

4 CHAMBERS BROTHERS GUILTY IN DRUG TRIAL

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Author: JOCELYNE ZABLIT Free Press Staff Writer , SWICKARD Free Press Staff Writer

Guilty verdicts from a federal court jury dealt a final blow Friday to the **Chambers Brothers** drug ring, described by a federal official in Detroit as the biggest crack cocaine organization to be smashed in U.S. history.

"The message that should go out is that we are going to investigate, we will indict and we will convict to the limit," said U.S. Attorney Roy Hayes, who prosecuted the case along with Assistant U.S. Attorney Larry Bunting. "To my knowledge this is the biggest cocaine distribution case in the history of the United States in terms of the number of houses they were operating."

Hayes said the **Chambers brothers** -- Billy Joe, Willie, Larry and Otis -- operated up to 300 crack cocaine houses in Detroit in 1983-88 at a profit of almost \$1 million a week.

One of the brothers was convicted by the presiding judge, and the jury, which deliberated 14 hours over three days, found the remaining three and four other people guilty of six drug-related charges. Paul Young, 18, who is serving a life sentence for first-degree murder in another case, was acquitted.

Billy Joe Chambers, 26, and Larry Chambers, 38, were found guilty of running the operation and face life in prison without parole.

Willie Chambers, 34, who requested a verdict from presiding U.S. District Judge Richard Suhrheinrich rather than the jury, was convicted of a conspiracy charge. The fourth brother, Otis, 20, was also convicted of conspiracy.

Hayes said that although the end of the Chambers organization curtailed the volume of cocaine trafficking in Detroit, "there is not a hiatus on dope traffic, unfortunately."

Defense attorneys characterized the six-week trial as a "showcase" and criticized the credibility of government witnesses.

"I don't think people have been well served by the law-enforcement community in this case," said Otis Chambers' attorney, Thomas Wilhelm. "They could have stopped (the drug ring) earlier but instead they wanted to make it a big showcase."

Larry Chambers' attorney, Anthony Chambers, who is no relation to the family, said the verdict could be appealed, in part because the trial was not moved out of Detroit despite extensive publicity.

The defendants, surrounded by 12 U.S. marshals, sat solemnly as the verdicts were read and as each juror was polled by Suhrheinrich. Then defendant Belinda Lumpkin, who was convicted of conspiracy, began sobbing and clutched her attorney by the shoulder.

According to testimony, the **Chambers brothers** recruited many of their 500 employes from Detroit high schools and their impoverished hometown of Marianna, Ark., keeping their troops in line with brutality and intimidation.

About 30 witnesses were provided with round-the-clock security, and many appeared shaken and scared during their testimony.

"I have never had a case where I have seen witnesses as apprehensive as in this case," Hayes said. He said about seven will be relocated under the federal witness protection program.

All of the defendants face up to 20 years in jail and a \$2 million fine on the conspiracy charge. Larry Chambers also faces 10 years and a \$250,000 fine on a charge of possession of a firearm. Larry and Billy Joe Chambers also face up to five years in prison for income-tax evasion. Both brothers and defendants Elaine Lucas, Jerry Gant and Marshall Glenn also face up to 20 years in prison and a \$2 million fine on a charge of cocaine distribution.

Memo: CORRECTION RAN October 30, 1988

getting it straight

* A Saturday report should have said that while Jerry Gant and Marshall Glenn were convicted of conspiracy in the **Chambers Brothers** drug trial, they were not convicted of cocaine distribution.

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