

VC = Vincent Carraher

CD = Claude Duke

OS = Otis Smith

VC: All right, I'm going to test this machine to make sure it's picking up. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. All right, all is well. Today is June 25, 1997. This is Vincent Carraher, and I'm with Mr. Claude Duke, and we're going to be taking a statement. As a witness, there is Mr. Otis Smith present. Mr. Duke, would you give me your name, age, and address, please?

CD: Claude E. Duke, Sr. I'm 63 years old. I live at [REDACTED] Maplewood, Minnesota 55109.

VC: And your phone, Sir?

CD: [REDACTED]

VC: All right. Now, are you retired, Sir?

CD: Yes.

VC: And from what company?

CD: U.S. West.

VC: U.S. West. Now, all your life, you've been gainfully employed with some company or another, correct?

CD: Since I've been 15.

VC: Since you were 15. And, ah, how many years with U.S. West?

CD: 25.

VC: 25. All right. Now, I have your permission to record this statement, correct?

CD: Correct.

VC: And, have I given you any promises, inducements, or threats?

CD: None whatsoever.

VC: All right. Has Mr. Otis Smith made any promises, inducements, or threats?

CD: None.

VC: Has anyone offered you a promise, an inducement, or anyone threatened you to give a statement?

CD: No one.

VC: Now, you're related to Mr. Ralph Duke, correct?

CD: Right.

VC: And Ralph Duke is presently incarcerated, is that correct?

CD: Correct.

VC: Now, did you ever have any illegal or unethical dealings with Mr. Ralph Duke?

CD: Never.

VC: Now Mr. Duke, as a family member, would see you on occasion?

CD: Also, yes, on occasion.

VC: All right. Did he ever discuss his personal business with you?

CD: Never.

VC: All right. So, it was family-related gatherings?

CD: That's what it always was.

VC: All right. Now, before we get into this, at a point in time, Mr. Otis Smith met with you, and some others, that have knowledge about Mr. Duke's situation. Is that correct?

CD: Correct.

VC: And Mr. Smith, you, and who else was involved in this discussion?

CD: Other people in the family.

VC: People in the family.

CD: I can name them?

VC: If you would, please.

CD: Okay. I think, ah, Andre Duke was here.

VC: Okay.

CD: Toby Skinner, which is my daughter.

VC: All right.

CD: Ah, Loren Duke was also present.

VC: Okay. And this discuss you had pertained to the history of Ralph Duke's arrest, trial, and conviction. Isn't that correct?

CD: That was correct.

VC: Now, this was not a formal statement, as I understand it, it was a discussion that was recorded, is that correct?

CD: Correct.

VC: Everyone joined in?

CD: Right.

VC: It wasn't a formal, ah, format, so to speak.

CD: No, it was not.

VC: Okay. Now, reflecting back to, what year was this investigation initiated against Ralph Duke? Do you remember what year that was?

CD: '89. I think it was '89.

VC: 1989. Okay. Can you tell me, what was your connection? Why were you brought into this investigation.

CD: They, the federal people said that they saw his car at my home, and that the snitch told them that he kept his money at my home, which is untrue.

VC: Okay, and do you know the name of the snitch, was that a person named Chambers?

CD: That particular snitch's name was Cadwell.

VC: Cadwell.

CD: Cadwell.

VC: This is what the feds told you?

CD: Yes.

VC: Okay. Now, were you home when they came to your residence?

CD: No, I was not, I was at work.

VC: And that was at U.S. West?

CD: Yes.

VC: Was a family member home?

CD: My wife was home, and my son was here.

VC: Which son, Sir?

CD: Andre and Marcel.

VC: Okay. Now, this business about a car or a vehicle, what did they tell you ultimately about that?

CD: Well, they told me that they saw his vehicle in my yard, the vehicle that they saw in my yard was my vehicle that had been out there for five years.

VC: They said they saw . . .

CD: They described it.

VC: Okay. They said it was Ralph Duke's vehicle?

CD: Yes. Now, and they described it, they described my vehicle.

VC: Yes.

CD: But, now, they gave no license number, when they were asked by Earl Gray the license number, they gave none.

VC: Earl Gray is the attorney.

CD: Was our attorney for my kids.

VC: Yeah, okay. So this was the reason they told you that they came to your residence?

CD: Yes.

VC: Because, but that was not, that was your vehicle, that was not Mr. Ralph Duke's vehicle?

CD: That's right.

VC: Do you know if they ever took a license and ran a license plate?

CD: I, we asked that question, and the police officer said no.

VC: They didn't?

CD: They did not.

VC: Wouldn't that be standard procedure?

CD: It should have been.

VC: All right. So, the federal agents came to your residence while you were at work and your wife was present with one of your children. Ah, were you, what happened here, what did your wife say when they came here?

CD: Well, they just smashed the door in and came in.

VC: Did they show her a warrant? Do you know?

CD: They couldn't get the door down, so my son went and opened the door for them, and just said, "Wait a minute, I'll open the door for you".

VC: But they didn't wait?

CD: No.

VC: They smashed the door in?

CD: Smashed the door in, and they could not get in. He had, eventually handed them the keys after they smashed it for hours.

VC: Okay. And do you remember how many agents were here? Did your son or your wife tell you?

CD: It is my understanding that there were between 17 and 20.

VC: And what time of day did this occur?

CD: 8:30, between 8:30 and 9:30 in the morning.

VC: Okay. And, ah, when you came home, what did you find had happened at your residence? Were items taken?

CD: Items were taken, yes.

VC: Did they inventory those items? Make a list?

CD: Yes they did. They did inventory some of the items, some of the items they did not.

VC: Okay. Was the house tossed . . .

CD: The house was tossed. Totaled.

VC: Was it a mess?

CD: Total mess. Totaled.

VC: All right. Was anything found that was illegal?

CD: Not one thing.

VC: Nothing found?

CD: Nothing.

VC: No large amount of cash or narcotics?

CD: No large amount of cash and no narcotics.

VC: And, do you know how long they were here searching the house?

CD: They were here until 7:30 - 8:00 that night.

VC: And they arrived early in the morning.

CD: Yes.

VC: Did you come home, then?

CD: I came home, yes. I got home about 7:30 - 8:00.

