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Confessions of a Steroid Smuggler

When the Quest for the
Body Beautiful Turns
Ugly—Inside a
Multimillion-Dollar
Drug Ring

Confessions of a Steroid Smuggler

When the Quest for Big Muscles Turns Into a Passion for Big Money

BY JOHN EISENDRATH

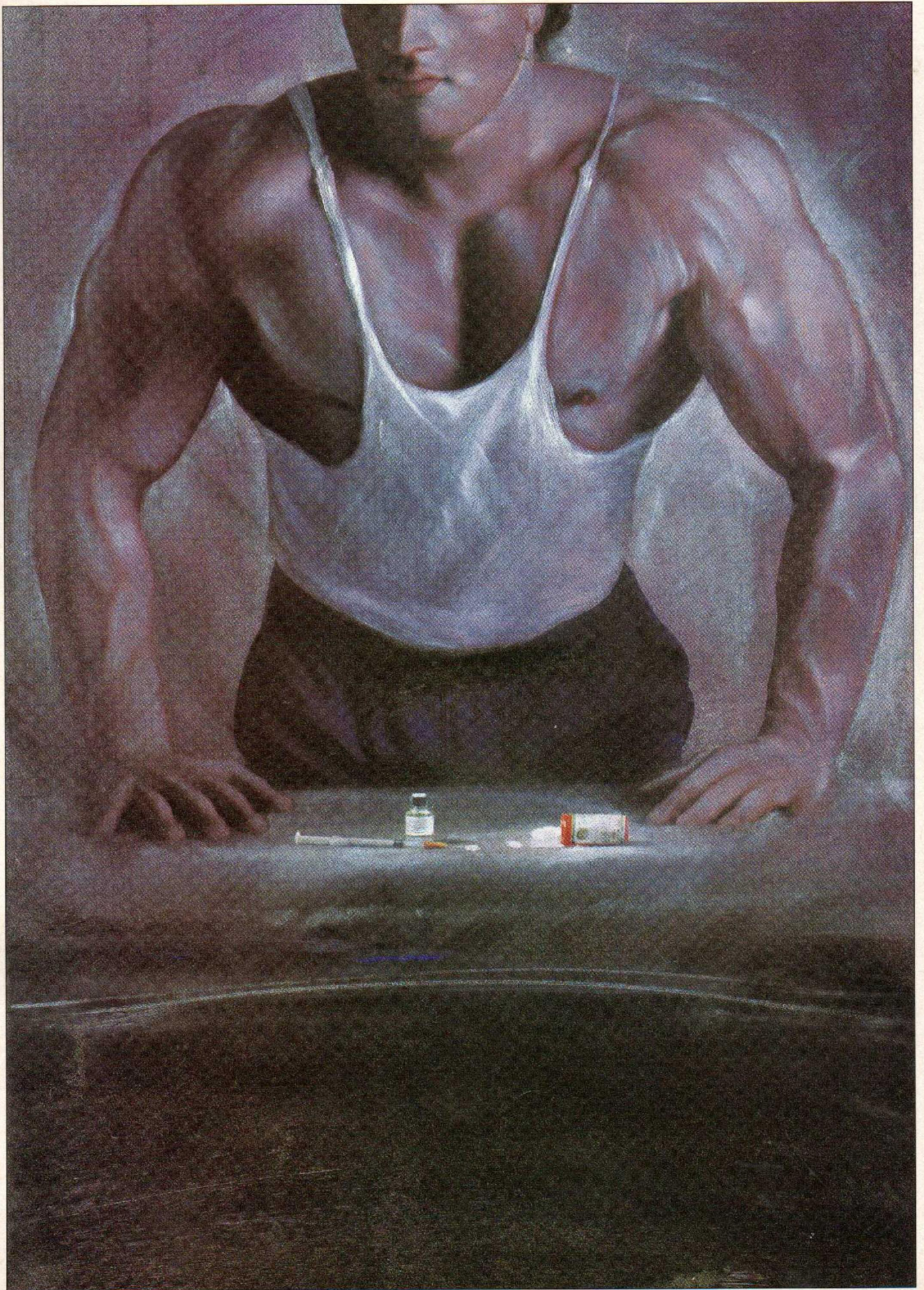
AT 4:56 P.M. ON MAY 1, 1987, William Dillon entered Junior's Deli on Westwood Boulevard, sat in a booth and learned he was going to be assassinated. Leonard Swirda ordered French fries and gave him the bad news. "I'll say, 'Let's not talk here . . .,'" Swirda said, describing how the hit would take place at a future date. "We go out to the car, I put a gun to your head, and I shoot you and throw you in the trunk, drive you to the desert, dig a hole and throw you in it. I've done it so many times."

