

FROM MANSIONS TO PRISON , DRUG SUSPECT HAD A WILD RIDE

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YAZOO CITY, Miss. -- The folks on Woodlea Avenue thought their new neighbor was sure "living large" for a hairdresser **from** Detroit.

In this delta town surrounded by cotton fields and catfish farms, they noticed the fleet of new cars with out-of-state plates, the gilt bedroom set, leather furniture in the custom-built den, the high-stakes pool games and the troop of young men who jumped like guard dogs **to** surround Ed Hanserd when he so desired.

With arched eyebrows, the neighbors thought Hanserd, in his running suits with gold chains, had come a long way **from** his days as a little boy visiting his grandmother on Locust Street, near Swamp Alley.

Although Hanserd attracted attention, he wasn't a problem until a summer day in 1988 when -- in an unexplained rage -- he stormed bare-chested **from** his home and smashed up a neighbor's patio.

Police came. They tried **to** take the compact, muscular Hanserd **to** a patrol car, but he broke free, flinging one cop aside.

"Call my lawyer," he demanded. "I'm the \$50-million man!"

"Big Ed" Hanserd wasn't just bragging, according **to** federal documents. Based on his annual outlay in running one of the four largest drug rings in Detroit, the documents allege, Hanserd was a \$54-million man.

Authorities say Hanserd's network was moving 250 kilograms of cocaine and 20 kilograms of heroin a month **from** Los Angeles through Yazoo City **to** Detroit and other Midwestern cities by 1989.

Hanserd's path **to** drug riches, investigators say, winds **from** east side Detroit beauty shops and party stores through Mississippi **to** Hollywood and other ritzy California towns.

His was a world of suitcases crammed with cash, exotic cars, shootings, bulletproof vests, dead dope lords and tainted drugs, investigators say.

It was also life of close calls, bullet wounds and, finally, **prison** cells. Authorities believe he survived more than a half-dozen attempts on his life before being locked up on gun charges.

His heady rise **from** reputed small-time marijuana peddler **to** indictment as an alleged drug lord running a transcontinental operation was matched with a dizzying fall **to prison** inmate. The custom homes and leather furniture have been swapped for state-issue denims and a stark cell at the Huron Valley Men's Facility near Ypsilanti.

His wild ride lasted less than five years, and now Hanserd, 28, and seven others face trial next month on federal drug charges. If convicted of all charges, Hanserd faces life in **prison** .

U.S. Attorney Stephen Markman said Hanserd's network was big and bad.

"Not only is it one of the most violent, but also, for its time, it is one of the largest," Markman said.

Hanserd is serving a 3 1/2- **to** -5-year state **prison** term for gun violations, and Markman said the government is determined **to** convict him on federal charges.

Considering him "quick **to** engage in violence and bloodshed," Markman said, "his status on the state charge is pretty irrelevant. When you can identify a criminal organization engaged in these acts, there is no interest in letting the matter drop."

But defense lawyer Stephen Rabaut said the government has yet **to** show him evidence that Hanserd was at the top level of the Detroit dope trade.

"Not once do they show a connection between him and all these kilos they keep talking about," Rabaut said.

Hanserd maintains that he is a victim of a federal grudge.

"He says it's a vendetta," said Rabaut. "The government wanted information **from** him. Either he didn't have it or he wouldn't provide it."

Seizing opportunities

Investigators said Hanserd's rise was testimony **to** guts, luck and brute determination.

As gunfire and the courts eliminated some of the more sophisticated drug networks, the 5-foot-7 Hanserd -- whose nickname "Big Ed" reportedly stems **from** his temper rather than his stature -- filled the void, said a federal official who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the pending trial.

Hanserd is "basically an opportunist who moves up **to** fill vacancies when others get taken off the field," the official said.

In 1984, investigators said, Hanserd was an Osborn High School dropout selling marijuana and eyeing the heavier drug trade. Pyramiding his deals, Hanserd expanded into cocaine, agents said.

Rising with him were childhood acquaintances Demetrius Holloway and Richard (Maserati Rick) Carter. Carter and Holloway were boyhood pals, investigators said; Hanserd was a kid they knew **from** around the neighborhood.