VC: Okay. Were you alerted by a family member that the search was going on?

CD: Yes, um hmm.

VC: Okay.

CD: I was on my job, I never left my job.

VC: Never left your job. All right.

CD: Except for lunch.

VC: All right. When you came home, were you arrested?

CD: No.

VC: Was anyone arrested here?

CD: No.

VC: All right. Ah, do you remember any names of these agents?

CD: Just Hopeman.

VC: Hopeman, he is, he is the prosecutor.

CD: Um hmm. And . . .

VC: Was there a man named Carey?

CD: I remember Carey, and I also remember Selas, Selis, Solasia I think his name was, or something. Because I . . .

VC: A Polish name?

CD: Solinsky.

VC: Solinsky.

CD: Solinsky.

VC: Okay. Was this in the summertime or wintertime, '89?

CD: Spring.

VC: Spring.

CD: I think it was spring.

VC: All right. This was quite a while ago.

CD: There was no snow on the ground.

VC: No snow on the ground. Okay. Were you shown a search warrant?

CD: No.

VC: You were not.

CD: Un hnn.

VC: Do you recall if your wife was shown a warrant?

CD: She doesn't remember any.

VC: All right. Can you tell me what items were taken that were not listed in an inventory?

CD: I had a, my neighbor, I had his bolt cutters I was using those, he saw them take them and he told me, "they took my bolt cutters out of your garage".

VC: Okay.

CD: He also saw them, and he told them they were his. He told the officer that had them. They took my new golf clubs and balls.

VC: Okay. Did you ever get those back?

CD: No.

VC: What is your neighbor's name?

CD: His name is John Stanley. He's deceased now.

VC: He's deceased. Did he ever get his property back?

CD: No.

VC: Now, all right. After this search, were you requested to give an interview with agents or Mr. Hopeman?

CD: No, I was not requested.

VC: Did they demand you give a statement?

CD: No.

VC: Okay. Were any threats or accusations made against you, your wife, or your son?

CD: Well, yes, after, when he told me to come, I had, he called me on my job . . .

VC: This is . . .

CD: The next day.

VC: The next day.

CD: And he asked me to come in and talk to him.

VC: All right.

CD: Hopeman asked.

VC: Mr. Hopeman asked you.

CD: Uh huh, and I did do so.

VC: All right. At his office?

CD: Yes, I went to his office, downtown Minneapolis, in the Federal Building.

VC: All right. And did you go there alone?

CD: Yes.

VC: All right.

CD: On my lunch hour.

VC: And what did he want from you?

CD: Well, at the time they had Loren incarcerated.

VC: All right, now who is Loren?

CD: My son.

VC: All right. Where was he arrested?

CD: Ah, he was arrested in Minneapolis.

VC: Okay.

CD: On that, this evening, on the evening before this.

VC: So he was being held in jail.

CD: Yes.

VC: All right. So, you went down to see Mr. Hopeman.

CD: Right.

VC: All right, and what did he tell you? To the best of your recollection.

CD: He said, first he told me he had evidence against me, I said, "Against what, doing what?", he said, "Well, narcotics", I said, "No, you don't have nothing against me with no narcotics, are you crazy? I know better", and he says, and then he said to me, "And we got Loren", and I said, "I know, that's why I'm here", "And Ralph", and I said "I understand that". And I said, I knew what they were holding Loren for . . .

VC: Why were they holding Loren?

CD: Loren and them were, the feds had made a deal with them to meet them at some hotel with money to buy narcotics that they never saw.

VC: Okay. When did you learn . . .

CD: Dumb kids.

VC: When did you learn that?

CD: From Loren that same day that I went to see Hopeman. He called me.

VC: Okay.

CD: That's when I learned it.

VC: Did you see Loren first and then Hopeman?

CD: No, I called, Loren called me in the morning.

VC: You spoke with him on the phone?

CD: Yes.

VC: And he told you why he was arrested?

CD: Right. And then, and then I talked to a couple of his buddies that came by and told me.

VC: Why he was arrested.

CD: Why he was arrested, because I wanted to know why.

VC: And he said what, that they . . .

CD: That they had went to purchase some narcotics and they turned out to be federal agents.

VC: Okay.

CD: That's the first I heard of it.

VC: Did they ever make the purchase? Was the deal ever . . .

CD: There never was nothing there.

VC: Okay.

CD: It was just, "Bring the money", they showed those kids no drugs, no nothing, Loren said. All, I talked to every one of the kids, none of them, they never showed them one thing.

VC: Okay.

CD: It was a sting operation, but there was no narcotics.

VC: Now, where did all that money come from? Did these guys pool their money?

CD: It is my understanding that they all pooled their money, and there had to be, there had to be, I don't know exactly how many of them, 'cause I talked to each and every one of those kids.

VC: Quite a few?

CD: Yes, oh goodness. I think a total of twelve, nine or twelve.

VC: All right. Was any of that money coming from Mr. Ralph Duke?

CD: Not a dime.

VC: Not a dime.

CD: Not a dime.

VC: And they said that, these people that pooled their money, did they tell you it was their money and no one else's?

CD: That's exactly what they told me.

VC: All right. Should we hold? There's a phone call here.

(tape stops then starts)

VC: We were interrupted by a phone call from Mr. Duke's daughter. Okay. I left off, or you left off by saying that Loren and other that spoke with you claimed that Ralph Duke did not have any money in this deal.

CD: Not one dime did he have involved. In fact, it came to my knowledge, actually, Ralph was already in jail. Before this ever took place.

VC: Before . . . ?

CD: Before the sting.

VC: Where was he in jail, and why?

CD: He was in Hennepin County Jail, and I don't know why. He was arrested, he had already been in jail two days.

VC: He had been in jail two days.

CD: Before the sting operation took place on those kids.

VC: All right. Now, going back to Mr. Hopeman, when you're in his office, he said of course that he had Loren there, and did he say they had Ralph Duke also?

CD: Yes, he did.

VC: All right. Then, what did he tell you that he was going to do?

CD: He, that's the question I asked him. "What's wrong with my son, I don't understand", you know, and he said, "Well, they were involved in a narcotics transaction", and I said, "Well, was Ralph in that transaction?", and he told me no, that he was no in that transaction.

