Businessman Guilty in Bird Smuggling

by Drew Broach
St. Tammany Bureau
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The owner of Bird World in Lacombe has pleaded guilty to two federal charges in a parrot-smuggling operation that stretched from Tijuana, Mexico, to Conway, S.C., authorities said Wednesday.

Gregory B. Jones Sr., 51, and his son, Frederick Jones, 29, who also pleaded guilty in the scheme, will be sentenced Jan. 13.

Both men entered pleas Tuesday in San Diego before District Judge Judith S. Crandall said. Crandall said Frederick Jones admitted storing 60 parrots for his father at his home near Slidell until learning of his father's arrest.

Frederick faces as much as a year in prison and a fine of as much as $10,000.

Three other defendants in the scheme have pleaded guilty. A fourth has been convicted at trial.

Eugene M. Carrier, 37, and his wife, Teresa L. Mooney, 25, entered pleas in August along with Robert O. Wylde, 62.

Crandall said all three are from Escondido, Calif.

The government alleged that Carrier, who owns a commercial bird distribution business in Valley Center, Calif., and his wife imported the parrots and distributed them in the U.S.

Wylde helped deliver the birds. He was placed on probation for two years and ordered to perform community service.

Mooney was sentenced to three months in prison and given a 15-month suspended sentence.

Carrier has not been sentenced. He faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a $500,000 fine.

Crandall said Joseph O. Rowe of Conway, S.C., who owns a pet shop there, was convicted of five charges Oct. 7 after a 1½-week trial. He is to be sentenced Nov. 30, and could receive 45 years in prison and a $1.2 million fine.

Two other suspects are awaiting trial.

Jose Gomez, 41, and Fernando Rojas, 44, both of Tijuana, were arrested Oct. 31 when they came to Chula Vista, Calif., to meet with a federal undercover operative, Crandall said.

He said Gomez was to pick up $20,000 that he was owed for supplying birds. Rojas is believed to be an errand runner for Gomez.

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