Alleged hit man saga continues

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—The saga of suspected Detroit hit man Chester W. Campbell, which has expanded almost in daily installments since his arrest Feb. 8 in Orchard Lake, took on still new dimensions this week as authorities in two counties advanced separate cases against Campbell.

In Oakland County, where Campbell has been held on three concealed weapons charges and a fourth charge of possession of heroin, bond against him was reduced to $200,000.

In Wayne County, where Campbell has been sought for more than two years on conspiracy charges in connection with the 18th (Livernois) Precinct police-drug scandal, a more serious charge of assault with intent to murder was made against Campbell.

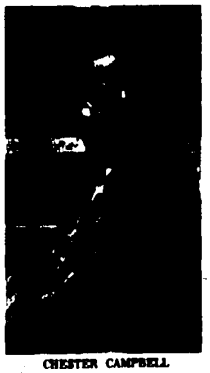
IN ADDITION three new court actions started or were planned in the ever-widening case:

- Campbell's attorneys announced plans to challenge what they still consider an unreasonably high bond. They will file the challenge with the State Court of Appeals Friday.
- Separate challenges were made to the legality of the recent police searches of two Campbell residences.

Wilfred Rice argued against the search of Campbell's official residence in Detroit in Recorder's Court earlier this week and Elbert Hatchett, Campbell's other attorney, will begin a similar challenge Thursday (March 6) in 48th District Court against the search of an Orchard Lake residence frequented by Campbell.

THOSE SEARCHES added new amounts of circumstantial evidence against Campbell and in support of the Detroit police claims that Campbell is a hired gunman of the Detroit narcotics underworld.

Added to the guns, heroin and suspicious documents found in Campbell's automobile in Orchard Lake in February, the house searches yielded 14 additional firearms, explosives, $300,000 in cash and police-type surveillance equipment.



CHESTER CAMPBELL

Besides generating added speculation about Campbell's underworld connections, all the Campbell-related activity caused expanded confusion—confusion that sometimes included the very authorities in both counties who are simultaneously investigating Campbell.

There were hardly two days within the past week that Campbell faced the same set of charges or the same amount of bond.

LAST TUESDAY, at the request of the Wayne County Organized Crime Task Force, the two-year-old conspiracy indictments against Campbell were dropped in Detroit Recorder's Court.

For a period of a few days at least, only the Oakland County charges were pending against Campbell.

Apparently, the warrants to search Campbell's houses were sought and issued without knowledge that the indictments had been dropped, even though investigating the Detroit charges was a major reason for the approval of the warrants.

Because police were unwittingly investigating no longer operative charges when they entered Campbell's residences, his attorneys are charging these searches were illegal.

THE CONFUSION was blamed on poor communication.

Apparently different units of the Detroit police departments hadn't kept each other informed about changing developments, just as the Oakland County prosecutor's office wasn't speedily informed by Wayne authorities.

The Oakland County prosecutor's office reportedly didn't learn that Wayne authorities had searched Campbell's Detroit residence until hours after it occurred.

Then, hastily seeking a warrant to search Campbell's Orchard Lake residence as well, Oakland authorities sought a search warrant partly to investigate the Detroit charges which they also hadn't been informed were dropped two days previously.

BY FRIDAY, however, a new Detroit charge was made against Campbell.

Campbell was charged with attempting to murder an important witness in the 18th precinct drug case even though Detroit authorities couldn't pinpoint when the alleged crime took place. They believe it occurred in July or August of 1972.

Campbell was quickly arraigned on the charge in Detroit and $200,000 was added to Campbell's Oakland County bond, which at that time amounted to $600,000.

WITHIN DAYS, however, the bond amount changed.

Tuesday Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Robert Webster lowered the Oakland portion of Campbell's bond to $200,000—which meant, given the $200,000 bond set by the Detroit judge, that Campbell needed $400,000 to be freed while his cases are heard.

Judge Webster said his decision would please neither of the attorneys and he was right.

Assistant Oakland County prosecutor Richard Thompson, who argued that it only took common sense for the court to recognize that Campbell is a dangerous man, asked the judge to return Campbell's bond to the unprecedented $1 million it was before Campbell's preliminary examination in district court.

Campbell's attorney Hatchett, who called the previous bond amount "totally shocking," said the reduction wasn't enough to keep his client from appealing bond in the court of appeals.

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Court will be 'swamped' with criminal-case rise

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—Still another problem has been blamed on the current recession: the sharp rise in criminal cases handled by the Oakland County Circuit Court.

Presiding Judge William P. Hampton cited worsening economic conditions as a major reason for what he predicted would be a temporary situation of circuit court judges being "swamped" by criminal cases.

"By virtue of this crime wave, if you want to call it a crime wave," Judge Hampton said civil cases are "placed on the back burner until we can get to them" and circuit judges are now devoting half their time to hearing criminal cases.

THE NUMBER of criminal cases jumped 44 per cent in 1974, according to Judge Hampton's figures, and already in 1975 have increased 65 per cent over the previous year's figures.

During the first month of 1975, criminal filings totaled 453 cases compared to 275 cases filed during the first month of 1974.

Stating that the best deterrent to crime is a speedy trial within 60 days of the crime, Judge Hampton said it now takes an average of six months after a crime has been committed for the trial to begin.

Because criminal proceedings are given top priority, Judge Hampton said the wait for a divorce trial now extends beyond nine months and for an auto negligence case, beyond two years.

The wait for divorce proceedings in Oakland County was less than the nearby counties of Wayne (where the average wait is 23.5 months), Genesee (13.2 months) and Macomb (11.5 months).

JUDGE HAMPTON discussed the rise of criminal cases along with a number of more positive subjects during a Monday press conference in his chambers.

He said that although future expansion of the 11-judge circuit court is inevitable, it should not be necessary until 1976 or 1978.

However, Judge Hampton suggested that the county begin studying now where the one or two new courtrooms would be located. The courthouse tower is already crowded and something may have to be moved to another county building to make room for more judges.

THE POSSIBILITY of placing one of the new judgeships in either Southfield or Royal Oak was discussed by Judge Hampton.

Just as there are satellite offices of the prosecuting attorney's office and the probation department in the southern part of the county, Judge Hampton suggested the heavy population in that area might warrant a more conveniently located circuit courtroom as well.

THE OAKLAND record of handling 1,884 cases per judge compares to a statewide average of 1,661 cases per judge.

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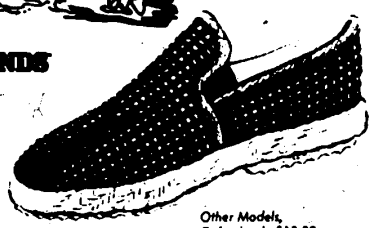

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