

WB man, wife charged in county obscenity raid

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

A West Bloomfield Township man and his wife are among 11 people charged Friday with violating Michigan obscenity laws under warrants obtained by the Oakland County prosecutor.

James J. Olasfky, 43, and Georgina S. Olasfky, 38, are accused of violating the state laws on the basis of material confiscated by authorities in May 1990 from three adult bookstores they own in Pontiac, Waterford and Ferndale.

Also arrested on the basis of those raids was Harold Mohamed, 45, of Hazel Park, who manages the three stores.

James Olasfky lives in West Bloomfield, according to the pro-

secutor, while he and his wife also have a Union Lake address.

They own the Tip Top Bookstore in Hazel Park and the Front Page News stores in Pontiac and Waterford.

All three stores were released on bonds ranging from \$5,000 to \$12,000 per person at Friday district court arraignments in each city.

"This should be a clear signal my office is committed to the vigorous prosecution of those who distribute hard-core pornography and the commercialized sex industry (sic) in violation of Michigan's law," Oakland County Prosecutor Richard Thompson said at a press conference Friday.

"THESE ILLEGAL activities are not only violations of the law, but create blighted neighborhoods, de-

grade women, encourage sexual violence and incite and aid child molesters."

The prosecutor said youngsters allegedly accosted by James W. Stoller told investigators he showed them sexually explicit material before attempting to molest them.

Stoller, a Southfield resident, is charged with molesting several boys between the ages of 10 and 13 when he was a coach in baseball and basketball youth leagues in Garden City. His case is pending in Oakland Circuit Court.

Thompson did not say that Stoller bought the material he showed his alleged victims at any of the three adult book stores that were raided.

But that doesn't lessen their culpability under state law, Thompson said. Any establishment that

possesses or distributes obscene material is subject to prosecution.

Also charged with violating anti-pornography laws Friday are five owners of four Ferndale party stores where obscene material was allegedly disseminated to minors.

Unrelated to book store cases, three women were charged with accosting and soliciting in a Ferndale massage parlor.

Those dealing with obscene materials are charged with first or second degree obscenity violations, both misdemeanors, Thompson said. Conviction on first degree carries a maximum penalty of one year in jail, a \$100,000 fine, or both. The maximum penalty for conviction on second degree is one year in jail and/or a \$5,000 fine.

Thompson said the obscene material confiscated in the police raids included both printed material and videos.

The book stores in Ferndale and Hazel Park had sexually explicit

"peep shows" that Thompson said brought in about \$75,000 per month at each store.

Consequently, Thompson said, he expects the defendants, and their associates, to contest the charges — as well as his "crackdown" — as a threat to their economic base.

THE PROSECUTOR said he also expects the American Civil Liberty Union to oppose his action. ACLU opposition is "like a red badge of courage to me," Thompson said. "When they oppose something, I know I'm on the right track."

Companies that sell or distribute sexually explicit material would have you believe that laws are so vague they can't be interpreted or enforced, Thompson said. "That is simply not the case."

Michigan has very specific anti-pornography laws enacted in 1985 and subsequently upheld by the high courts, he said. "We're not talking about Playboy, Penthouse or R-rated

movies," Thompson said. "We're talking about hard-core pornography."

State law defines "obscene" as including all of three elements:

• The average individual would find the material in question appeals to the prurient interest, meaning a "shameful or morbid interest in nudity, sex or excretion."

• The material, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value.

• The material depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct.

Asked who would decide if specific magazines or videos included all three elements — such as "lacking serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value" — Thompson said, "the jury."

"Just like they decide if a person is guilty of premeditated murder."

The prosecutor said he doesn't want to be the county's censor, but he doesn't want obscenity distributed in Oakland County either.

County porno crackdown upsets video store owners

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

The crackdown on pornographic material has many Oakland County video stores "very nervous," according to a representative of the Michigan Chapter of the Video Software Dealers' Association.

They are worried that actions by Prosecutor Richard Thompson could cut into the sale or rental of sexually explicit videos they feature, said Jeffrey G. Pedersen of Flint, who is president of VSDA which has about 300 members in Michigan and 75 in Oakland County.

Pedersen made his comments in a phone interview Friday, shortly after the owners of three adult book stores were arraigned in court on charges of violating Michigan obscenity laws.

While VSDA dealers do not operate adult book stores — like the prosecutor acted against — many often feature X-rated films. They defend their right to sell them as well as the individual's right to acquire them for use in their own homes.

"These videos don't involve kids or animals," he said. "But they are sexually explicit... what might be classified as stag films. Many of our customers are women or couples."

PEDERSEN said most dealers don't openly flaunt their adult sections and many acknowledge their sexually explicit videos only to those who ask about them.

"But we believe people have a right to view those videos in the privacy of their homes," he said. "And we believe we have a legitimate right to sell them."

The owner of a store in Troy said the prosecutor's actions, "clearly indicate there's an election coming up."

"We don't have vulgar or suggestive advertisements," said the woman, who asked not to be identified. "These are videos that men and women get for their own enjoyment."

The U.S. Constitution protects those rights, she said. And it protects the rights of video store owners to make them available.

"He (Thompson) is just playing to the gallery by jumping on a popular issue," said the woman, who said she is afraid religious groups might picket her store if they knew sexually explicit videos are available.

The woman, her husband and Pedersen met with Thompson on May 28 at which time the prosecutor reminded them of state obscenity

laws and his intention to enforce them.

"I informed them of the law and the fact that it's been upheld by the courts," Thompson said. "I asked them to voluntarily take obscene material from their shelves."

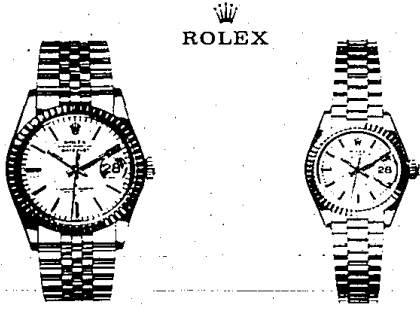
THE PROSECUTOR DENIED that his actions constitute any crackdown.

"I simply reminded them of the law and asked for their complete cooperation," he said. "Like any other legitimate business, I expect them to comply."

Thompson said he expects to send each of Oakland County's estimated 300 video dealers a letter, probably this month, explaining the law and his position. "It's not a threat or crackdown," he said. "I just want them to keep objectionable material out of Oakland County."

Regardless of his intentions, however, Pedersen said he views Thompson's actions as threatening to the legitimate interests of video dealers.

"We intend to fight it," he said. VSDA includes in its membership large dealers — like Blockbuster Video — as well as mom and pop grocery stores that rent movies as a sideline.



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