VC: Did anyone else witness what he said to you?

CD: There was another officer in there, I don't know who he was or nothing.

VC: But, when you first met with him, Hopeman said "No, Ralph Duke was not involved"?

CD: Was not involved. He said, "He's on another charge".

VC: He's on another charge.

CD: That's what he indicated to me.

VC: Did he tell you what that other charge was?

CD: No. He did not, and I did, you know, I was more interested in my kid than that.

VC: Okay. Did he say, ah, did he make any threats to you about your son?

CD: He just told me that he was facing 20 years.

VC: Okay.

CD: And that, ah, "Maybe you", he asked me straight out, he said, "Maybe you could talk to him".

VC: About what?

CD: About, "I need him for something, if you can talk to him to cooperate with us, I'll, ah," and I, at the time I said, "What do you mean by cooperate, I don't understand", I didn't, you know, because I didn't have all the information, so "I don't understand". "I need him to cooperate with us, and if you can talk to him, I want you to, I want you to talk to him to have him talk to me".

VC: Okay.

CD: And I said, "Well, I'll do that".

VC: Okay. But was Hopeman specific about this cooperation? What did he want Loren . . .

CD: At that particular time, that's all he gave me at that particular time.

VC: Okay.

CD: We had three meetings.

VC: You had three meetings. All right . . .

CD: Or more.

VC: Then you went and talked to Loren?

CD: Right.

VC: And what did you instruct him to do? Or, request him.

CD: Then I went there and he told me the whole, the whole thing that happened.

VC: Loren did?

CD: Loren did, and everything that was, everybody that was involved, and in doing so, I asked him, I said, "Well, is Ralph involved?", and he said "No, he has nothing", he said, "If you're talking about Ralph he had nothing to do with this, nothing".

VC: Okay.

CD: "This was all the guys", and then he named off the guys, and everything, he said this had nothing to do, he called him Plukey, "Had nothing to do with Plukey at all. Nothing".

VC: Can you give me the names of these guys? Do you remember?

CD: I can get their names. I can remember, I can get the names of every one of them.

VC: Well . . .

CD: But I can't . . .

VC: Off the top of your head.

CD: Ah, Loren, Buddha, Hutchinsons . . .

VC: Hutchinsons . . .

CD: And the Hutchinsons had never seen Plukey in their life.

VC: They never met Ralph Duke?

CD: Never in their life.

VC: Okay. These were young men?

CD: Young kids. 19, 20 years old. And, in the courtroom, they asked them to pick out Ralph, they could not do it.

VC: They could not.

CD: No, and they made a deal, they had also made a deal with Hopeman, and they couldn't pick him out.

VC: Okay.

CD: They had never seen him in their life. They lied to get their time changed.

VC: Okay. So, back to your conversation with Loren, Loren gave you the entire history of how this came down?

CD: Yes.

VC: Okay. What did he, what did he tell you?

CD: He said, "Dad, ah, Lamonte made a deal with some guys, and they told, some white guys, and they told him they'd give him such amount of drugs for such amount of money". Well, it was such a good deal to those kids, that he said they all got together and pooled their money.

VC: Okay.

CD: It was a rich-quick venture. Well, you know, for those kids.

VC: Yeah.

CD: There never was no drugs shown to them, I don't know how they could be that dumb.

VC: Okay.

CD: And they went for it, and it was police. And, so Lamonte talked him into it. "Hey, come on, we can do this and we can do that".

VC: Now, Lamonte is who?

CD: Is Plukey Duke's son.

VC: Okay.

CD: And Plukey Duke had no knowledge that this was going on. None.

VC: And Plukey Duke was not directing Lamonte?

CD: None of it, he knew nothing of it.

VC: Okay.

CD: Nothing. And, this is the thing, all those, all on their own.

VC: All right.

CD: So, they went to, ah, to go see the people, of course they were instantly under arrest. Handcuffed, slammed on the ground, they took the money.

VC: Okay.

CD: Then they came . . .

VC: Was Loren present?

CD: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he was standing, he was at the truck. He never met them, he was outside at the truck.

VC: And this was at a hotel?

CD: Yes, but they stayed outside. Loren and, and another kid stayed outside, (inaudible) stayed with the money.

VC: And where was Lamonte during . . .

CD: Lamonte went in to get the guy and brought him out.

VC: In the hotel?

CD: Yeah, and he asked Lamonte, "Well where's the money?"

VC: Yeah.

CD: This is how dumb he is, he says, "Well, it's in the truck", so they slam Lamonte down, handcuff him, go outside, jump the other guys, and there was other kids involved, and they ran, they jumped in their cars and tried to get away. They had them surrounded. One of the kids got all the back to St. Paul, he had gotten away, but a neighbor saw him go through the yard and called the police and told them.

VC: Okay. So, Loren told you the events of that particular . . .

CD: Yes, he did.

VC: Okay, so you get done meeting with Loren, and then when did you next meet with Hopeman?

CD: Probably two day, ah, a day later or two days later, I don't remember exactly.

VC: Did he say, what was the purpose of the meeting? Did he call you up and you went down?

CD: Yes.

VC: And did he say why?

CD: I wanted him to release my son.

VC: Okay.

CD: Then he comes out with an article in the paper.

VC: Hopeman?

CD: Yes.

VC: Okay.

CD: That he has an indictment waiting for Marcel.

VC: And who is Marcel?

CD: My other son.

VC: Your other son.

CD: So, now he has an indictment waiting for Marcel, who's my other son, so I, I go to Marcel, and said, "What kind of indictment could he have", and Hopeman says, "Oh, I got a whole table full of indictments, for all of you. You, your wife, ah, your other brother", who's 70 years old and never done anything. And I said, "Well, wait a minute now, you're telling me one thing, but you're doing something else". And then Marcel called him up.

VC: All right.

CD: And he wanted Marcel to come in and talk to him.

VC: Now, was Marcel at all involved in this sting operation?

CD: No, but the snitch, I don't know about the sting operation, but I know that Marcel was involved in the, ah, yes, let's see, how did this go, Marcel was involved, it is my understanding that the snitch was with Marcel, told him that he went and picked up something with Marcel.

VC: Well, did Marcel contribute, did he pool some of his money also, in this deal?

CD: Yes, he did.