The three became occasional partners, investigators said. Hanserd alone has survived assassination attempts in the intervening years.

In the mid-1980s, Hanserd ran Bartee's Unisex Salon near Chrysler's Jefferson Avenue plant and began acquiring other holdings, including two houses on the 13400 block of Sparling. His expansion extended beyond the east side and that growth -- or a disputed debt -- finally snapped his ties **to** Carter and Holloway, agents said.

Hanserd was marked as a suspected big-time trafficker in April 1987 after Los Angeles police spotted him and several other young men scrambling around a Mercedes-Benz 500SE and Porsche parked outside an apartment just off Sunset Boulevard.

Hanserd, who was carrying several sets of identification, and the others laid claim **to** the luxury cars as well as a Ferrari in the apartment garage. They said they were on a car-buying trip for relatives.

No charges were brought, but the officers filed reports tagging Hanserd as a suspected drug dealer who was using the cars in a cross-country operation.

Returning **to** Detroit, Hanserd sold his salon **to** an employee, a move authorities said was an effort **to** mask his holdings, and unloaded other property.

Out of the line of fire

By November 1987, Hanserd had his hands full with Carter, who had become a deadly enemy. Carter and a companion allegedly opened fire on Hanserd and a buddy, and although the slugs stitched him across the stomach, Hanserd survived and did not press charges. But he took steps **to** create a safe haven out of the line of fire.

Longtime companion Stephanie Jacobs went **to** Yazoo City and bought the Woodlea Avenue home in a subdivision carved **from** the woods on the edge of town.

Elaborate steel grates covered the doors and windows soon after Hanserd and his entourage moved in with their Maserati, Corvette, Jeeps and vans.

One neighbor, who feared **to** be identified publicly, said Hanserd seemed too outlandish and brash for the hairdresser he claimed **to** be.

"He took me through the house once, and my, oh, my," the neighbor said. "He had a gold bedroom suite. I'd never seen anything like it before. He built a den with a fireplace -- and the leather furniture was something else."

Hanserd was only a part-time resident, they recalled; he would be there for several days every few months, then leave on mysterious trips. A troop of young men often took up residence in the house, neighbors said.

Hanserd controlled the young men like a parlor trick, the neighbors said.

"He'd snap his fingers and the guys would circle him -- jump up around him, just like dogs," a neighbor said.

Others said he fancied himself a master of the pool table, but lost big in money games with the local sharpies.

He drew other notice around town, picking up a drunken driving ticket in the Corvette. Detectives started watching him.

Detective Bobby Adams said Hanserd gave the appearance of "coming down here **to** relax in the country."

Hanserd started 1988 with more traffic problems. In February, Louisiana State Police stopped his GM van and found a bag with a pair of jeans and \$198,000 in cash. With Hanserd was Anthony Medina, a California car dealer.

Hanserd said the cash came **from** the sale of his beauty shop and Sparling properties. The money was confiscated as drug proceeds, which Hanserd didn't challenge.

Later in March, federal agents testified, Hanserd got a 47- kilogram cocaine shipment, and passed 31 kilograms of it **to** Detroit party store owner Nathaniel Wilson, who also is facing federal charges.

'I'm going **to** get you!'

The summer of 1988 featured more encounters with police -- he was arrested three times in Detroit on weapons charges.

Police said he did not go quietly. **To** Officer Rico Hardy he allegedly yelled: "I'm going **to** get Maserati Rick and then I'm going **to** get you!"

In another arrest, for allegedly threatening **to** "put 100 holes" in a man during a street corner dispute, Hanserd reportedly shouted at Officer Randy Homan: "Do you know who I am? I'm the No. 1 hit man and dope man in the city."

In September, according **to** police, Hanserd was stopped in a red Maserati convertible, and more than \$3,000 and a beeper were confiscated. Again he did not challenge the seizure.

Soon after, Carter was killed in his hospital bed while recovering **from** gunshot wounds. No one has been convicted in the slaying.

Hanserd was in custody on a weapons charge at the time, as he was when Carter's pal Holloway was gunned down in October 1990 at the Broadway clothing store in downtown Detroit.

Despite his legal scrapes, Hanserd's California connection allegedly was rolling smoothly: Cash was going **to** the West Coast and dope-packed cars were coming back.