Dillon had been one of the biggest dealers of black-market anabolic steroids in the country, and now Swirda was telling him that some of his former customers wanted him dead. For 36 minutes, Dillon led his would-be executioner in a morbid colloquy, which he was secretly taping for the federal government. What if Dillon ran away? (Swirda: "I'll find . . . where your mother lives.") Could Swirda be persuaded instead to kill those who wanted Dillon dead? The hit man calculated. ("I'm gonna have to cut their hands off and their heads off so nobody is found.") He'd do it for \$40,000.

Dillon watched Swirda eat his fries. The calculus of murder was new to him. Dillon considered the human body a shrine. His 6-foot, 250-pound frame attested to his disciplined worship of the bench-press, the squat and injectable testosterone cypionate. Dillon loved to oil his delts, flex his pecs and pump iron. He looked forward to the day he could command \$3,000 for a three-minute "guest pose" of his thighs.

Now Dillon's dream has been deferred; he lives in fear for his life and faces 16 years in prison. He was one of several athletes and body-builders who made national news last May when they were indicted in San Diego by the federal government for illegally buying and selling steroids. Most of the drugs, which are illegal without a doctor's prescription in the United States, were smuggled from Mexico to meet the demand of body-builders, who use them to gain bulk and strength. Twenty-three of the 34 people named in the 110-count indictment have pleaded guilty to felony charges, including smuggling, conspiracy and tax fraud, and await sentencing. They include Dillon, British Olympic silver medalist David Jenkins and Pat Jacobs, the former strength coach for the University of Miami. Swirda and two other men are to be tried for extortion this summer. Until all the cases are

John Eisendrath is a Los Angeles writer.



resolved, none of those who have pleaded guilty will be sentenced.

The federal government estimates that in 1986 and 1987, the San Diego-based group illegally sold between \$2 million and \$4 million worth of steroids made in Mexico and Europe to more than two dozen distributors in every region of the country. According to Phillip Halpern, the assistant U.S. attorney prosecuting the case, Dillon's was by far the largest steroid operation ever broken.

This is William Dillon's story, an account of life inside a steroid-smuggling ring. It is based on extensive interviews with Dillon and some of his associates and on the government's case against members of the ring, which includes numerous secretly taped conversations.

WELCOME TO L.A., THE LAND OF SERIOUS MUSCLES

GOLD'S GYM IN VENICE is the Yankee Stadium of body-building. It's the house that Arnold built. Every day 1,500 Schwarzenegger disciples work out in one of three cavernous weight rooms, hoping to become the next Terminator. They grunt and groan and stare at themselves in the mirrors that line the walls, proudly noting every new bulge and vein. Above the mirrors is the pumpers pantheon: life-size posters of current and former Mr. Worlds and Mr. Universes. The champions stare down, taunting and inspiring. Keep lifting—another repetition! more weight!—and someday a picture of you, flexing in a Speedo, might be hoisted into our ranks.

William Dillon made his pilgrimage to Gold's from his small Illinois hometown in October, 1984. Though he had just won the Illinois collegiate body-building title, Dillon was no mere muscle-head. That June he had received his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Southern Illinois University. After sifting through a number of job offers, he chose Hughes Aircraft in El Segundo. The federal government gave Dillon clearance to see classified scientific material, and he went to work in the company's space and communications division and moved to West Los Angeles.

In the gym, Dillon found that champion lifters from other parts of the country get sand kicked in their faces at the Gold's near Muscle Beach. "I was a midget," says Dillon, who weighed 220 pounds at the time. "Lots of guys with my build were carrying 270 pounds. Obviously they were taking something." Dillon quickly found out what. One of the first body-builders he met at Gold's was David Grigus, whose brother he had known in Illinois. They became friends and workout partners. According to Dillon, Grigus used and sold steroids; he is one of those who eventually pleaded guilty to conspiracy and interstate commerce violations.

From the outset, Dillon says, "Grigus said if I took steroids I had a chance to go places." Dillon resisted, even

though he was receiving repeated requests for the drugs from his friends back home. "I gave them all to Dave," he says of the orders. When, after several months, Dillon concluded that steroid-free lifting was getting him nowhere, Grigus allegedly taught him how to bulk up on drugs. He showed Dillon what to buy (an injectable form of testosterone called Sustanon 250) and, Dillon says, took him to his supplier in Mexico. For eight weeks, Dillon recalls, Grigus even filled the syringe and administered Dillon's injections.

Sustanon 250 is expensive, however, and to pay for his supply Dillon decided he should be the one making money selling to his pals in Illinois. During the first five months of 1985, Dillon says, he made small sales to pay for his own drugs. Then he got married and moved his wife from Illinois to California. As she looked for a teaching job, expenses mounted and Dillon began to increase sales. By October he had 20 clients and was pocketing \$18,000 on \$30,000 orders.