VC: Okay.

CD: Yes, he did.

VC: All right.

CD: Yeah.

VC: So, anyway, Mr. Hopeman said they had an indictment for Marcel, also.

CD: Right. He said it in the paper.

VC: He said it in the paper.

CD: Yeah, and so Marcel called him.

VC: Okay.

CD: And Marcel went down to see him. He didn't even act on the indictment, he let Marcel come in and talk to him.

VC: Okay. So, he, Mr. Hopeman is telling you he's got all these indictments.

CD: Right.

VC: What did he want from you, what did he say to you?

CD: Well he asked me, he asked me questions about Ralph. And I said, "Well, me and Ralph, I haven't seen Plukey since, probably twice in a year. I went to see him not too long ago, out at Watertown", and he asked me "Why did you go there?", I said, "He's my brother and me and my wife went out there, went for

a ride, I should be able to go see him whenever I get ready, had nothing to do with no drugs”.

VC: Okay.

CD: And that's, and I hadn't seen Ralph since, that was the third time I had seen him in one entire year.

VC: All right.

CD: That we were physically together.

VC: Okay. Ah, at that point in time, did Mr. Hopeman threaten you and your wife . . .

CD: He said, "I'm going to", ah, he said, "If you get Loren to cooperate with me", I said "What do you mean, 'cooperate with me'?", he said, "I'll drop the indictments against you", I said, "Indictments against me for what?", "And your wife", I said, "Again, for what?", I said "We haven't done anything, what are you talking about", and he said, "I know, but I'm still going to take you all into court", he said, "I'm still going to take you into court" he says. I said, "For what?", he says, "Well, ah, it came to our attention that you were holding Ralph's money", I said, "Well, you searched my home, what money was there there that was Ralph's, tell me what you found there that was Ralph's", he said, "I found nothing there that was Ralph's".

VC: He admitted he found nothing . . .

CD: Nothing there that was Ralph's, not even a letter.

VC: And I asked you before if there was any cash or narcotics at your house, and you said no.

CD: None.

VC: Okay.

CD: None. And no narcotics paraphernalia of any description.

VC: And that vehicle that was parked in front of your house was yours.

CD: Was mine. It had been sitting there for five years, off and on, I used it to go to work, back and forth. And the first thing a police officer should do is take the license plates.

VC: Right. And Mr. Duke, Mr. Ralph Duke, did he come by in a similar vehicle ever? Or often?

CD: No.

VC: No.

CD: No, no.

VC: Okay.

CD: No, and, ah, 'cause when I questioned that, he said, "Well it could have been his or Lamonte's", like that, and threw it off, "It could have been his or Lamonte's", and I said, "Well, neither one of them has a vehicle like that, so please tell me", I said, "That vehicle's been sitting out there for five years, I bought it five years ago" at that time, I said "I've been driving it every day to work back and forth".

VC: But that was the excuse they used for the search warrant.

CD: For the search, yes, that's what he said.

VC: All right, so, Mr. Hopeman is telling you that he has indictments for you and your wife.

CD: Right.

VC: And he wanted Loren's cooperation.

CD: Right.

VC: And you told him that you had not done anything improper, illegal, unethical, or anything.

CD: Or anything.

VC: Okay.

Missing Pg 23

CD: Yes. This is what he said. And he said, "And you and your wife, too, if I don't get no cooperation". That was his very words.

VC: So, did you interpret that as a threat?

CD: Yes, I interpret that as a threat.

VC: Okay. So, then what happened?

CD: When I, then we, they had the hearing at the courtroom, I went down there, and I saw all those guys, and they didn't give none of them bail. They refused bail for every single one of them.

VC: And then you talked to Loren?

CD: Then I talked to Loren and said, "Tell Hopeman what happened at the hotel with two guys, the two guys were enticed into that garbage and what was happening".

VC: And, ah . . .

CD: Hopeman went down and saw Loren.

VC: And Loren then told him how this thing developed?

CD: Right. And he said to Loren, and I didn't know this until later, he said, "Tell me that Plukey was involved in it, and I'll see that you get no time." He said, "I don't really want you".

VC: That's what Hopeman told Loren?

CD: Right.

VC: All right. Did you encourage, ah, Loren to . . .

CD: Absolutely.

VC: You encouraged Loren to go along with this?

CD: Yes. Yes, I did.

VC: Okay.

CD: And, yes, I did.

VC: All right. In order to protect your son?

CD: Yes. Sons.

VC: Sons. You encouraged them to do this.

CD: Yes, and I had another brother that was involved, that was involved. They had just arrested, because he was with Plukey sometimes.

VC: All right.

CD: He's 70 years old and they arrested him.

VC: And you encouraged that to protect your 70 year old brother.

CD: Right. He had a bad heart, and he died from a heart attack from this garbage.

VC: All right. So you were protecting also your wife?

CD: Right.

VC: And yourself. Did they threaten to take your, your home or vehicles?

CD: They had taken one of my vehicles, that had belonged to my wife.

VC: They took one of your vehicles?

CD: Yeah, and they, yes they did.

VC: All right.

CD: And they brought it and gave it back.

VC: And they gave it back?

CD: Yes.

VC: Okay. So, at any rate . . .

CD: They didn't touch my vehicle, they took my wife's.

VC: All right. So, at any rate, Loren then did talk to Mr. Hopeman and other agents?

CD: Yes.

VC: And from what Loren has told you and what you later learned, he said that Ralph Duke's money was involved in this?

CD: He told me that Ralph Duke's money was never involved.

VC: He told you that, Loren did.

CD: Yes.

VC: But what did he tell Hopeman?

CD: He told Hopeman, Hopeman told to tell him that.

VC: Hopeman . . .

CD: Hopeman had the whole stage plan made out for him. They did not make me aware of what he was going to say to him when he went there to talk to him.

VC: Okay.

CD: He said, I said, "It's set up for you to go talk to him".

VC: Now, before this, had Hopeman talked to Loren, and had Loren told Hopeman that Ralph wasn't involved in this? Had he originally told him . . .

CD: Well, yeah. They had Lamonte there, they all said, "Ralph Duke, it's not, none of Plukey's money".

VC: Was any of that, to your knowledge, recorded, or did they take notes about that?

