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NOTORIOUS CASE ENDS WITH SENTENCING

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Today one of the last players in a scandal that swept through Burbank and eventually saw a sitting council member resign her office faced sentencing in a federal courthouse in downtown Los Angeles.

Scott Schaffer, once the prominent owner of a local cab company and frequent contributor to virtually every charitable cause and several political candidates in the Burbank/Glendale area, was sentenced to 13 months for having given two guns to members of a now-notorious street gang in exchange for cocaine. Schaffer had already pleaded guilty to the charges which could have resulted in a sentence of up to 10 years.

Schaffer, 53, was arrested in July, 2005, this after a .45 pistol was found in the apartment of a member of the Vineland Boyz street gang. Subsequent investigation determined that, though it had changed hands in the interim, the weapon originally came from Schaffer.

During his subsequent questioning, Schaffer told police he owned several handguns, and that some were stored in a garage at the home of Stacey Murphy, then a member of Burbank's city council. Murphy and Shafer had been in a relationship for several years.

A search of Murphy's home that same day led to her arrest for cocaine possession, and for child endangerment charges because Schaffer's four handguns found in her garage were accessible to her 12 year old son.

Of the weapons found in Schaffer's Glendale home and in Murphy's garage, all were legally owned. But the fact that Schaffer admitted giving two handguns to the gang members who later provided him cocaine triggered federal charges of illegal gun sales.

The initial search of a gang member's apartment was undertaken by a task force created to go after the Vineland Boyz in the aftermath of two of its members killing Burbank police officer Matthew Pavelka in Nov., 2003. Burbank officer Greg Campbell was also seriously wounded in the same incident, a shoot-out that sprung from Officer Campbell investigating suspicious activity in the parking lot of a local hotel. Of the gang members who did participate in the murder, one was killed in the shoot-out. The other, David Garcia, fled to Mexico. But he was eventually expelled from the country, and was brought back to face charges.

The task force was made up of members from police departments in Burbank and Los Angeles, and included Los Angeles County Sheriffs, the Drug Enforcement Agency and other federal agencies. In a release last week announcing the sentencing of three Vineland Boyz gang members arrested by the same group, but unrelated to Schaffer's case, the task force was described as one created to "avenge" Pavelka's murder.



Mounted officers at the Nov., 2003 funeral for Officer Matthew Pavelka

While rumor and speculation linked Schaffer and Murphy to Pavelka's killers and his murder, the facts of the case never connected either Burbanker, nor Schaffer's guns. But it has been clear from the start that Burbank Police have been holding the pair responsible. Early in the case police officials also floated theories that Schaffer used the cab and transportation companies he owned, one of which employed Murphy as a bookkeeper, in a conspiracy with the gang to smuggle drugs. But court records and the charges indicate law enforcement never found evidence to support their speculation.



Pat's: Sports bar and alleged Vineland Boyz hangout.

By all accounts, Schaffer came into contact with the gang members at a Studio City sports bar called "Pat's Cocktails," where he, Murphy and their friends often gathered to watch sporting events. Police maintain the sports bar was a well-known hang out for Vineland Boyz members, while Murphy and Schaffer insisted they had no idea some of the patrons around them were gang members, to say nothing of belonging to the gang whose members killed a Burbank cop. It was at that bar that Schaffer

admits to having turned over two guns to the gang members, and where sometime later they gave him cocaine.



Former council member Stacey Murphy.

Murphy resigned her council seat weeks after her arrest, and in Dec., 2005 was sentenced to probation and ordered to attend drug diversion and parenting classes.

In court today, federal judge John Walters, an appointee of George W. Bush who has been known to cancel plea bargains he believed to be too lenient, cited Schaffer's actions before and after the arrest as he issued a sentence almost two years short of the 33 month minimum requested by the federal prosecutors. Walters noted that Schaffer entered drug and alcohol rehab

programs shortly before his arrest - not after it, and has continued actively participating in those.

Schaffer spoke on his own behalf, admitting his guilt and offering profuse apologies to the people of Burbank. He also directed apologies to Murphy and her three sons, noting the boys had to remain in the community and contend with the notoriety of the cases, and also with the rumor and speculation arising from them. Murphy and her family did not attend the sentencing, and she has had no contact with Schaffer since their arrests.

The judge referenced receiving numerous letters of support for Schaffer that conceded his wrongdoing, but asked the judge to also consider Schaffer's years-long record of service on charitable and community panels. The judge also noted supportive comments that a retired Burbank police lieutenant offered to the probation officer developing a pre-sentencing report on Schaffer.

According to the judge, retired Lt. Don Brown, now a city council appointee to the Bob Hope Airport Authority, courageously risked the enmity of his former BPD colleagues by condemning the acts of which Schaffer was guilty, but while noting the prominence of the case, and the aggressiveness exhibited by authorities, were due to its indirect associations to Pavelka's murder and Campbell's serious injuries.

According to numerous sources, early in the morning before the sentencing, members of the Burbank Police Officers Association apparently learned of the remarks that appeared in the confidential pre-sentencing report, and called an emergency meeting to discuss ejecting the Brown from the group. Brown has served terms as the BPOA's president, and long served as its public spokesman. According to sources, the discussion was tabled to a future meeting so that Brown can participate.

Schaffer was ordered to turn himself in to enter the federal prison system on or before April 2. Under the federal system, he will be eligible for a reduction of his sentence of up to 15% for good behavior, and will be credited for the 36 days he spent in jail after his arrest.