With business expanding, Dillon says he fell under the influence of steroid guru Dan Duchaine, who would later plead guilty to conspiracy and interstate commerce violations. Author of the definitive "Underground Steroid Handbook," which describes how to use the drugs and where to get them,

Duchaine taught Dillon the value of being circumspect. "I was buying and selling out of my house," says Dillon. "I didn't try and cover up at all." Dillon says Duchaine taught him to use anonymous post office boxes for all deliveries and to use public phones to conduct business. The government says Duchaine also provided Dillon with a European connection. Because the body builds up immunities to the constant use of any single steroid, lifters have to rotate types to get maximum results. Dillon says Grigus' alleged Mexican connection did not have a varied selection. But the European steroids Dillon says were available through Duchaine could make him a full-service distributor.

Dillon rationalized his moonlighting at the time. "My wife was a teacher making \$20,000," he says. "I was making \$30,000 [a year at Hughes]. Money was tough. This was the chance of a lifetime to get ahead." What's more, at 25 and fresh from his hometown of 4,600, Dillon believed the more seasoned Duchaine when he said no one ever gets in trouble for selling steroids. "He told me," says Dillon, "that the worst I could get was a slap on the wrist."

Though he didn't know it, Dillon's burgeoning network was about to be dramatically affected by decisions being made more than 3,000 miles away in Washington. The Food and Drug Administration had grown increasingly concerned about steroids in the 1980s. Athletes in sports ranging from track and field to cycling had tested positive for steroids, and football players such as Howie Long and Lyle Alzado of the Raiders had gone on the record saying they had observed widespread use of the drugs on the

Fresh from
a small town in
Illinois, Dillon,
at 6 feet and 220
pounds, says he
felt like a
'midget' next to
the body-builders
at Gold's gym
in Venice.

The Destructive Side of Steroids

MORE THAN \$100 million worth of steroids are bought and sold annually on the black market, the federal government estimates. Their use among athletes has, the government says, reached epidemic proportions.

Steroids were first manufactured in the 1930s to treat chronically ill people whose catabolic, or destructive, metabolisms could not produce protein, causing them to lose body mass. Medical researchers knew that the male hormone testosterone causes the retention of nitrogen, the source of amino acids and protein, and so increases muscle mass. They theorized that steroids, which are synthetic versions of testosterone, would reverse protein depletion in their catabolic patients. But in the early 1960s, this use of steroids was refuted by the National Academy of Sciences and subsequently replaced with intravenous feeding. Steroids were also once used to help speed the recovery of burn victims and surgery patients, but this was abandoned in the mid-'60s.

From the start, doctors knew the drugs had dangerous properties. For all their anabolic, or building-up, qualities, steroids also have androgenic effects. In men, they can decrease hormone levels and sperm production and cause breast development and prostate enlargement. In women, steroid use can bring about hair growth or baldness and deepening of the voice; menstruation may become irregular or stop; the breasts and uterus may shrink. According to FDA medical reports, steroids can also cause liver tumors, birth defects, impotence, psychotic episodes, atherosclerosis and acne.

Because the side-effects can outweigh the benefits, the medical use of steroids is limited, says Dr. Glenn Braunstein, director of the Depart-



UC Davis Magazine

Anabolic steroids, taken either orally or injected, work to build the body up, but end up tearing it down.

ment of Medicine at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and a clinical professor at UCLA School of Medicine. He says legal steroids are prescribed in a handful of instances: for men who, because of a pituitary irregularity, have low levels of testosterone; to speed up maturation in certain children; to stimulate red-blood-cell production in sufferers of aplastic anemia; to combat a condition that causes fluid in the larynx, and to treat inoperable breast cancer. Medical experts estimate that 3 million Americans take steroids every year.

Dr. Gloria Troendle, a senior medical officer at the FDA, says the main reason steroids make athletes stronger is that they increase protein synthesis. Although there have been no scientific studies on their impact, evidence suggests that athletes who use steroids are 10% to 15% stronger than their drug-free counterparts. However, the American College of Sports Medicine, an organization for physicians and researchers, has stated that the drugs have not been shown to increase muscular strength.

Because steroids do not fall under the Controlled Substances Act, the federal government does not impose quotas on their manufacture. But the FDA has attempted to limit the

availability of steroids; only about a dozen are approved for any medicinal application. None of the types popular among athletes is available without a prescription, and some are banned outright. The FDA says those favored by athletes include:

■ Nandrolone decanoate (known as Deca-Durabolin). An injectable steroid used to treat anemia caused by renal failure and delayed adolescence in boys.

■ Nandrolone phenpropionate (Durabolin). Also injectable, it is used to treat breast cancer.

■ Testosterone cypionate. An injectable steroid used in the treatment of inoperable breast cancer.

■ Oxymetholone (Anadrol-50) and Oxandrolone (Anavar). Taken in pill form, both are used to treat aplastic anemia.

■ Methandrostenolone (Dianabol). Once used to treat growth failure in young boys and osteoporosis, this oral steroid was taken off the FDA's approved-drug list in 1985.

