

The Miami Herald

50 CENTS
107TH YEAR, NO. 207 ©2010

MiamiHerald.com



FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2010
FINAL EDITION

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COURTS

DEA agent faints on stand

■ A federal drug agent fainted under cross-examination by a Miami criminal defense attorney at the sentencing of a prominent Florida lawyer's son.

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TCPALM.com

After a day and a half in Miami federal court, convicted pot grower Kobie O. Gary will have to wait another week to learn his fate after the lead DEA agent in the case fainted Thursday on the witness stand, prompting the judge to clear the packed courtroom.

U.S. District Judge K. Michael Moore rescheduled Gary's sentencing for next Friday.

The abrupt cancellation came just before 2 p.m., as Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent Darren Singleton, who had come under intense questioning by Miami attorney Jeffrey Weiner, was about to reply. His head fell forward, hitting the stand in front of him.

Court officials scrambled to his aid.

After more than 50 people filed out of court, paramedics arrived. Singleton refused medical attention and arranged to go to a hospital on his own.

While waiting for a ride outside court, Singleton said he felt "back to normal."

Gary, 30, the son of famed Stuart attorney Willie Gary, who was in court Thursday, could receive between five and 40 years behind bars after pleading guilty in January to conspiracy to manufacture and distribute more than 100 marijuana plants.

Authorities accused Gary and codefendants Stephen Shepherd, 33, of Hobe Sound, Scott Gibson, of Stuart, and David

Grant, 26, of Jensen Beach, of operating a marijuana grow house in a Hobe Sound home that netted 237 pot plants seized Oct. 27, when Gary was arrested.

All four have pleaded guilty to the same offense.

For most of the morning, Gibson, who was brought into court in waist chains and leg irons, testified about how the group set up the grow house, which was initially established at a rental home that Gary's parents owned in Port St. Lucie before it was moved to a Palm City trailer, then later to Hobe Sound.

For months, Gary's lawyers have pointed to Gibson as the group's ringleader, not their client, as his codefendants have told authorities.

The issue of leadership could impact Gary's ultimate punishment, because his legal team is arguing he qualifies for a "safety valve exception," which allows for a shorter prison term than five years, provided it's proved that Gary wasn't a ringleader or used guns in the offenses.

Gibson testified Thursday that he had the pot-growing know-how, but Gary was the one calling the shots.

Gary's attorneys then confronted Gibson with transcripts of recorded phone calls from the St. Lucie County jail to his wife placed after his November arrest.

During some calls played for the court, he speculated about how his cooperation might benefit his own case.

After a lunch break, Weiner was grilling Agent Singleton about those phone calls.

Moments before Singleton fainted, Weiner was accusing Gibson of lying to authorities and suggested Singleton knew that Gibson was lying.