

Clearly, however, the time that passed from April 4, when Cicconetti was first informed of the plot, and April 9, when arrests occurred, will be burned into the memories of the judge and his family forever.

Benchmark spoke with him in June about the experience.

Q. How did you first hear about this?

A. Interesting. I just finished my annual visit to my doctor's office. Feeling pretty good. As I am leaving I get a phone call to call my secretary—it was urgent, on my cell phone. So I call her back. She said, "You need to talk to Detective Doyle from Madison Township. He says it's extremely, extremely important that you contact him now." Okay. I was given the phone number, gave him a call. Apparently my secretary had told him that I was in the doctor's office, so they were driving towards there and were within a stone's throw of the doctor's office and I met them.

He said, "We need to talk privately."

I said, "Okay, Mike. Come on in. Come to my truck here."

He brings his computer. "I want you to listen to this" and puts in a CD. I heard voices—unknown voices—on there talking about bombing a house, and I don't care if he has kids, and the detective said, "Do you know what this is?"

"It sounds like somebody is going to bomb something." He goes, "They are talking about you."

I go, "Oh, my God. Has the local sheriff's office been informed of this?" And he said, "No, we have been investigating this and we called you first."

I immediately went to our sheriff's department.

Q. Did they tell you who it was?

A. Oh, yes. They revealed the name and said it was Joe Sands.

Q. What did you think?

A. I said, "What? They have a little case before me, a little minor case of not filing their tax return with the local village, and they are due to come up in sentencing." The detective says, "We know that."

Q. What is the potential penalty for that?

A. It is actually an unclassified misdemeanor, so there really is—the maximum penalty on an unclassified would be 60 days in jail, but there is no mandatory minimum, no nothing, no requirement.

Q. Is there a normal punishment for that—a typical—?

A. Well, I am going to tell you no because I have never had one before. I have never had one in this court for failure to file a village tax, which brings us back to the whole underlying issue here. That is this: the defendants, Joe Sands and Dawn Holin, believed that the village was out to get them. Perry Village. And, you

know, there may have been a little aggressive pursuit of prosecution on the two of them by the local authorities. You know, they did everything the way they wanted to do things. If they put up a sign and it was in violation of the sign ordinance, they waited until they got cited and then they battled over that. They were always in a battle with the local village.

Anyways, so the mayor, I think, became a little more aggressive. They felt they were being singled out for prosecution and just deep-seeded emotion eventually led to what they [did]. The mayor was number one on the list, the mayor of the village. I was second only because I was to do the sentencing. The police chief was right in there first or second or third.

Q. Had you had any inkling of any unusual aspect to the proceedings in your court?

A. Absolutely not. Other than they were—no, none. Dawn Holin, the female, would call here occasionally as the court date got near, and we have had them in here for another minor offense, and she typically calls one of the clerks and, "Is the date still on, is the judge going to be there?"

Of course you look at this particular case [now] and say, yes, she wanted to make sure I was going to be here on that date so they knew when they could attempt to kill me.

Q. You learned this on April 4th?

A. That is correct.

Q. When was the court date set? April 20th?

A. April 20th. The irony of that is, as I am looking on my calendar right now on the wall, I was to be out of town that day, anyway. I was taking the family to Toronto, Canada. We had tickets for the Blue Jays game on the 19th. We were spending the night and going to Niagara Falls. I wasn't even going to be here on the 20th. I was not even going to be present to do the sentencing. There would [have been] a visiting judge here to do that.

Q. Speaking of your family, you have a wife and two sons—8 and 10?

A. Correct.

Q. How did you go about telling all of them?

A. Well, when I was first informed of the possible acts, we had to vacate the house. So we told the boys that we had to leave because there was a gas leak in the house. Well, I forgot that we had guinea pigs in the house, but the boys didn't, because they said there can't be gas leaking in the house or you would have taken the guinea pigs out. You know what, you are right. So let's sit down. We have to talk.

And we as calmly as we could told the boys what was going on. There were some [bad] people out there. They don't have to be concerned, that we are being protected.