■ Methanolone enanthate (Primobolin). A non-approved injectable steroid made of animal testosterone.

In 1986, the California Legislature classified steroids as controlled substances and imposed trafficking penalties of up to five years and \$20,000.

—J.E.

gridiron. In addition, the FDA had concluded that steroid use could cause health problems such as liver tumors, prostate cancer and heart disease.

As a result, the FDA required a number of companies to withdraw steroids with no medical application from the market. In December, 1985—just months after, Dillon says, he hooked up with Duchaine—the agency withdrew the most popular steroid among body-builders, known as Dianabol, from its list of authorized drugs (although its legal manufacture had ceased in 1982). After that, methandrostenolone—the generic name for Dianabol—was available only through counterfeit sources.

The FDA's supply-side approach caused the steroid black market to boom. In fact, it had the ironic consequence of transforming Dillon from an average distributor to one who, he says, "could walk into any gym in the country and sign up every steroid user in the place." Through Duchaine, Dillon says, he met David Jenkins, a member of Britain's silver-medal-winning 1,600-meter relay team at the 1972 Munich Olympics. The government says Duchaine had met Jenkins after the Olympian had moved to San Diego and gone into business selling nutritional supplements. According to both Dillon and Jenkins, the three men discussed joining forces in the nutrition business over dinner in January, 1986. Out of the blue, Jenkins mentioned wistfully that anyone able to supply Dianabol could turn a dramatic profit. "A couple of weeks later," Dillon recalls, "we met again, and Jenkins looked us both in the eyes and said: 'I can supply the Dianabol. Can you distribute?' We looked at each other and told him yes."

THE RING AND THE MEXICAN CONNECTION

THREE MONTHS LATER, Dillon, Duchaine and Jenkins had dinner in Carlsbad. They talked again about the nutrition business. They gossiped. Dillon says they talked about everything except their fledgling business—the illegal importation and distribution of steroids. After the meal, Jenkins got up, took the package Dillon and Duchaine had brought for him and said goodbye. According to government documents, the package contained about \$30,000 in cash. In return, Jenkins left a small key and a set of directions. Dillon and Duchaine followed the directions to a room at the Allstar Inn. The steroids were in a suitcase on the bed. "We hung out in the room for a while," Dillon says. "I watched TV, and Dan took a shower. Then we just left like we were checking out."

According to the grand jury indictment handed down May 21, 1987, this was a typical transaction. Formalized in February, 1986, the steroid ring consisted at first of Dillon, Duchaine, Jenkins and his Mexican manufacturer, Juan Macklis. An odder quartet can scarcely be imagined: Dillon, his open face and quick smile so reflective of his

willingness to trust people; Jenkins, an untrusting cynic; Duchaine, the xenophobe who once insisted in a taped telephone conversation, "I'm not prejudiced against Mexicans, but they're Mexicans"; and Macklis, the Mexican manufacturer who reportedly kept two pit bulls in his office.

As head of Laboratorios Milano de Mexico, a large pharmaceutical company based in Tijuana, Macklis was able to supply his partners with counterfeit Dianabol and 13 other steroids. In brochures he had printed up, Macklis

boasted that he could provide his customers with injectable and oral steroids made from synthetic derivatives of either human or animal testosterone. Although steroids are legally available in Mexico without a prescription, the indictment alleges that Macklis broke U.S. laws. (He and seven other Mexican citizens named in the indictment are now fugitives.) He allegedly provided phony labels bearing the trademarks of such legitimate drug manufacturers as Searle, Squibb and Ciba-Geigy SA. The government also alleges that smuggling the drugs in from Mexico was part of the service provided by Macklis. According to the indictment, the steroids were transported in specially constructed compartments built into car gas tanks, wrapped in garbage bags around the

bodies of couriers or sewn along the bottoms of their pant legs.

In exchange for his efforts, Macklis had required Dillon and Duchaine to give him a \$28,000 deposit. According to the indictment, which both Dillon and Jenkins say is accurate, Macklis' company churned out \$81,000 worth of drugs within weeks of receiving the deposit. Typical of the kinds of orders Macklis filled was a \$26,000 shipment containing 2,500 bottles of methandrostenolone, 4,000 ampules of nandrolone decanoate, 500 bottles of oxandrolone and 500 vials of testosterone cypionate.

Dillon was the telemarketing specialist of the group. He called his friends in Illinois. He allegedly contacted Grigus, who had moved to Denver. One buyer says Dillon flew to Las Vegas to give him a pitch. Dillon even made cold calls. "I never met Dillon," says Michael MacDonald, who lives in Minnesota and claims to hold 36 world records in the bench-press, including a personal best of 608 pounds. "He just called me up." MacDonald, who has pleaded guilty to interstate commerce violations, says he eventually bought for resale more than \$265,000 worth of steroids from Dillon—a staggering display of sight-unseen salesmanship.

