



POLICE / VANCOUVER

Con Man Captured for Arizona Investment Scam

(AP)—Vernon Leroy Smith, who pleaded guilty to bank fraud and other crimes and fled before he could be sentenced, has been captured in California.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lance Caldwell said the plea bargain the Portland man agreed to in late 2000 is now off the table, although his guilty plea remains. Smith could now serve as much as seven years in prison.

Smith had agreed to serve several years in prison and pay back nearly half a million dollars he'd stolen from two banks and investors.

He paid back \$100,000, but did not show up for a July 6 sentencing hearing.

Smith was captured March 12 in Lake Elsinore, Calif., where he had been staying under an assumed name.

According to court papers, Smith ran an investment scam in Arizona in which he allegedly persuaded investors to deposit from \$250,000 to several million dollars into bank accounts, telling them it would be used for collateral on high-yield, short-term trading ventures.

Smith allegedly told investors their money would never leave the bank, but it was wired offshore, "never to be returned," an affidavit states.

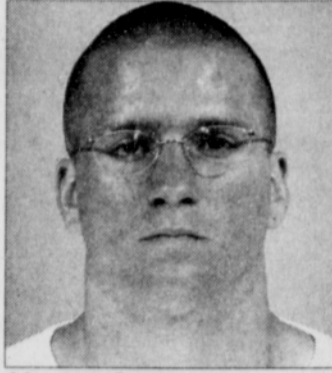
Life Sentence for Eastgate Murders

(AP)—A 23-year-old Portland man will spend the rest of his life in prison for killing two people in the Eastgate Theater parking lot off Southeast 82nd Avenue last year.

Matthew Justice Propst was sentenced last week to life in prison without parole. He escaped a death penalty by pleading guilty.

Propst killed 44-year-old Terry Lee Spencer and 34-year-old Lisa McGee by shooting both in the back of the head.

He also was accused of robbing McGee of several fake Rolex watches.



Matthew Propst

Another man, 39-year-old Rakim Malik Dupriest, faces murder and robbery charges in the same crime. Police say his car was used to drive Propst to the theater.

Police Kill Man in Parking Lot Standoff

(AP)—Clackamas County Sheriff's deputies shot and killed a Portland man they said was suicidal and waving a gun in a restaurant parking lot Thursday.

Kenneth E. Gerde, 47, got out of his car and advanced toward deputies when at least two of them fired, said Clackamas County Sheriff's Deputy Angela Blanchard.

Authorities received a call at 4:36 p.m. from Gerde's brother, saying he was suicidal.

Six to eight deputies arrived at the scene and tried talking

with Gerde, who was reclined in the driver's seat of his Saturn car. Deputies said he had a handgun on his lap, and his family had warned he had access to several firearms.

Gerde got in and out of the car as deputies tried to negotiate with him, Blanchard said.

"He was agitated, and they could tell he was extremely intoxicated, and not listening to their commands," she said. "He advanced on the officers. A canine was deployed on him, and at least two deputies fired on him, striking him."

Liquor Sales Up in Oregon

New products, women and high-end customers boost demand

(AP)—Liquor has always been called a recession-proof industry, and last year proved it.

Sales totaled \$249.9 million in 2001, a 6.5 percent increase over 2000, according to recent figures released by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission.

The trend has continued into this year, with sales totaling \$18.2 million in January, a 3.7 percent jump from the previous January.

Distilled spirits are sold in 237 stores in Oregon. Statewide, the only month in which sales dipped last year was September and OLCC officials say that was surely because of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11.

"People were not getting out at

all; they were watching TV and hunkering," said Ken Palke, an OLCC spokesman. "We see increases in sales for celebrations, not sorrowful events."

The OLCC says liquor sales increased in spite of the recession, not because of it.

Palke said higher prices, more liquor stores and the state's increasing population all contributed to increased sales. But the biggest factor, Palke said, appears to be the industry's efforts to market new products, such as flavored vodkas and rums, to women and high-end customers.

The fact that dollar sales are climbing faster than case sales points to the reality that many

shoppers are upgrading to higher-quality brands.

"From an industry perspective, there's a lot more diversity of product and apparently consumers are responding to that," said John Stubenvol, another OLCC spokesman.

That's no surprise to Mike Chown, agent at the Willamette Plaza liquor store in south Eugene, which had sales of \$2.8 million last year, a 6.3 percent gain over 2000.

"I think the economy has actually been OK, with the recession slower coming to Oregon than other places," he said. "There are a lot of people out there who are still doing real well."

Pawn Shop Owner Arrested

On March 26, Detectives Scott Smith from the Property Crimes Unit assisted by Detectives from the Vancouver Police Department Burglary Task Force, arrested the owner of Family Loan, located at 606 Main St.

Arrested was Russell Jay Dealy, who was the subject of a

Search Warrant served by police detectives, was charged with four counts of Unlawful Possession of a Firearm and one count of Trafficking in Stolen Property. The investigation is continuing.

Anyone with information regarding the handling or possession of firearms by Dealy or the

transfer of stolen property to Family Loan is asked to contact Lead Detective Scott Smith at 360-696-8027 or Detective Sergeant Lou Braafladt at 360-696-8226.

For further information, please call Deputy Chief Thiessen at 360-696-8165.

Paint Recycled for Non-Profits

Latex paint collected at Clark County's household hazardous waste collection facilities has been processed into recycled paint and is available for non-profit groups and public agencies.

Sold in 5-gallon pails, the paint is thick and rich with pigment, provides excellent surface coverage and dries to a durable, low-sheen finish. It can be used both inside and outside.

The public can also purchase the recycled paint for \$25 per 5-gallon pail (off-white) or \$22 per 5-gallon pail (all other colors) at Metro South, 2001 Washington St. in Oregon City.

For information on buying the free recycled latex paint or for information on hazardous waste collections in the Vancouver area, including disposal options for businesses, call 360-397-6118 ext. 4016.

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