

HEROIN RING GROWS TO FILL YOUNG BOYS ' SHOES , OFFICIALS SAY

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Sunday, October 2, 1983

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A citywide **heroin** trafficking operation, using children and teenagers as street salesmen, has replaced the notorious **Young Boys Inc.** as Detroit's largest drug **ring** , according **to** law-enforcement officials

The **ring** , which calls itself "Pony Down" after a popular athletic **shoe** , is selling at least \$100 million worth of **heroin** a year, sources told the Free Press.

The Pony Down gang has been implicated in two slayings in the last three months, according **to** Detroit police records. The group is also believed responsible for a rash of gang-style shootings in recent months, and leaders of the organization are suspects in a Chicago area homicide, the sources said.

On May 25, about 90 Detroit police officers arrested 36 alleged **heroin** peddlers -- many of them identified as Pony Down members -- and confiscated about \$25,000 in cash and \$20,000 worth of **heroin** . During the raids on 12 locations throughout Detroit -- including the Palmer Park duck pond -- police also confiscated about three dozen guns, 28 fur coats and 118 cartons of cigarettes. The raids were aimed at **Young Boys Inc.** and the Pony Down gang, according **to** police.

A PROFILE of the Pony Down gang -- its size, structure and the depth **to** which it has penetrated Detroit -- emerged from interviews with members of local, state and federal law-enforcement agencies.

The drug operation, which buys bulk **heroin** in New York and sells it locally in brown coin envelopes stamped "Pony Down" or "Pony," is almost a copy of **Young Boys Inc.**, sources said.

Lieutenants, who distribute **heroin** and collect money, supervise sellers who work street corners or housing projects. Lookouts watch for police. An enforcement arm protects sellers from other drug **rings** and makes sure sellers don't shortchange lieutenants on proceeds from sales

Begun as a nickel-dime outfit, Pony Down started peddling **heroin** about three years ago in the W. Seven Mile and Murray Hill area of northwest Detroit, according **to** officials familiar with the group.

After **Young Boys Inc.** was crippled by federal grand jury indictments and convictions that sent most of the leadership **to** prison earlier this year, the Pony Down gang moved **to fill** the void

"They moved all over town like a bunch of cockroaches," said a law-enforcement officer. "They started popping up everywhere . . . the same kind of thing as when YBI (**Young Boys**) started getting big."

SOURCES SAID some Pony Down members are former **Young Boys** Inc. members who defected in 1981 and 1982 **to** join the organization created by members of a west side Detroit family who have narcotics-related police records that go back more than a decade.

Some of those defections -- especially those involving top salesmen -- weren't voluntary, according **to** one law-enforcement official , who said **Young Boys** members were forced **to** join the Pony Down gang.

"The shootings (between Pony Down and **Young Boys**) started seriously in 1982," the official said. "There was a rash of serious shooting . . . but it wasn't about turf, they were not trying **to** take over turf. They were trying **to** take over the street sellers."

Pony Down, which by that time included ex- **Young Boys** members who had defected, made a list of **Young Boys** ' best street sellers and started approaching them **to** work for Pony Down, he said. Many refused. "And they started telling them, 'You don't work for us, and you don't work for anybody,'" he said. "Then the shooting started."

Another law-enforcement official said, "There were quite a few instances around the first of this year when they (Pony Down members) would just pull up **to** a street corner and shoot at the remnants of YBI who were still working. They're crazy. They all think they're Al Capone."

THE STREET BATTLES between the Pony Down gang and remnants of **Young Boys** led **to** drug-related shootings.

On July 7, George (Scandalous Butch) **Young** , 24, identified as a **Young Boys** member, was ordered **to** stand trial for murder in Detroit Recorder's Court. **Young** and some accomplices allegedly killed a 15-year-old east side youth and wounded two men April 9 because **Young** thought the three were selling **heroin** for the Pony Down gang in **Young Boys** territory , according **to** court testimony.

Young is awaiting trial, according **to** police records. Ironically, testimony revealed the victims were not selling Pony Down **heroin** , but an independent brand.

On July 15, Frank Delano Lee, 19, was ordered **to** stand trial for murder in the shooting death of William (Chilly Willy) Hunter, 17. Lee and an accomplice, both identified by police as Pony Down members , were charged with shooting Hunter six times June 17 outside a west side apartment building, according **to** court records.

Homicide investigators said Hunter, identified as an independent **heroin** dealer , was selling drugs in what was considered Pony Down territory. Lee was acquitted of the charge last month, and charges were dismissed against his alleged accomplice, according **to** court records.

LAST MONTH, the child of a Pony Down kingpin was kidnapped and later returned unharmed after a foiled ransom attempt.

"I just don't think that kidnapping was done for money," said one officer who investigated the abduction. I think you could safely say it involved narcotics and the Pony Down gang."

In August, according **to** the Cook County, Ill., Sheriff's Department, a Pony Down member was robbed of \$20,000. The man suspected of the robbery was slain Aug. 30 near Chicago in what deputies believe was retaliation.

The children and teenagers involved in Pony Down are invaluable **to** the organization because minors are rarely sent **to** prison for selling **heroin** . The youngsters, carrying **heroin** packets in plastic garbage bags, distribute drugs **to** street sellers, according **to** investigators .

Detroit public-housing projects such as Herman Gardens and Brewster-Douglass, once the realm of the **Young Boys** , are now provinces of Pony Down, say narcotics experts.

While **Young Boys** members were identified by their Max Julian jackets in winter and low-brimmed straw hats in summer, the Pony Down symbol is the Pony Co. basketball **shoe** . The **shoes** cost between \$30 and \$50 a pair, depending on the model.

"You'll always see the kids with those **shoes** on," said one officer. "They never go anywhere without them.

"When you see those spray-painted signs all over town that say 'I Pony Down', let me tell you it doesn't mean the kiddies are horseback riding."

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 1A

Index Terms: DRUG ; MAJOR STORY ; DETROIT ; JUVENILE ; PONY DOWN

Record Number: 8303020407

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