Another Minnesota client, Gerald Jones, says that at one time he was buying \$40,000 worth of steroids a month, much of it from Dillon. (A world-class powerlifter, Jones, who has pleaded guilty to conspiracy and interstate commerce violations, was partial to the drugs manufactured for horses and dogs. "I figure if this stuff is good enough for a million-dollar racehorse," he once told

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Dillon believed his more seasoned partner, Dan Duchaine, when he told him that no one ever gets in trouble for selling steroids.

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a reporter, "it's good enough for me.") To hook reluctant buyers, Dillon offered up to two free samples as inducements toward future purchases. Affable and down-home earnest, Dillon was a natural. "It was like Amway," he says. "I called up all the guys I knew around the country and convinced them to stick with me."

Duchaine allegedly had a different set of clients. Like Dillon, he was a middleman. According to Dillon, they both bought wholesale from Jenkins and sold to their clients retail. Dillon says Duchaine sold in small quantities to hundreds of athletes, while he sold in bulk to no more than 30. "Several times a week I'd send out boxes 24 inches by 24 inches filled with steroids," says Dillon. "Dan's boxes were about four inches by four inches, and he'd be sending out about 50 a day."

Eventually Dillon had clients in Illinois, Minnesota, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, Missouri, Florida and California. The indictment indicates that by August he and Duchaine had sold a total of more than \$200,000 worth of steroids. Jenkins had been right: People were willing to pay top dollar for counterfeit Dianabol. Practically overnight, Dillon says, "I went from nothing to one of the biggest suppliers in the country."

As sales increased, Dillon's life changed dramatically. Figuring he "didn't need to put up with my stupid bosses for an extra \$300 a week," he quit his job at Hughes. He and his wife ate out every meal. Twice they got into their new Jeep Cherokee and traveled the country. Dillon says with some of the money he invested \$20,000 in a Venice restaurant called Ribs to Go and \$30,000 in the Gold's gym in Pacific Beach in San Diego. His wife spent thousands on clothes. "For two kids who had never had money before, it was great," says Dillon. "I was making more money in a month than my father made in a year."

Despite the distractions, Dillon's body-building improved. Without a full-time job, he was able to spend more time in the gym and, thanks to the steroids, he shot up to 250, a gain of 30 pounds. In May, 1986, Dillon entered the California Bodybuilding Championships and, in his first real test against the big boys, finished eighth.

Dillon's good fortune ended swiftly. According to the government, he and Duchaine were still receiving steroids from Europe. In August a random check by a U.S. Customs agent of packages from Belgium uncovered a stash of illegal steroids. The package was addressed only to a post office box in Los Angeles. "Customs agents began monitoring the contents of the post office box," says Assistant U.S. Atty. Halpern. Between Aug. 10 and Aug. 18 a man was seen making a number of pickups from the P.O. box. "We had searched the box, so we knew that he was picking up steroids," says Halpern. On Aug. 19, customs agents tried following their suspect but lost him in traffic. "They got his license plate number and found it was an Illinois plate registered to William

Dillon," says Halpern.

The next day, less than two years after he set out for Muscle Beach, federal agents confronted Dillon with a search warrant at his apartment on National Boulevard. They found steroids and a pile of fake pharmaceutical labels. The drugs were confiscated, but Dillon wasn't arrested. "We knew there were huge distributors out there, and we figured maybe Dillon could lead us to them," says Halpern, whose knowledge was based primarily on brochures and advertisements in body-building magazines that touted the availability of steroids. Under instructions to let him go, the agents asked Dillon a few questions, accepted his alibi and left.

Dillon figured he should too.

A SHORT RETIREMENT

As sales increased, Dillon quit his job and invested in a restaurant and gym: 'I was making more in a month than my father made in a year.'

DILLON MOVED to San Diego soon after. For two months, he says, he stopped selling steroids, concentrating instead on legitimate nutrition supplements. Without Dillon and Duchaine, who also had stopped selling, Jenkins' business suffered. To shore up their flagging profits, the government says, Jenkins and his Mexican partners distributed pamphlets to gyms across the country inviting potential customers to travel to Tijuana and buy drugs in "our fine

offices overlooking a golf course."

Few people responded to this vacation-resort approach to drug dealing, and by October, Jenkins says, he asked his former partners to help him out. But Duchaine opted to retire ("I feel . . . like someone who's . . . 50 years old 15 years early. . .," he told Dillon in a telephone conversation taped by the government), and Dillon, still leery from his run-in with federal agents, refused to play the middleman. According to both Jenkins and Dillon, Jenkins lured Dillon out of retirement by assuring him that he wouldn't have to handle either drugs or money. All he had to do was make phone calls: one call to a client to solicit an order, one call to Jenkins to make sure it got filled. An hour a day and 10% of the profits. Dillon couldn't resist.