CD: Oh, I don't know, it was done down there in that jail that they were in. It was, it was Chippewa, Wisconsin, or something.

VC: Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin.

CD: Something like that. That's where they were being held.

VC: You don't know if they recorded . . .

CD: No, I don't.

VC: But, you learned originally, they denied Ralph Duke's involvement. Is that correct?

CD: That is correct.

VC: I don't mean to be leading you . . .

CD: No, they, they knew that Ralph Duke was not involved in that.

VC: Okay.

CD: Every kid came forward and told them that.

VC: All right.

CD: But the deal was, "Tell me he was", that's with the Hutchinson boys, also.

VC: The Hutchinson . . .

CD: And they never saw Plukey in their life.

VC: They never knew him?

CD: Did not know him.

VC: All right.

CD: Did not know him. And did not know me. Couldn't pick me out from a line-up.

VC: All right. But, they were told by Hopeman and possibly agents . . .

CD: That's absolutely correct.

VC: That if they incriminate Ralph Duke their sentence would be minimal, or . . .

CD: Or none.

VC: Or none.

CD: All the kids there were told they were facing 20 years.

VC: They were all facing . . .

CD: But if they cooperated, you'd either face none . . .

(end of side of tape)

VC: That was the conclusion of Side A of the interview with Mr. Claude Duke. We left off by talking about sentencing. So, you stated that they were all threatened with 20 years, and if they would say that it was Ralph Duke's money, they would get less time.

CD: Absolutely correct.

VC: And, ah, when did you learn about this?

CD: Ah, three days after they arrested the boys, Loren and them.

VC: Okay. Now, you had a, a third meeting with Mr. Hopeman, is that correct?

CD: That's correct.

VC: Was there another agent present?

CD: Yes, ah, they had taken some guns out of my home.

VC: These were hunting . . . ?

CD: Hunting, they left me my rifles.

VC: Yes.

CD: They took my pistols. I had target pistols. They took all my pistols and ran an FBI check on all of them.

VC: Yes.

CD: And after Loren, and they took all my tax papers and stuff out of the house.

VC: All right.

CD: They found nothing wrong with none of it, and then they, they called me up, and told me my stuff was released, and come get my guns.

VC: Yes.

CD: They gave me every one of my guns back, except, some of them stole one of the clips out of one of them.

VC: All right.

CD: But everything else they gave me back. They gave it back to me.

VC: Okay.

CD: And all the paperwork that I could see, they gave all that back to me. All my tax statements, I had receipts for every gun, from Phillips Bait Store, and they, they gave that all back to me. And they gave me all my guns back, except for that clip that was missing.

VC: All right. But you had specifically told Mr. Hopeman that Ralph Duke was not involved in this sting operation?

CD: I told him that.

VC: And Loren and others had told Mr. Hopeman originally?

CD: Yes. Absolutely correct.

VC: Then they changed their story, is that correct?

CD: The boys?

VC: Yes.

CD: Yes. Yes, the boys changed their story, yes.

VC: Okay.

CD: Loren changed his story to protect his mom and dad after being in that courtroom, and seeing what they were doing, and that scared him.

VC: Yes.

CD: I didn't even know that he had changed his story. I, he said, "I'm not going to let you and mom go to jail, Dad, for nothing, that's what he's trying to do".

VC: All right.

CD: That was the very words he said to me.

VC: Okay.

CD: And I, you know, and Ralph had, Plukey had nothing to do with none of that. Nothing.

VC: All right.

CD: And they knew that. They already had him incarcerated.

VC: He was incarcerated two days before the sting.

CD: Right. The day, 24 hours before the sting.

VC: Okay.

CD: And the federal agents that made the deal with those kids knew that Plukey was not involved, because it was, it was Lamonte they were dealing with, that's all they ever saw.

VC: Okay.

CD: They knew that Ralph was not, Plukey was not there.

VC: Now, would you have . . .

CD: The kid told, another thing he told me, he told me that he told those agents that he had nothing to do with it, that he was not involved.

VC: Who said that?

CD: Lamonte told the, he thought he was just a regular white guy.

VC: Yeah.

CD: He said, he said, "This my, this is our deal".

VC: Did Lamonte later tell you that?

CD: Yes. Yes.

VC: Did you talk to him at court or on the phone?

CD: On the phone, yes.

VC: And Lamonte told you that it was his deal, that Ralph Plukey Duke had nothing to do with it.

CD: And not only that, so did all the kids.

VC: So did all the kids.

CD: All the kids. Some of the kids got out on bail, like a couple of them, one of the kids that had his name, the only way they got him, his name was in the bag.

VC: Oh, yes. On a bag.

CD: Yeah, he was not involved. Physically, he was not involved. He let them use his bag. He got five years.

VC: He was incriminating for letting someone use his bag.

CD: Right. That's the truth. I can't remember the kid's name, man. I, you know, and this is what they were doing down there, and it scared Loren.

VC: Okay.

CD: So then Loren cooperated with Hopeman, yes.

VC: All right. Okay. Ah, let me pause for a moment and look at my notes.

(tape stops, then starts)

VC: All right, ah, had you talked to Ralph Duke while he was incarcerated?

CD: I had talked to Ralph Duke while he was incarcerated, yes. *(before trial not after)*

VC: Okay. Did he ever ask you to lie or fabricate a story?

CD: No.

VC: Okay.

CD: No.

VC: All right. Now, concerning your older brother, who was 70 years old, did you talk to Mr. Hopeman about him?

CD: Yes, I did.

VC: Okay. Can you tell me what he said about him?

CD: I went to him, and I said "He has never done anything, he, they had a (inaudible) or something down there, but he's never run no money or anything, ah, whatever Plukey asked him to do, he did this or he did that, and he's never done anything wrong. I understand that when you caught him he had a pistol in his briefcase, but he always had a pistol in his briefcase.

VC: We'll pause for the phone.

(tape stops, then starts)

VC: Okay, we paused for the phone, ah, and you said that he had a pistol in his briefcase. Then, what, what was Mr. Hopeman's reaction to your plea on behalf of your elderly brother?

