

# Grass smuggler had fun until caught

**United Press International**  
RICHMOND, Va. — Robert Eby was a member of the Young Republicans and the owner of a Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., sailboat company in 1972 when friends offered him \$12,000 to smuggle six tons of marijuana into the United States.

Eby was initially hesitant, but was persuaded by his friends, whose marijuana-laden ship had run aground in the Caribbean.

"I figured I'd do it just once," said Eby, 32, who flew the pot to the Midwest in his twin-engine plane. "But I had so much fun the first time, I kept doing it."

Eby was finally grounded March 22, 1977, when he was caught behind the controls of a vintage DC-4 plane loaded with three and a half tons of pot at the Hanover County Airport near Richmond.

"As far as I'm concerned I'm out of the business for good," Eby said in an interview at the Richmond City Jail, where he is serving a 15-year sentence on his December 1977 marijuana bootlegging conviction.

"But there are plenty of other

people still in the business and I think federal officials are only kidding themselves if they think they can stop them," said Eby.

Eby agreed to an interview, but was careful not to name specific dates or places or any of his former associates.

He said he made about 30 trips smuggling marijuana, mostly from Colombia to the Midwest.

As a high-flying smuggler, Eby claims he was fired upon by South American military police, chased by Cuban planes while flying over that country and shot at by other smugglers when he nearly landed by mistake at the wrong clandestine airstrip in Colombia.

"It was a thrill, a challenge," he said. "I never smoked pot, I got high smuggling it."

Eby said he was paid an estimated \$1 million — "all in cash in fives, tens and twenties" — for smuggling, but that he squandered the money as fast as he made it.

He was captured when the aircraft he was piloting got stuck in the mud at Hanover Airport, drawing the attention of authorities.



A co-pilot was also convicted, although federal authorities were never able to determine who owned the aircraft or where the marijuana was to be delivered.

Authorities admit it is difficult to stop the trade, but they are spending several millions of dollars trying.

At best, they intercept only two of every 10 marijuana shipments.

"I doubt they are catching that many," said Eby. "There are all sorts of people out there smuggling and they are making big money doing it."

Eby said he was a freelance

smuggler specializing in piloting airplanes, mainly DC-4's like the one he was captured in.

He said he contracted his services to smugglers in the need of a pilot, earning a standard fee of \$10 per pound of marijuana transported into the United States.

## Blizzard in 'Windy City' may be worse than '67 storm

**United Press International**  
CHICAGO — With Chicagoans reeling from more than a week of sub-zero temperatures followed by the heaviest snow since the "Blizzard of '67," and then more subzero readings, it seems the worst that could happen would be more snow.

The National Weather Service said Sunday a snowstorm in the Rockies could pass through the city as early as this morning, adding to the record 29 inches already on the ground.

A weekend snowstorm accompanied by 40-mph winds devastated the area, dropping more than 20 inches. Auto travel was hazardous if not impossible, roofs collapsed under the weight of the snow.

parked cars were buried from view, mass transit was partially shut down and O'Hare International Airport — the world's busiest — was closed for the sixth time in its history.

The temperature in the city got down to 15 below zero early Monday, and a stiff breeze brought the wind-chill factor down to 37 below. The surrounding suburbs were even more frigid.

Mayor Michael A. Bilandic, heavily criticized for slow action in removing snow from a major New Year's storm, went to mass Sunday night "to pray for no more snow," as he put it. Work crews will work 12-hour shifts until the snowremoval job is done, city officials said.

"You know it's bad when the mayor goes to church to pray for a

break in the weather," said Barry Glace, a North Side resident.

The weekend blizzard also battered the rest of the northern third of the state, prompting Gov. James R. Thompson to declare it a disaster area.

At O'Hare, which officials said would probably reopen sometime today, all available snow-removal equipment was busy clearing the runways.

"This blizzard is much worse than 1967's," Bilandic told a news conference Sunday night, "because besides the heavy snows, we are encountering sub-zero temperatures and high winds."

Activities within Chicago will be slow, but operating. Fortunately, our forces worked steadily through the storm, allowing us to stay open, unlike many of the cities around Chicago."

Two helicopters, one from the Coast Guard and one from the Chicago Fire Department, battled 45-knot gusts on Lake Michigan early Sunday to rescue four crewmen from a wooden fishing boat caught in the ice.

But not everything about the blizzard was bad. Police reported an 80 percent drop in crime over the weekend, attributing it to the harsh weather.

## Test tube baby boy is in excellent health

**United Press International**  
GLASGOW, Scotland — The world's third test tube baby and the first boy conceived outside the womb of his mother was reported in excellent health Monday.

Grace Montgomery, mother of 5-pound 12-ounce Alastair is also doing well. The 32-year-old cookery teacher once had given up hope of ever having a baby.

A health board spokesman told a news conference the mother and baby were in "excellent health" more than 24 hours after Alastair's birth. Dr. David Mackay Hart, delivered the child Sunday morning.

Gynecologist Patrick Steptoe and physiologist Robert Edwards, who pioneered the test tube technique, told the news conference they would present details of their clinical findings to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists at a meeting in London Jan. 26.

The parents were elated.

"We wish to express our deep gratitude to Dr. Steptoe and Dr. Edwards for everything they have done on our behalf," the Montgomerys told reporters.