Neither, it turned out, could his clients. In October and November, according to the indictment, Dillon sold \$315,000 worth of steroids to 14 people in six states. Between December and February he sold an additional \$194,000 in drugs. As the business grew, so did Dillon's commissions. According to the indictment, he got \$9,000 in October; in November, Jenkins paid him \$11,000, and in December, over hamburgers at a Jack-in-the-Box in Pacific Beach, the former Olympian handed Dillon an envelope that held \$29,000 in cash. One reason for their renewed success was that by cutting out the middleman they could—even with Dillon getting a 10% commission—offer the drugs wholesale. "We had the lowest prices in the country," says Dillon. "Pretty soon everyone

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was buying from us.”

Even though Dillon's encounter with the customs agents had scared him, in some ways it reinforced his belief that law enforcement officials didn't go after steroid traffickers. He admits that he was greedy enough to re-enter the drug trade but frightened enough not to stay in very long. Brisk sales had enabled him to pocket \$49,000 in the last three months of 1986. By March, 1987, he says, he was owed another \$130,000 in commissions and was looking to retire. As a grand finale, Dillon got a number of his clients to pool their resources on \$600,000 worth of steroids, enough to fill a one-car garage. It was his most expensive and complex deal, and it was scheduled to take place March 20.

THE GOVERNMENT'S BIG BREAK

THE CUSTOMS AGENTS had assumed that Dillon could lead them to a larger network of steroid traffickers, but, at first, that proved to be a mistake. Halpern knew Dillon had moved to San Diego, but with him out of business no leads developed. Only the actions of some of Dillon's overzealous colleagues put the agents back on his trail.

One of the first deals Dillon arranged on commission, according to the indictment, was for 30,000 vials of the steroid nandrolone decanoate. The drugs were allegedly paid for by James Insko, who met Dillon at the Gold's in Venice and, according to the government, became one of his biggest customers. Taking a page from Dillon's sales manual, Insko was allegedly fronting the money—\$30,000—for a Phoenix man named Mark Mayeda as a way of earning his trust, as well as his future business. However, Mayeda apparently had other plans. According to the indictment, he took delivery of the drugs and called Insko to say that the drugs had been stolen and that he would be unable to reimburse the \$30,000.

Crossing a former Mr. U.S.A. was a little more painful than Mayeda had anticipated. The government says Insko, who won the title in 1983, imme-

diately called on the services of Leonard Swirda, Dillon's friendly would-be hit man, who was another lifting buddy from Gold's. The indictment describes Swirda's preparations for the trip: He packed a briefcase with two guns, a 12-inch club, a double-edged knife and leather gloves weighted with metal. Swirda also brought along a martial-arts ex-

Dillon's
encounter with
federal agents
scared him
enough to keep
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dealing for a
while, but soon
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the drug trade.

pert known only as Lao, as well as Robert Wantz, a body-building friend of Insko's. According to one of those on board, the four flew to Phoenix on a private jet Insko chartered so that Swirda's weapons would not have to go through a metal detector.

It is unclear exactly what transpired once Mayeda was confronted by an ex-Mr. U.S.A., a hit man, a 250-pound body-builder and a martial-arts expert carrying a bagful of weapons. (None of the four has admitted guilt in the incident; all but Lao face trial on extortion charges Aug. 30.) During their conversation at Junior's, Swirda told Dillon: "I beat him so long I had to . . . take my shirt off. . . . I had to rest. He was chained up. Gagged. . . . I pounded him so many times. . . . There was nothing left of his face." More subdued eyewitness accounts have it that Mayeda suffered at worst a broken nose.

What is clear is that, according to the government, Mayeda filed assault charges with the Phoenix police and told them about the steroids. Eventually, Halpern says, Mayeda's story got back to the U.S. Customs agents who had been tracking Dillon. Suddenly

the operation became clear: Dillon set up the buys; the drugs came from Mexico. That was in October. For the next few months, agents searched for a way to get an operative on the inside.

It was neither glamorous nor easy. First they tapped Dillon's phone. "We got a special court order [to trace his] local calls," says Halpern. But Duchaine had apparently taught Dillon well, and he said nothing incriminating over the phone. Halpern says the authorities were forced to track the people Dillon called in the hope that they would be less discreet. They got more court orders and tapped more phones. They slogged through back alleys hoping to find evidence in suspects' garbage cans.

Eventually an agent infiltrated through Toivol Mansen, a Florida body-builder who in December, 1986, allegedly called Dillon to make a purchase. In the 1970s, Mansen, who has pleaded guilty to interstate commerce violations, lived in Dayton, Ohio, and worked for Larry Pacifico, perhaps the greatest power-lifter of all time. Pacifico was undefeated for 10 years and won world championships in three different weight classes, ranging from 198 to 242 pounds. Mansen worked in one of Pacifico's spas. Pacifico taught him about lifting and, according to Dillon, about steroids. Mansen's attorney, Paul Sack, says his client revered and trusted Pacifico. What Mansen didn't know was that Pacifico, a reformed steroid user, was fingering steroid dealers for the government. In fact, the first person Pacifico set up was his former employee, Toivol Mansen.