CD: He said, I said, ah, he said, he asked me, "Is Loren going to cooperate with us?", and I said, "Well, I'm talking to you about Sunny", that's my little brother, he says, ah, "Is Loren going to cooperate?", and I said, "Yes, Loren's waiting for you to come and talk to him", he said, I said, "Get my brother out of jail. He didn't, shouldn't be there, he hasn't done anything". Hopeman said

to me, "He will be out at 9:00 in the morning, you can come get him, he'll be free. No bail, no nothing. Free".

VC: Okay.

CD: Everything dropped totally.

VC: Depending on what?

CD: On Loren's cooperation.

VC: Okay. Had Loren made up his mind . . .

CD: At that time, no. I don't know, not at that time, yet.

VC: Okay.

CD: I, see I don't know what they said down there.

VC: Okay, all right. So, do you know at what point in time Loren decided to tell them what they wanted to hear?

CD: It must have been, he probably already had the information in his grasp, because he did, he said he'd turn him loose, and this was at 2:00 in the afternoon.

VC: Okay.

CD: So, he must have already had the information that he needed.

VC: So, when was your brother released, then?

CD: He kept his word, he was released the next day.

VC: Okay. And, do you believe that Hopeman and the agents knew all along that Mr. Ralph Duke was not part of this, ah, drug transaction.

CD: He knew all along. And so did the agents. They all knew.

VC: Did they tell you they knew?

CD: Ah, the agent went into the jail cell and, and punched on Plukey, and he told Plukey, he said, "We got you this time", and that's what Ralph, Plukey told me when I talked to him on the phone.

VC: That's what he told you.

CD: That's what he told me. And the other, the kids were in the jail at the time, they saw this take place.

VC: Do you know what jail that was? Was that Hennepin County?

CD: Hennepin County, yes.

VC: Okay. All right. But, what convinces you, ah, what convinces you that Hopeman knew all along that Mr. Ralph Duke was not involved in this particular deal?

CD: When I talked to him, I could tell he knew, because I told him, I said, "You know Plukey had nothing to do with none of this, nothing, those are those kids' deal", 'cause I said, "That's an entrapment what they did to those kids, and that's a damn shame. Those kids are 19, 20 years old, and you, you people would come in here and do that to those young, starving kids". And that's, and he said to me, he said, "Well, things happen", and I said, "Yeah, I know. I know, but that's a shame to do that".

VC: And you had talked to Loren and some of the others before any deals were made about sentencing, and they told you Ralph Duke was not involved?

CD: Absolutely.

VC: Okay. You talked to Loren and Monte, and who else?

CD: Loren called me in the middle of the night at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, and told me, on the phone, he said, "Dad, I've been arrested. For, ah, they got us for trying to make a drug deal", I said, "You're crazy".

VC: Uh huh.

CD: "You're totally insane", he said, "I can't talk long", he said, I said, but I said, "Who's idea was this?", and he, the first thing out of his mouth, he said, "It has

nothing to do with Plukey at all, Dad, nothing”, then he says, “Lamonte and us”.

VC: Okay. Do you know why he said it had nothing to do with Plukey?

CD: Because I couldn't find him for three days. Plukey.

VC: Okay.

CD: You know, we were looking, wondering if something had happened to him.

VC: You usually hear from him by phone, or . . .

CD: All the, yes. Yes.

VC: Okay.

CD: And he never talked to me about drugs. Ever.

VC: All right.

CD: He might have talked to me about a woman or a car, but never about drugs. Never did he.

VC: All right. So, it was Lamonte's idea. Lamonte directed this entire thing.

CD: Lamonte told me that they approached him.

VC: Okay.

CD: And he was approached through a black kid. A black guy.

VC: Was this Chambers?

CD: It could have been.

VC: Okay.

CD: He was a snitch.

VC: Yeah.

CD: And he was approached by him.

VC: Okay.

CD: And it was all engineered by him.

VC: All right. Did Ralph Duke know this Chambers or was he ever in contact with Chambers?

CD: No, not to my knowledge. And he, nor was I. Ever.

VC: Ever.

CD: I couldn't point him out to you, I'd never seen him in my life.

VC: Okay.

CD: And I'll tell you, he's never seen me.

VC: He's never seen you?

CD: No.

VC: All right. Now, there's an allegation that some of these young people were beaten up by the police, do you know anything about that?

CD: Yes, they were. Absolutely. Yeah. They stepped on their heads and kicked them, and you know, they have them handcuffed down, what do you need to kick them for?

VC: Did you see some of these injuries yourself?

CD: Yes. When, my kid, when I went down to talk to, even Loren, he said, "Look at my head, Dad", the hair was missing on the side of his head, where they had stepped on him while he was down, he said, "All I did was put my hands behind my back and lay down, I saw the guns". They walked up and kicked and beat each one of those kids. But they're only 19, 20 years old.

VC: Okay.

CD: I don't know how old they were.

VC: Yeah.

CD: But I know what they did to those kids.

VC: So, some of these kids were beaten during the arrest . . .

CD: When they were handcuffed and laid down, when they saw the police's guns, they laid down, they were scared, of course.

VC: Yeah. Do you know if some of these kids, earlier on, had ever been involved in drug dealings?

CD: Ah, I'll say this, out of the nine kids, I would say maybe one was involved in a drug deal prior to this, or two, out of nine.

VC: Two out of nine, maybe?

CD: Yeah. That is all.

VC: Okay. All right. Now, during the trial, there were some Iowa witnesses. Do you know anything about that?

CD: Yes, I know all about that. There were some people that they had stopped and caught with narcotics.

VC: Down in Iowa?

CD: Yes.

VC: Okay.

CD: They had never saw Ralph Duke in their life. They made a deal with those people to come here and testify, and they would cut them loose, if they would say they were bringing those drugs they had for Ralph Duke.

VC: They were supposedly bringing them up from Iowa to Minnesota?

CD: Right. He had never saw them people in his life, and knew nothing of them at all, and that was the deal the federal attorneys made.

VC: So, those witnesses lied, also.

CD: Yes, they also lied.

VC: Okay.

CD: And I've talked with some people that know them people since this has happened.

VC: Yes.

CD: And they laugh. They say it's the biggest lie that, and one of the girls said, "And they got off".

VC: Ah, they served no time in prison?

CD: No time, no nothing.

VC: Do you know the names of those people?

