

Nephew testifies he transported cocaine for Duke

By Paul Gustafson
Staff Writer

A nephew of Ralph C. "Plukey" Duke testified Wednesday that he transported large quantities of cocaine for his uncle.

Loren E. Duke also told jurors in his uncle's federal drug conspiracy trial that Ralph Duke's son had told him that \$118,000 for a May 17 cocaine deal that turned out to be a federal "sting" operation came from Ralph Duke.

Loren Duke told jurors that his uncle once sold him a half-kilo of cocaine at a reduced price as payment for delivering 10 kilos of cocaine to a St. Paul house where Ralph Duke stored drugs. He also testified that he drove cocaine from Los Angeles to the Twin Cities for Ralph Duke.

Federal prosecutors also called as a witness yesterday a convicted Los Angeles drug dealer named Duane Davis. He testified that the 24 kilos of cocaine found in his possession when he was arrested a year ago were being sent to Minnesota.

Davis said that two weeks before his arrest his associate in the 24-kilo drug deal, Marvin McCaleb, introduced him in Los Angeles to a man from Minnesota identified as "Ralph's son."

Davis could not identify Ralph Duke's son, Ralph LaMont (Monte) Nunn, as the man he met in Los Angeles.

Defense attorneys challenged the credibility of Davis and Loren Duke. They said that both had pleaded guilty to federal drug charges under agreements that could lead to reduced prison terms in exchange for cooperating with the government.

Prosecutors said Ralph Duke, 44, was the biggest cocaine dealer in Minnesota when he was arrested in May. They said he netted over \$1 million from drug sales since 1986 while using a car sales business as a

cover. He is accused of running a continuing criminal enterprise and selling cocaine directly to others. He also faces three federal weapons charges.

Ralph Duke's attorney, Joseph Friedberg, has argued that prosecutors have no direct evidence linking Duke to drug deals.

The money that financed Duke's lavish lifestyle came from buying and selling expensive cars to burglars, pimps, prostitutes and others who, like Duke, make a living in "soft money" enterprises where income goes unreported, Friedberg has said.

Also on trial for involvement in the drug ring are Ralph LaMont Nunn, 19, Nunn's mother, Doris (Tina) Admon, 41, Duke's niece Serena D. Nunn, 20, Shawn Q. Regan, 21, Walter L. Hughes, 43, and Kim A. Willis, 19.

Ralph and Loren Duke, Ralph LaMont Nunn and three others were arrested May 17 after Nunn attempted to buy 20 kilos of cocaine from a federal informant at a Minneapolis hotel.

Loren Duke said yesterday he accompanied Nunn to the drug buy at the Hilton Hotel on Industrial Blvd. and helped his cousin count the \$118,000 that was to pay for half of the drug purchase.

"I heard he (Nunn) got the money from his father. I heard that from Monte," Loren Duke said.

Under cross-examination, Loren Duke said that under his plea agreement, he could receive a six-month prison sentence by cooperating with federal prosecutors.

He also admitted that he had lied when he testified that he did not know the names of several people to whom he sold cocaine.

The drug conspiracy trial before U.S. District Judge David Doty is expected to continue for several weeks.