

SUSPECT'S FATHER FIGHTS FOR HIM POLICE CALL 18-YEAR-OLD A DRUG DEALER

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Sunday, November 8, 1987

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With his stylish mop of blond hair, slim build and chubby cheeks, **Richard Wershe Jr** . looks as though he should be thinking about the prom, not prison.

But **Wershe** , 18, will face a lifetime behind bars if law enforcement officials can prove "White Boy Rick" -- as he is known on the fading streets of the East Side -- is one of Detroit's major dealers of cocaine.

"Even though he looks like Baby Face Nelson, as far as this court is concerned, he's worse than a mass murderer," said Judge William Hathaway of Detroit's 36th District Court at a preliminary examination on Oct. 30.

To his father, **Richard Wershe Sr.**, **Wershe** is a loyal son, whose family has become a victim of police harassment and brutality that the Wershes are combating with an unusual counter-offensive in the courts.

So far, the Wershes are losing.

After raising a total of \$200,000 in bond after three arrests since March, **Wershe** is being held without bond in the Wayne County Jail awaiting trial on two cocaine distribution charges, one involving nine pounds of the drug, the other, 11. Each carries a mandatory sentence of life in prison. The third charge is possession of a small amount of cocaine, which carries a maximum sentence of four years in prison.

Richard Wershe Jr . also is the subject of a separate investigation by federal authorities, who have indicted his acquaintances on drug charges, participated in raids on family members' homes and confiscated more than \$11,000 and a 1986 Mercedes-Benz from his father in the past two years.

Richard Wershe Sr. calls the treatment of his son by the police and courts an outrage, and adds: "I've been proud of my son many times. I feel my son has made some mistakes in his life, OK, but nothing like they're alleging."

WERSHE SR., 44, said he has been told by law enforcement officials that he also is considered to be a known associate of major drug dealers, though he has never been charged with a drug offense.

A surplus goods and electronic components merchant who also is president of a Colorado-based firm that manufactures weapons parts, **Wershe Sr.** said he unwittingly has installed satellite television systems in the homes of people who turned out to be drug dealers.

Divorced from **Richard Jr.**'s mother, Darlene, who cried during her son's court appearance last week, **Wershe Sr.** said he has raised **Richard** and his 21-year-old sister, Dawn, for the past 12 years.

Dawn "was addicted to cocaine," **Wershe Sr.** said. "I had her in clinics, I went through hell over that. And they're going to tell me that I deal this stuff? No. Never.

"I thank God I have the money and brains to make the public aware of this. We're sure not getting justice."

IN JULY, **Wershe Sr.** filed an \$8.1-million lawsuit in Wayne County Circuit Court against Detroit police, charging them with falsely imprisoning him, invading the family's privacy, and beating his son when they arrested the son on May 22.

Last month, the family filed a \$5-million lawsuit against Detroit police, an assistant Wayne County prosecutor, WXYZ-TV and an unidentified informant, charging defamation, invasion of privacy and malicious destruction of property after an Oct. 21 raid on two homes **Wershe Sr.** owns in the 13000 block of Hampshire, in the Harper-Dickerson area of the east side of Detroit. His mother, Vera **Wershe**, 76, lives in one of the homes; he lives in the other.

USUALLY, defendants in criminal matters avoid public comment, but on Oct. 23, **Wershe Jr.** appeared at a press conference in the office of one of his attorneys, William Bufalino II, to deny he was a drug kingpin.

Bufalino assailed what he said were officials' attempts to convict the **Wershe** family "in the streets," and denied that **Wershe** ever had possessed drugs.

As a juvenile, **Wershe** had several run-ins with police and months of convalescence after being shot in the abdomen with a handgun when he was 15, while visiting the home of a teenaged friend.

"It was a regular shooting, not drug-related," said Bufalino, and **Wershe** collected \$35,000 from the friend's family, according to records at Wayne County Circuit Court.

FEDERAL AND local investigators, who spoke on condition that they not be identified, allege that **Wershe** began his career as a cocaine merchant three or four years ago as a delivery boy for members of the Curry organization, an East Side cartel whose top members are awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to federal drug charges in September.

In one way, **Wershe** stood out. He was white; most of his associates, including the Currys, were black.

Wershe absorbed the Currys' expertise, investigators theorize, and went off on his own as federal agents closed in on the Curry leaders.

Wershe also inherited the companionship of Cathy Volsan, 23, the wife of an admitted cocaine

distributor, Johnny Curry. She is one of Mayor Young's nieces. **Wershe** dated her this summer after Curry had been jailed, according to **Richard Wershe Sr.** and others.

Richard Wershe Sr. said he and his son met Johnny Curry and Cathy Volsan when the elder **Wershe** installed satellite TV systems at Curry's downtown condo and at a north-side hall Curry owned. He said he had no knowledge of any illegalities involving the Curry clan.

IN SEPTEMBER 1986, when a DEA agent made the first of two small drug buys at **Wershe Sr.**'s home, the **Wershe** family and authorities began an ongoing duel that has put the junior **Wershe** in jail and his family in the public eye.

The activity, according to court documents, included searches and seizures of **Wershe** cars and money and at least two raids at the **Wershe** homes during the last 14 months. The drug purchases at the elder **Wershe** 's home resulted in an 18- month prison sentence for one of young **Wershe** 's friends. **Wershe Jr .** was not charged.

He and two others were stopped by a DEA agent at Metro Airport last November while getting off a plane from Miami. That ended with a six-year prison sentence for one of his friends, but **Wershe** again was not arrested or charged.

He was charged, though, with possession of less than 50 grams of cocaine on March 3 when police raided a home on Hayes where he was sleeping.

Young **Wershe** was in trouble again May 22 when Detroit police stopped him near his Hampshire home and later arrested him for possession with intent to deliver nine pounds of cocaine, accusing him of hiding a box of the drug in a neighbor's yard.

Then on Oct. 13, **Wershe** was arrested with Robert Poulack on Manistique near E. Warren and charged with possession with intent to distribute 11 pounds of cocaine after a team of Detroit police and federal agents said they found the drug in the car the two were driving.

Wershe was jailed following his arraignment, but was released on Oct. 21 after raising \$100,000 bond.

DURING A subsequent hearing Oct. 30, Hathaway ordered **Wershe** to jail without bond. He appealed, and last Wednesday, Recorder's Court Judge Dalton Roberson reinstated the original \$100,000 bond that **Wershe** already had posted. Roberson delayed his order for seven days while the Wayne County Prosecutor appeals.

Wershe 's next date with the courts is Wednesday, when he's scheduled to be released on bond -- unless the Court of Appeals agrees to delay Roberson's decision.

Wershe Sr. vows not to give up.

"If I have to lose every dime I have to defend myself, I will . . . I'll go to court. Give me my day. Give me my constitutional rights. Give my son his constitutional rights. That's all I ask."

CUTLINE:

Richard Wershe Jr ., 18, will face a lifetime behind bars if law enforcement officials can prove he is one of Detroit's major dealers of cocaine.

Caption: Photo WXYZ-TV

Edition: STATE EDITION

Section: NWS

Page: 3A;

Index Terms: RICHARD WERSHE JR; COCAINE ; DRUG

Record Number: 8702220846

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