. On Wednesday, he will be taken under tight security to the U.S. District courthouse in downtown Detroit for a hearing on the charges, for which he could be imprisoned for 50 years if convicted.

And Detroit police officials are making arrangements with federal authorities to test all of the weapons confiscated from Campbell.

If ballistics comparisons verify that any of the weapons were used in unsolved Detroit slayings, Campbell could be charged again -- with being a hit man.

AMONG THE ITEMS CONFISCATED FROM CAMPBELL FROM HIS CAR

- * A loaded two-shot .32-caliber derringer.
- * A silver ballpoint pen gun, 5 1/2 inches long, loaded with a .22-caliber long shell.
- * A black notebook "containing numerous names and addresses as well as the names of subjects who are currently being investigated by law enforcement."
- * Cash and money orders totaling \$10,791.
- * A plastic bag containing white powder.
- * Two plastic bags filled with marijuana.
- * A business envelope containing a smaller brown envelope containing heroin.
- * A loaded Colt Python .357-Magnum revolver.
- * A loaded .25-caliber semiautomatic pistol with attached silencer.
- * A loaded .22-caliber revolver.
- * A loaded .38-caliber revolver.
- * A loaded pump shotgun.
- * A video camera with cartridges and other accessories.
- * A large plastic bag containing blasting caps and "unidentified explosive devices."
- * A loaded .45-caliber semiautomatic pistol.

- * A flare gun and rounds.
- * A portable police scanner.
- * A Statue of Liberty knife.
- * A telescope.

TAKEN FROM HIS HOUSE

- * 21 one-kilogram packages of marijuana.
- * A loaded .357-Magnum revolver.
- * A loaded .38-caliber revolver.
- * A 12-gauge bolt-action shotgun.
- * Two CB receivers.
- * One tie-clip microphone.
- * A 12-gauge pump shotgun.
- * A 12-gauge double-barreled, sawed-off shotgun.
- * A silencer.
- * A .22-caliber target pistol.
- * \$5,000.
- * A pair of "Bionic Ears" (microphone, ear piece and dish).
- * A gray false beard and mustache.
- * A "Design a Face" disguise kit.
- * A .25-caliber semiautomatic pistol with a silencer attached.
- * A pair of plastic gloves.
- * A pair of leather gloves.

CUTLINE:

Chester Campbell

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