According to an affidavit given by Gary Neal, a special agent with the U.S. Customs Service, and confirmed by Sack, the sting worked like this: Pacifico called Mansen and told him he was sending down his bodyguard, who was interested in buying steroids. On March 15, U.S. Customs Agent John Bosley, posing as Pacifico's bodyguard, met Mansen in his Miami apartment. Bosley wanted in, and Mansen told him his timing couldn't be better: A \$600,000 shipment was available in San Diego. Neal alleges that Mansen was investing \$250,000 (his attorney says it was more like \$60,000) and that Mansen told Bosley there was plenty for him. Two

days later they flew to San Diego and met with Dillon, who was staying in Room 500 of the Dana Inn.

In contrast to his cautious phone manner, Dillon was extremely chatty with Bosley. According to Neal, Dillon told the newcomer all about the operation: about Jenkins and the Mexican connection and the fake labels. Dillon bragged that in two years of selling steroids he had made about \$750,000. Dillon now says boasting was part of his job: "As the salesman I always had to talk big. In an illegal business there is no insurance against loss or theft, so I always told clients if their drugs got lost that I could cover the loss. I said I made \$750,000 in two years because I wanted Mansen and Bosley to make a \$500,000 purchase that would net me \$50,000." Dillon was not alone in talking big. According to the affidavit, James Insko, whose legitimate occupation consisted of training other body-builders, showed up a day later, invested \$70,000 in the upcoming shipment and told Bosley that he was clearing \$100,000 a month reselling the steroids he bought at cost from Dillon. Dillon says small investments by Grigus and others made up the rest of the \$600,000. In this consummately cocky bunch, Bosley, who had infiltrated on the pretense that he was a big spender, was immediately embraced.

The only problem was that Bosley, who had said he wanted to buy \$250,000 worth of steroids, didn't have any money to spend. "We weren't about to give him \$250,000 of the government's money to hand over to the Mexicans," says Halpern. The specter of Mayeda's beating weighed heavily on the federal agents. Bosley couldn't spend the money, but for the sting to work—and for his own safety—he couldn't let Dillon and his partners know why.

The first thing Bosley did was stall: He requested that the purchase be made in two parts so he could see the system work before taking his money to Mexico. Dillon agreed, and at 7 a.m. on March 20, Bosley and Mansen took an initial installment of cash down to Tijuana. According to special agent Neal, Bosley and Mansen drove to San Ysidro, crossed the border on foot and arrived by cab at the Hotel Fiesta Americana shortly after 8 a.m. In his affidavit, Neal recalled that

"when Agent Bosley entered Room 408 [the room overlooking the golf course], David Jenkins greeted him. . . . At this time, Mansen gave Jenkins about \$200,000 [Jenkins says it was closer to \$100,000] that he removed in two brown paper grocery bags from a gold and blue Gold's gym bag." Jenkins gave Mansen a key to a U-Haul truck and a parking permit for it and told him the truck with about \$200,000 worth of steroids was parked in a lot just across the border in San Diego.

After the truck had been unloaded, federal agents set the final con in motion. The government had placed \$250,000 in a safe-deposit box in a San Ysidro bank. Bosley picked up the money and pooled it with about \$120,000 provided by Insko, Mansen and other investors. The \$370,000 was put in a duffel bag. According to Neal's affidavit, Bosley took the bag and set off for the border with Mansen. As they had done that morning, Bosley and Mansen lined up at the pedestrian crossing into Tijuana. As

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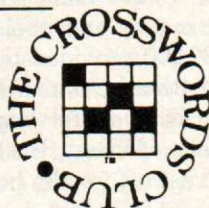
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they approached, the government says, two customs agents began conducting exit searches. When Bosley and Mansen reached the border, they were asked if they were taking more than \$10,000 in cash into Mexico. They said no, but the agents persisted, asking Bosley ever so innocently to open his duffel bag.

For Mansen's benefit, the agents handcuffed both him and Bosley and took them to the customs office. There they were fingerprinted, photographed and interrogated. Bosley and Mansen were eventually released, but the money was confiscated. Bosley's subsequent indignation was Academy-Award perfect. "The sting worked out better than we ever anticipated," says Halpern. "The crooks thought the explanation was [that] Dillon ripped them off."

Jenkins says he and Macklis suspected that Dillon never intended to make the second payment. Their view was reinforced by a Customs Service source who told them that no such confiscation had been recorded (the Customs Service says the paperwork was misplaced). The fact that the first payment coincided with the amount of steroids in the U-Haul truck was, according to Dillon, a coincidence. Jenkins and Macklis didn't deliver all the steroids for the simple reason that only \$200,000 worth fit inside the truck. "They thought I was trying to get \$600,000 worth of steroids for \$230,000," Dillon says. His clients, on the other hand, were certain that Dillon and Macklis—whom they had never met—faked the confiscation and pocketed the money.

