

## Two Amish men plead guilty in cocaine case

**1** PHILADELPHIA — Two Amish men pleaded guilty Monday to conspiring to sell cocaine to fellow members in a case that threw a spotlight on how modern-day problems are encroaching on the sect's simple way of life.

Abner King Stoltzfus, 23, and Abner Stoltzfus, 24, could get five to 40 years in prison and up to \$2 million fines. No sentencing date was set. The men are not related; Stoltzfus is a common name among the Amish.

Prosecutors said that from 1992 to 1997, the two men bought cocaine from a Philadelphia-area motorcycle gang called the Pagans, then sold the drugs to Amish youth. Eight members of the Pagans also have been charged.

The accusations shook Lancaster County's 22,000 conservative Old Order Amish, who isolate themselves from the outside world and shun modern conveniences. They ride horse-drawn buggies and dress in plain, black clothes.

Some Amish acknowledged that the sect has had to grapple with alcohol and marijuana problems for a decade. But word of Amish young people using hard drugs prompted the community's bishops to send a letter to all the churches, warning about cocaine.

At the time of their indictment, the Stoltzfuses were participating in a "timeout," a period during which young Amish men and women are allowed to explore the outside world and decide whether to join the church. Both men intended to join, their lawyers said.

The courtroom Monday was packed with people in Old Order Amish dress.

"It's a very gratifying thing for



a judge to see that an individual's family and peers are supporting him in a time of genuine need," U.S. District Judge Clarence C. Newcomer said.

## Boston Chicken files for Chapter 11

**2** DENVER — Five years after going public in one of the most frenzied stock offerings Wall Street has ever seen, Boston Chicken Inc. filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection Monday and closed 15 percent of its stores.

The restaurant chain, which closed 178 stores, said it sought court protection because of about \$283 million in debt that comes due Oct. 17.

Boston Chicken and its home-style Boston Market restaurants created a Wall Street sensation in 1993. Its initial public offering was priced at \$20 per share and shot to nearly \$50. The stock split 2-for-1 in 1994.

The stock has since plummeted, closing at 50 cents Monday

on the Nasdaq Stock Market.

Some analysts said the Golden-based company had expanded too quickly and lost focus.

Between May 1992 and this year, Boston Chicken grew from 34 stores in the Northeast to 1,143 nationwide. Sales jumped from about \$21 million in December 1991 to nearly \$1.2 billion in 1996.

Along the way, meatloaf and ham were added to the chicken and mashed potatoes on the menu. The company also invested in a bagel chain.

After years of growth, Boston Chicken posted mixed sales in 1997. This spring, the company's co-chairmen stepped down.

Jerry Hirschberg, who tracks Boston Chicken for Standard & Poors, said "a lot of people were taken with the concept" at first. But he said the company's subsequent strategy seemed to be: "Put up a thousand or so stores, then figure out how to run them."

Chapter 11 allows a company to hold off its creditors while it tries to put its finances in order.

## Convicted assassin claims conspiracy

**3** MEXICO CITY — A factory worker convicted in the 1994 assassination of Mexico's top presidential candidate has made a new assertion of innocence, claiming he is the victim of a government conspiracy.

In telephone conversations recorded by his family, Mario Aburto Martinez said his confession to the killing of Luis Donaldo Colosio came under intense physical and psychological torture.

"I was used as a scapegoat. ... We believe the government killed (Colosio) as part of a power struggle," Aburto is quoted as saying by the Mexico City newspaper, El Universal.

Colosio, who had been widely expected to win Mexico's presidency, was shot at a campaign rally in the border city of Tijuana in March 1994.

Police arrested Aburto at the scene, and he was convicted of homicide and sentenced to more than 40 years in prison.

But few Mexicans believe Aburto acted alone. Colosio was shot in the head and abdomen, from what some believe to have been two different angles. A special prosecutor, however, said the shots were fired by the same gunman, while Colosio's body spun in the air as he fell.

The government appointed a succession of four special prosecutors to investigate the case, but little has come of it.

Attorney General Jorge Madrazo told Congress last month his office continues to look for the masterminds of the homicide.

## New Zealander grabs bungee jump record

**4** AUCKLAND, New Zealand — A New Zealand daredevil who dove off Auckland's highest building Monday claimed a world record for his 591-foot bungee jump.

Traffic halted as crowds gathered to watch A.J. Hackett's 8-second jump from the Sky Tower casino. Hackett's bungee cord plunge ended just above the heads of the shouting and whistling spectators.

Hackett, a promoter credited with popularizing bungee jumping, said he set a record for a bungee jump from a building. The Guinness Book of World Records does not recognize bungee jumps because of their danger.

Longer bungee jumps include a nearly 3,300-foot plunge from a helicopter, and a 700-foot drop off a dam in the 1995 James Bond movie "Goldeneye."

For the nighttime jump, Hackett used a rubber bungee along with two steel guide cables to prevent bouncing or drifting into the building.

Hackett jumped 377 feet from the Eiffel Tower in Paris 12 years ago.

"You get a fair bit of adrenaline pumping round your body, which is fairly nice," he said.

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