

Drugs, alcohol played a role

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SANTA CRUZ — ~~Stanton Powers~~ attributed a "miraculous" growth in his bank account to the powers of meditation, but his belief may have been clouded by excessive prescription drug and alcohol abuse, his attorney said today in opening remarks to a jury.

Powers, 41, is standing trial on a felony charge of grand theft for allegedly withdrawing some \$2,000 from his County Bank account, which at the time only contained \$1.17.

Prosecutor Bob Patterson rested his case this morning after calling three bank officials and other witnesses to testify about Powers' transactions at an Automated Teller Machine in September 1982.

Patterson contends Powers deliberately defrauded the bank of the \$2,000.

But Powers, a pen-and-ink artist, had ingested a large amount of Ritalin (a prescription drug for mental depression), codeine and alcohol on the days in which the crime is alleged to have occurred, said attorney Lisa Martin today in court.

"This led to a slightly deranged mental state," said Martin.

Several factors played a role in Powers' mental state at the time, she told the seven-woman, five-man jury hearing the evidence in Superior Court Judge Harry Brauer's courtroom.

Martin said she would call a psychiatrist who diagnosed Powers as suffering severe mental depression. The psychiatrist concluded Powers could be easily influenced by a fortune teller...or an authority figure, such as attorney Marcello Di Mauro.

Martin was planning on calling Di Mauro to testify, but it was learned he will not testify.

Di Mauro may have been with Powers on several of the visits he made to the ATMs, Martin contends. At issue is who keyed in "deposits" of over \$4.4 million into Powers' account.

Martin said Powers had taken 16 tablets of Ritalin, six tablets of codeine and more than 10 alcoholic beverages on some of the days he visited the ATMs.

He was also seeing a "fortune teller" named Fortune, who helped teach him the powers of meditation.

The drugs, alcohol, suggestions by Fortune and his own belief in meditation led Powers to attribute his bank account's growth to the meditation, said Martin.

Adding to Powers' confused state, said Martin, was that he "tested" the ATM to see what his balance was. In doing so, he was able to withdraw more money than he knew his account held.

Martin argued Powers "firmly believed the money must be in his account.

"He was under the assumption that the ATM would not allow him to withdraw funds not in his account..." said Martin.

Powers' recollection of the four days on which the transactions at the ATM occurred are a bit hazy. Martin said that two of the visits the prosecution has shown in its case are lost in Powers' minds.

Martin said the combination of drugs and alcohol caused Powers to have a blackout.

It is during those two transactions that the prosecution has claimed someone punched in deposits of more than \$4.4 million in Powers' bank account.

Powers' fingerprints were found on some of the envelopes received during those days, said Cornace Sanders, a fingerprint expert with the Department of Justice crime lab in Sacramento.

Powers was expected to testify this afternoon in his behalf.