CD: No, at this time I do not know their names, no. But I knew people that knew them and talked, and it was a big joke.

VC: Is it possible to get their names through anybody you know?

CD: I could, I could probably try to, I could work on it and see if I could, you know, through the kids. That are out.

VC: They would be in a court transcript, though, they did testify?

CD: Oh, yes. They would be in the court transcript.

VC: Okay. Were they caucasian people or black people?

CD: They were black.

VC: They were black people, okay. They were Iowa people, though?

CD: Yes.

VC: There's some mention about a person named Simpson, and, ah, did he lie about Ralph Duke?

CD: Absolutely.

VC: What, ah, what was his involvement?

CD: Well, Ralph bought a lot of cars from Mr. Simpson.

VC: And he's a local car dealer?

CD: Yes, and Mr. Simpson also loaned Ralph Duke a lot of money.

VC: For gambling purposes, or what?

CD: For whatever he wanted it for.

VC: Okay.

CD: I never questioned him, but I know, I know for a fact that he got money from Simpson, because I was with him on one occasion that he got money two years prior to this that he had gotten some money, and I thought it was to go buy a car. That was my indication.

VC: Yes.

CD: That they were going, he was going down to buy a car for Simpson.

VC: Okay.

CD: But Simpson always gave him money whenever he came there and asked him for it. Large amounts of money.

VC: Okay. What would Mr. Simpson lie about, and why would he lie about Ralph Duke?

CD: Well, the feds threatened him, now this is what his son told me. Simpson's son. The feds threatened him, they were going, they were going to say that he laundered Ralph Duke's money.

VC: All right.

CD: So Simpson lied because they, they were, everything that Simpson does is not on the up-and-up in that car dealership.

VC: All right.

CD: So, what he did is, um, Simpson, I don't know what kind of dealing Simpson and Ralph Duke had, but I'm sure Simpson was in Ralph Duke's business, because he just, ah, it came to my knowledge that he just, if he had cars, a lot of cars Plukey did bring him, did pick up cars and stuff for him, but when the feds threatened him, this is what his son told me, threatened him, to tell on Ralph Duke . . .

VC: Yes.

CD: They made the same deal with Simpson that they made with Loren. "You tell us anytime that he calls you, or we're going to arrest you and charge you with laundering money".

VC: All right.

CD: And that's what his son told me.

VC: Okay. Is Simpson still in business?

CD: Absolutely.

VC: And Ralph Duke was in the car business. He bought and sold cars, California, Minnesota, etcetera.

CD: Right. Yes.

VC: So that would have been his connection with Mr. Simpson.

CD: Right. He bought a lot of cars for Simpson.

VC: Okay. I'm going to pause here, and I want to look at some notes.

(tape stops, then starts)

VC: All right. Let me ask you about another of your sons, Andre. Ah, how was Andre dragged into all of this?

CD: Andre, Marcel lived with, downstairs from Andre in Andre's home.

VC: And where would that be?

CD: It was in Minneapolis on Stevens.

VC: Okay.

CD: And Scott Tredwell, who is Marcel's best friend, was the snitch against Marcel. And he said he came by there one night, to Andre's home, and said he wanted to, he wanted Marcel to buy some drugs from him, but Marcel said, "I don't want to buy no drugs", well, he came in a cab, it was a federal cab, the feds, and Marcel said, "I don't want no drugs, and I got no money", so he went back outside, that gave them, and now Andre wasn't there, wasn't involved, but that gave them the power to go in there and say the deal was being transacted, even though it wasn't transacted, but the drug dealer did come here, and took Andre's house.

VC: So Andre's house was . . .

CD: Seized.

VC: Seized.

CD: And there was no deal or nothing ever done. But, but the drug guy went in there.

VC: All right.

CD: They didn't buy nothing and he came back out and got in the cab and drove off, but the cab driver was a federal agent.

VC: Okay.

CD: Now, but they gave Andre his house back, after about three months, he had, it remained empty and they gave it back to him. They went in there and searched his house and tore all his, tore his house to pieces. Found nothing. And just mutilated the home.

VC: Now, who was this guy who was the snitch?

CD: Scott Tredwell. Scott Tredwell.

VC: And he was a snitch involving this sting operation?

CD: Oh, yes. He was involved from the day, from the very get go. He was always working for the feds. He was Marcel's best friend, Marcel didn't know that he was a snitch.

VC: Yeah. Okay. So, Andre was not involved in that . . .

CD: None of it.

VC: All right.

CD: None of it. They never came with no warrant for him, nothing.

VC: Okay.

CD: They said they had an indictment made up for him, said that's why they took his house, and he said, "I'll come and get him next".

VC: Were they accusing you of running what they call a "safe house" where transactions go on, or . . .

CD: No, he just said that this particular one time when he came in this cab with the feds, he came in but there was no deal made. Nothing was made.

VC: Nothing was made.

CD: It was just set up to make it look like it. Nothing happened.

VC: Okay.

CD: Nothing.

VC: All right.

CD: That's how they set the wheels in motion.

VC: Was there an allegation against you that some informant, a snitch, was at your house with Marcel? Can you tell me anything about that?

CD: Okay, Marcel, he's a life-long friend of Marcel's.

VC: This is the guy . . .

CD: This is, his name is Scott Tredwell. This is the snitch. And he came out here one day with Marcel. Marcel came out here, and he came out here to talk to me on a personal matter, it had nothing to do with no narcotics, nothing. And he came out here to talk to me, and Scott Tredwell never got out of the car.

VC: Okay.

CD: Never, and Scott Tredwell told, said that, told the feds that he was reporting to that he either, Marcel either took him some money or picked up some drugs, I don't know which, because I never saw anything. Because he made it up out of the clear blue sky.

VC: Did he describe the interior . . .

CD: Absolutely, he described the interior of my home as red. It is true that the interior of my home was red in 1973 when Scott Tredwell was here as a little boy and was playing with the kids, yes. The interior of my home since 1980 has been black.

VC: Did this come out in court?

CD: Yes. The federal agent asked him to, asked him, "What did the interior of Mr. Duke's home look like?", and he said, "It's red, it's got red carpet and, ah, red carpet in the dining room, red carpet in the front room", and the federal agent said to him, when he was reading this in the house, when they were in my home, they were reading this thing off here, wherever this agent came from, he didn't come from Minnesota, and my sons were handcuffed on the floor, everyone was handcuffed on the floor, heard him say, "There's nothing red in this house. How long has this house been this way?", and he asked my wife, and my wife said, "It's been this way since 1980".