Their anger increased when, two days later, customs agents raided a house in San Diego where the first installment of steroids had been stashed. No arrests were made, but for Dillon's customers that hardly seemed to matter; they had lost their investment and had no steroids to show for it. On top of being frozen out, Dillon's house was searched by federal agents. "After that," he recalls, "I decided to get a lawyer."

SMUGGLER TO INFORMANT

DILLON DOESN'T remember who the seven people were in Phil Halpern's office the day he turned himself in.

All he remembers is what they said. "They told me I was killing high school students," Dillon says. "They said I was a loser and a liar."

The government had Dillon's case locked up. He had told Bosley everything. "They didn't promise me anything," Dillon says of the government prosecutors. "I still don't know if I'll get any leniency even after all I did."

What he did was spend several months last spring baiting his colleagues in taped conversations. He got Jenkins to talk about the \$600,000 deal that went sour; and he got his mentor, Duchaine, to talk about how much money he had made and how many clients he had. At their showdown at Junior's, Dillon recorded Swirda's threats in two microphones—one hidden in a telephone beeper, the other wrapped around his waist.

The organization was breaking up when Dillon began cooperating with authorities. Jenkins, for instance, was planning to return to England. Through Dillon, Halpern says, authorities kept tabs on everyone's itinerary, which allowed them to continue investigating until arrests were necessary to keep the conspirators from getting away. Dillon insists that the authorities had enough information to indict his partners without his cooperation. Still, he unquestionably helped nail shut the government's case.

Because of this, Dillon fears for his life. At night he arranges his furniture so that if a door is opened or a window jarred, something will fall over and he will be alerted. When Swirda told him some of his ex-customers wanted him dead, Dillon began sleeping with a gun. Scariest of all, says Dillon, is the outcome of his last deal, orchestrated in cooperation with the government in early May. Dillon says that, following government instructions, he offered to meet a customer at the Hyatt Hotel in Pacific Beach and sell him \$170,000 in steroids. When his client showed up with the money, federal agents moved in, arrested him and confiscated the \$170,000, which Dillon fears belonged to the East Coast Mafia. He doubts that they take such debts lightly. "I think they'll either kill me or beat me up," he says with

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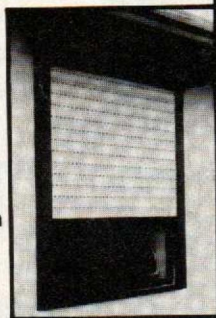
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resignation. "When they do, the Feds won't be there for me."

AFTER THE FALL

IN SHORT, Dillon says his life is ruined. For cooperating with authorities he is blackballed from competitions and considered *persona non grata* at gyms. Dillon's wife left him when the indictments came down. "No one regrets what happened more than me," he says. "I lost my wife, I gave up all my friends, and I can't compete anymore." In the past year, he says, he has contemplated suicide.

He awaits sentencing in San Diego, lifting occasionally and cleaning fish tanks for a living. Duchaine pleaded guilty April 7 and awaits sentencing in Los Angeles. Swirda and Robert Wantz have an Aug. 30 trial date for their part in the beating of Mark Mayeda, who has not been charged with anything in the case. Insko, now also awaiting trial, has not admitted guilt in his role in the steroid ring. Jenkins, whose musings over dinner one night got the steroid operation going, is, like Dillon, living in San Diego. He seems resigned to the fact that he will be imprisoned, and says he bears no malice toward Dillon. "I feel for him," says Jenkins. "I hope he doesn't get any sentence at all. He's a sensitive man, and all he's been through has been very painful for him."

As for the federal crackdown on steroids, in the last three years, investigations involving the FBI, the FDA, the U.S. Customs Service and the IRS have netted only 87 prosecutions, which have not come close to disrupting the \$100-million-a-year black market for the drugs.

An advertisement in the March 31 issue of the San Diego Reader underscores how readily available they remain. It touts the "best stocked pharmacy in Tijuana. . . [for] bodybuilders . . . steroids." A phone number and address are listed, and customers are asked to call in advance "for large orders."

William Dillon suspects that plenty of people are calling. "I'd say \$50,000 worth of steroids come across from Mexico every week," he says. "Even after all the busts, if I was a little kid in some hick town in Illinois, I could still get steroids."

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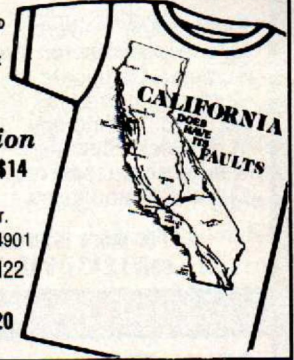
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