

# Local

✓ Drugs r P 6/30/87

## Four sentenced in federal court on drug charges

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Three Santa Cruz County residents and a San Jose woman who were indicted along with seven others on various drug trafficking charges two years ago were sentenced earlier this month by a federal judge after pleading guilty to several of the charges.

Six others, including reputed cocaine-smuggler Bartolo Vivenzi and his wife, Ruth, of Soquel, await trial on a variety of drug-trafficking charges in San Jose's U.S. District Court Sept. 14. Vivenzi's brother, Giovanni, 33, was also indicted but has returned to Colombia.

Paul Nicholas Mecchella, 33, Bradley J. Frey, 32, and Darlene May Gilbert, 54, all of Santa Cruz, and Jan Ann Black, 30, of San Jose, were ordered this month to serve various sentences by Judge Spencer Williams after pleading guilty to charges of conspiring to possess and sell drugs, Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Pavone said. Other conspiracy charges were dismissed in exchange for the guilty pleas, Pavone said.

All four were alleged to have participated in Vivenzi's cocaine and marijuana smuggling operations from October 1982 to May 1983, Pavone said. The operation allegedly funneled cocaine from Colombia to the San Francisco Bay Area through Santa Cruz. Investigators believed the ring had been operating for as long as six years.

Special agents for the Department of Justice's Drug Enforcement office broke the alleged ring following an investigation into the bungled 1983 kidnapping of Mecchella's 70-year-old father in Capitola, Edward Mecchella Sr. Vivenzi, 35, allegedly ordered the kidnapping after losing about \$82,000 in an abortive marijuana-smuggling deal in Hilton Head, S.C., purportedly engineered by Edward John Mecchella, 38, and his brother, Paul.

Mecchella's father escaped from his abductors unharmed, and Vivenzi and three other men were convicted of the kidnapping in 1985. Vivenzi's conviction and subsequent life sentence were overturned on appeal, and he is awaiting another trial on the charge in Santa Cruz following his federal trial on drug trafficking charges. He could be sentenced

to life in prison without parole if convicted of all the charges.

It was the investigation into the kidnapping that led special agents to the alleged drug-trafficking ring.

Of the four sentenced this month, Jan Black was the most involved in cocaine distribution, Pavone said.

Black was sentenced June 19 to four years in federal prison. She was a "dealer at the kilo level" in San Jose, Pavone said, and allegedly got cocaine directly from Vivenzi. She pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess and distribute cocaine and possession of cocaine with the intent to distribute, Pavone said.

Gilbert was an occasional kilo dealer of cocaine in Santa Cruz, Pavone said, and was sentenced June 19 to two years in federal prison. She will be placed on parole for three years after her release, he said.

On June 12, Paul Mecchella was ordered to serve six months in a federal prison and was fined \$5,000 after pleading guilty to a single charge of conspiring to distribute more than 1,000 pounds of marijuana in connection with the foiled smuggling effort that prompted the kidnapping, Pavone said.

The Mecchella brothers had allegedly planned to smuggle 3,000 pounds of marijuana from Jamaica in early 1983, Pavone said. But the deal fell through when the boat broke down, and Vivenzi's investment was lost, he said. Edward Mecchella faces 156 years in prison and \$465,000 in fines in connection with the deal and other alleged cocaine deals with Vivenzi, Pavone said.

Vivenzi is charged with two counts of conspiracy and 11 counts of possessing and distributing cocaine. He also faces two charges of filing false income-tax statements for allegedly failing to declare hundreds of thousands of dollars in drug proceeds, Pavone said.

Also charged are Vivenzi's wife, Ruth, 38, Gentil Jordan, 45, of Santa Clara, Tyrone Havas, 40, of Pebble Beach, and Donald Albert Hall, 42, of Morgan Hill.