VC: So, this Tredwell lied.

CD: Yes, he lied. Absolutely. And I did not let him in that day he came, he sat in the car.

VC: All right.

CD: And Marcel came in the back yard. I never saw Scott Tredwell and Scott Tredwell never saw me.

VC: And you were in the yard working?

CD: Cutting grass.

VC: Cutting grass.

CD: He never saw me and I never saw him.

VC: Okay. Did, do you know, did the federal agents have a case on Tredwell? Was this his motivation?

CD: Yes, they had a case on him.

VC: They had a case?

CD: Absolutely. Yes.

VC: Okay. So he made up lies about you and Marcel.

CD: Yes. He was told to do that.

VC: All right. Did you attend the trial?

CD: Yes, a little of it. A little of it.

VC: Okay. And you don't know this person, Cambers?

CD: Not at all.

VC: Not at all, and he testified, didn't he?

CD: I, I never seen him. 'Cause I, I saw these guys sitting in there.

VC: Yeah.

CD: The first time I was there, I saw all these guys, and they said, they said they were the snitches.

VC: Okay. All right.

CD: But, they did not bring Tredwell in.

VC: They didn't . . .

CD: No.

VC: He didn't testify?

CD: No.

VC: Okay. Is that because it was obvious he lied? Is that . . .

CD: I don't know why. I have no idea why.

VC: All right.

CD: But I don't believe he was there. I can found out, you know.

VC: All right. Ah, so then once again, all these young men originally said that Ralph Duke was not involved in this, but then they changed their story?

CD: Absolutely.

VC: And Loren changed his to protect his family.

CD: Right.

VC: His mother and father. Okay. And, ah, Lamonte, have you talked to Lamonte at all about this?

CD: Oh, sure, I've talked to him, and sure I have, yeah.

VC: Okay. And did he cooperate, too?

CD: Oh no.

VC: He did not, okay. Were there some others that did not cooperate and did not blame Ralph Duke?

CD: Yes, and they got the maximum time. Twenty years.

VC: They got 20 years.

CD: Right. Lamonte got 25.

VC: Lamonte got 25. Okay.

CD: There was a girl that was involved, she never did anything, and she got 15.

VC: Who was that?

CD: Cheryl Nunn is her name. Because she had the same name as Lamonte, they thought she was a relative, she was not. She was his girlfriend. She had nothing to do with nothing.

VC: How was she dragged into it?

CD: When they raided her mother's home in Minneapolis, she was there visiting.

VC: She was there visiting.

CD: And they gave her 15 years. And she had no involvement in no narcotics, they had nothing on her, nothing. And still gave her 15 years. For association.

VC: For a conspiracy, or whatever? Who knows? All right. Is she . . .

CD: I'll never understand it to this day.

VC: Where is she incarcerated?

CD: I can find out. She's in a, ah, I can find out where she's at.

VC: All right. Well, then, to sum up, right from the very beginning, the federal government agents and prosecutor knew that Ralph Duke had no part of this, ah, transaction that ended up a sting.

CD: They knew that. They knew he had no parts of it. They were told that over and over by everyone in the damn thing.

VC: Okay. From the beginning.

CD: From the beginning.

VC: Did Hopeman ever admit in your presence that he knew Ralph Duke was not involved . . .

CD: I could, I could tell, when we talked I could tell he knew he wasn't involved. I said right, I said, "You know Plukey's not involved in none of this".

VC: And how did he . . .

CD: He just, he shrugged it off.

VC: Shrugged . . .

CD: Like that. Like it was a joke, but it wasn't a joke.

VC: All right. Okay. But you were told by Loren and others that were involved that Ralph Duke was not part of this. Is that correct?

CD: That is absolutely correct. And I was also told by Ralph Duke.

VC: And Ralph Duke also told you . . .

CD: I talked to Ralph Duke in St. Cloud, when he was in jail, and he also told me, he said, "You know I had nothing to do with that", and I said, "I know you didn't".

VC: Okay. Would you know if Ralph Duke was close to Lamonte. Were they, you know . . .

CD: I don't think they were close.

VC: Okay. Did they see a lot of each other, or . . .

CD: I think Lamonte sort of, ah, they sort of avoided each other. That's my estimation.

VC: That's your perception.

CD: Right. That's my perception. I, you know . . .

VC: Okay. Do you know if Ralph Duke was supporting Lamonte, giving him . . .

CD: Not at all.

VC: Not at all?

CD: Not at all.

VC: So Lamonte was on his own.

CD: Lamonte was always on his own. And that's one of the things that they didn't get along about. Lamonte was always on his own and doing, you know, foolish things that began way back when he was burglarizing places, see, his dad would come to him and say, "Hey, stop that bullshit", you know, like that.

VC: All right. Now, once again, I have your permission to record this.

CD: You have my permission to record it.

VC: Okay. I will have this transcribed, and I will make a copy for your records. And I would like to consider this a sworn statement. I'm a notary. Would you agree to raise your right hand and swear that this statement is true and accurate to the best of your knowledge.

CD: I swear that it's true.

VC: And accurate.

CD: And accurate to the best of my knowledge.

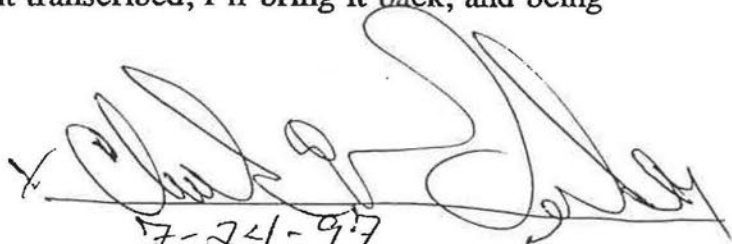
VC: All right, Sir. And then when I have it transcribed, I'll bring it back, and being a notary, I will notarize it.

CD: All right.

VC: Is that agreeable?

CD: That's agreeable to me.

VC: All right, Sir. Thank you very much.


7-24-97