"To think at one time we were convinced we would never have a baby and now we are in the marvelous position of having a child of our own. We look forward to the time when other couples can have a child in this way."

Alastair is Britain's second test-tube baby and the second triumph for Steptoe and Edwards who were responsible for the birth last July 26 of Louise Brown, the first baby conceived outside the womb of its mother, in Oldham, England.

"I don't have any real regrets, other than I got caught," said Eby, a 1969 graduate of Florida Institute of Technology. "I knew what I was getting into and while it lasted, I enjoyed it."

Jail officials describe Eby as a near model prisoner who obeys orders, is congenial and assists other inmates.

He teaches math at the jail school and works in the law library. He is also writing a book about his smuggling adventures and dreams of it becoming a movie.

Last July, he testified before the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Navigation about international marijuana smuggling.

Eby will be eligible for parole in 1980 and he says he's been told his chances of being freed would be enhanced if he told authorities who else was involved in his last smuggling operation.

He has refused.

Eby estimates he made nearly three dozen trips smuggling marijuana and another 100 smuggling artifacts from South America. Bootlegging artifacts was a spinoff of his pot trade, he said.

"I wasn't the type of guy you would expect smuggling," he said. "I was very conservative, a Young Republican, a Richard Nixon fan. I don't smoke or drink, but I guess I enjoy excitement and that's one of the big reasons I did it."

"Part of the thrill was the challenge of smuggling and being the pilot of a plane without having any regulations to follow."

He talked about some of his close calls.

"I think it was 1974 when I was

making one of my trips to Cuba," he said. "I was landing at these makeshift airstrips, the ones set up by the Cubans themselves, and all of a sudden they started shooting at me."

"I quickly realized it was a wrong airstrip and got out of there as fast as I could."

Another time, while approaching another airstrip, Eby flew over Cuban military police who were chasing him. They opened fire on him as he waited for the plane to be loaded.

"My body was pumping as I waited for about 30 minutes to load the marijuana. I could get out of there, but it was a great feeling taking it over."

Onspretur trips from Cuba he occasionally cut through space over Cuba, a route did not appreciate. Once chased by Cuban planes.

"I don't think they really intend on shooting me down," he said. "They just wanted to see if I was a real smuggler. I dove into a cloud covering them."

Eby said in 1976 he was in Arizona where he bought a land and a log cabin. At the time he figured his smuggling operation was over.

Then, in spring of 1977, smugglers contacted him about bootlegging trip that even led to his arrest.

"Someone knew something they asked me if I would do a trip for them," Eby recalled. "My girlfriend tried to talk me out of it but I decided 'Why not?'"

## Annuitant may pay millions

**United Press International**  
FORT WORTH — In the year since Rita Kaye McDonald was carried unconscious off a softball field she has learned to stand, to walk and even to run a little.

And late last week, in one of the largest settlements ever in Texas, the Texas Electric Service Co. agreed to payments totaling up to \$4 million to help assure Rita's progress on her artificial leg.

On April 18, 1978, the old was waiting with some high school friends to take a trip at shortstop.

"Then I heard a buzzing sound," Rita said. "And I saw a flash of light. I felt like I was being hit. As she turned, she was to see a power line hurtling her head. More than 70,000 volts surged through the young girl, causing massive burns on her legs."

"I realized instantly that something had happened," she said. "I was unconscious."

In the intensive care room at Peter Smith Hospital, doctors put her right leg and arm in merced numerous skin grafts to attempt to save her.

Following a recovery that called remarkable, Rita was the witness stand Friday in Judge Clyde Ashworth's court to accept the \$4 million settlement — a decision that both parties and even the state agreed to pay \$1 million set up the annuity. Three months later, Rita will receive \$1 million at the outset.

"The payments will increase as she grows older," a spokesman said. "She could be receiving \$36,122 annually in 20 years, 50 years, the payments were \$87,678 a year."

Assuming she lives at least a few more years, she will have \$4.1 million.

The annuity guaranteed minimum of \$537,000, which go to her estate should she die before collecting that amount.

Rita showed only a trace of pain when she went to testify.

"I'm doing fine," she said. "I'm attending school and I've gotten to where I can run some with a prosthetic leg."

"I still have what they call phantom pain. There's also some discomfort where my wounds healed. There is no severe pain anymore."

Ashworth praised the settlement.

"Without it (the annuity) she would have received a lump sum of almost a half million dollars on her 18th birthday," he said. "I know that when I was 18 I wasn't ready to handle that money. But this arrangement assures her of an income for the rest of her life."

## Girl's accident settlement

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## Museum exhibit in New Orleans most prestigious since King Tut

**United Press International**  
NEW ORLEANS — It may never draw the crowds the King Tut exhibit attracted a year ago, but the latest exhibit at the New Orleans Museum of Art could be the second most prestigious in the city's history.

More than 2,000 persons filed through the museum Sunday during the first day of a three-month showing of golden treasures from five ancient Peruvian Indian tribes.

"It is kind of ironic that it is almost exactly one year ago that the King Tut exhibit" said Richard Drezen, volunteer coordinator for the museum. "But this is a very different sort of exhibit and we're trying to play down the comparison with the Tut show."

Drezen said public interest in the

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