Although he allegedly had sold the Sparling properties, witnesses told investigators that Hanserd still used them **to** sell "Tutti-Fruitti" brand cocaine **from** California in bulk lots.

In January 1989, on what authorities believe was another drug run, Hanserd was stopped in Barrien County driving a 2- day-old Ford Bronco.

Of all the luggage, only a blue Samsonite suitcase was locked. Hanserd said it held underwear, but police found and seized \$369,000 in \$5,000 bundles, cash that weighed 52 pounds.

Agents said his direct participation in transporting drugs showed two aspects of his personality.

"He wasn't afraid **to** get his hands dirty; he'd get in there and work," the agents said. "But it also was concern: Can you really trust your people with almost a half-million in cash?"

The next month, Hanserd was given probation for two weapons charges. He later was acquitted in another gun case and a separate kidnapping charge.

By this time Hanserd was attracting public attention in Detroit, and he groused **to** a reporter that he was being picked on. He was a victim, he insisted, pulling up his shirt **to** display his bullet wounds and denouncing Carter's associates for having all the troops in the fight.

In mid-1989, Hanserd's threats **to** police had turned **to** pleas. Arrested wearing a bulletproof vest after a chase, he asked: "Please let me go. I'm on probation now and I can't afford this case."

Released **from** custody, Hanserd was kept under close federal surveillance.

On June 15, armed with a probation violation warrant, agents arrested Hanserd as he walked **to** a red BMW at Northland mall in Southfield. He was armed and wearing a bulletproof vest, agents said. A paint-and-patch job covered bullet holes in the car, mementos of his close calls, agents said.

A cheer **from** neighbors

In custody, Hanserd and agents started a delicate dance **to** see whether he would cooperate, but he refused **to** inform on anyone in Detroit.

But others did. Informants said that Hanserd had shipped jewelry and \$200,000 **to** his 83-year-old grandmother, Cora Shields, in Yazoo City and that a girlfriend took another \$50,000 **to** the Woodlea Avenue home.

Agents were intrigued by tales of Hanserd's gold jewelry, especially a \$250,000 solid gold replica heavyweight boxing championship belt. In October, police raided the Woodlea Avenue house and Shields' modest house across town beyond the railroad tracks.

Agents did not find the gold championship belt, but they did get a submachine gun at his grandmother's house.

Yazoo City neighbors applauded as the agents drove away **from** Hanserd's house.

Federal pressure increased in 1990, even though Hanserd was locked up on the state gun charges. An alleged member of Hanserd's crew was cooperating with federal agents and keeping the California connection alive.

In a series of recorded calls between April and June, California car dealer Medina and the informant chatted in crude code about drug deals and Hanserd's legal woes.

A deal went down in June and agents arrested Medina, who was convicted in the fall and faces a maximum 40-year **prison** term despite his defense that he was just a money-wowed "wanna be" dooper.

In Detroit, a 24-count federal indictment against Hanserd and his alleged network, including Wilson and Medina, was handed down in July. Federal raids on Wilson's homes and cars turned up tally sheets that officials claim are detailed drug-dealing records. Attorney Wilfred Rice, representing Wilson in the federal case, declined **to** discuss the charges.

The indictments did not end the federal pressure. The Yazoo City house on Woodlea was seized by federal agents, who alleged it was used as safe house and way station for Hanserd's California connection.

As Hanserd pondered his fate **from** a jail cell late this year, Cora Shields slumped in her large easy chair in Yazoo City and wondered about her grandson and all his troubles.

"He was a good little boy who liked his grandpa," she said. "He liked it down here when he came, and I'd whip him if he was naughty."

She shook her head at the charges that face him.

"I asked him once if he was in those drugs, and he told me no," she said. "Then those government men came here and went all over my house."

Shields said Hanserd's reputation has spilled all around town.

"Once people heard about all that money he was supposed to have, they went to breaking into that house of his," she said. "I went over to have a look myself. All I found was one penny on the floor."

She sat silently for a moment.

"I don't know if trouble follows Ed," she said, "or he follows it."

Caption: Photo File photo

: Richard Carter Demetrius Holloway Ed Hanserd, known for "living large" for a hairdresser **from**

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