

## An unorthodox Woodland drug investigation attracts attention

By Lauren King

A Woodland native and former UC Davis Fire Department captain has been charged with the illegal possession and cultivation of marijuana for sale after a controversial investigation.

The recent raid on the man's business and home by narcotics agents is drawing complaints of harassment and a closer look at local medical marijuana laws may ultimately suggest that the action was unfounded.

Paul Fullerton Jr., 44, battled blazes for more than two decades before an on-the-job spinal injury forced him to change career paths.

Fullerton's neck is now held together with 12 screws and three plates. Although the former firefighter was able to recover, the injuries and subsequent surgeries have left him with chronic pain that he has struggled to manage.

"They pumped me full of pills,"

I know for sure that there is some evidence in this case that was falsely planted and we look forward to bringing that to light in court as well," said Tully.



Paul Fullerton Jr. identifies a hole in his garage wall allegedly created by law enforcement to insert wiretaps.

he said at the time.

The pills had many side effects and left Fullerton looking for better options.

A friend suggested medical marijuana as an alternative treatment, but Fullerton was hesitant because he prided himself on being a retired firefighter and "model citizen."

However, when the side effects became too much to handle, he changed his mind.

"My world opened up," he said. "I don't take any pills anymore."



Last year, Paul Fullerton Jr. showcased his business — ‘Lil’ Shop of Growers — which has influences from the musical ‘Lil’ Shop of Horrors and the Jamaican culture.

Medical marijuana created such an improvement in Fullerton’s quality of life that, in 2012, he decided to open a hydroponics shop catering to local growers.

It was this very business, ‘Lil’ Shop of Growers, that was raided by the Yolo Narcotic Enforcement Team earlier this year as a part of a sting operation.

According to Fullerton’s attorney, Joseph Tully, the unit had long been suspicious of his client due to the type of business he owned and his participation in a medical marijuana collective with his coworkers.

The collective, according to Fullerton, was drawn up by a lawyer and each member has a physician’s letter. This documentation was offered to investigators who chose to

ignore it.

Earlier this year, an undercover officer went into Fullerton’s business and was given 1.7 grams of medical marijuana — the equivalent of a joint and a half, Tully reported.

The attorney said that Fullerton gave the officer the marijuana because he believed that the officer was a medical patient.

This interaction gave the investigation unit the evidence that they needed to get a search warrant for Fullerton’s business and residence.

Soon after investigators finished their search, Fullerton discovered that the unit had set up wiretaps throughout both properties.

The internet, alarm system,

and garage door all experienced malfunctions — telling Fullerton that something was amiss.

“They tapped into my Internet and At&t U-verse came out and had to basically rewire my Internet because they had spliced into the lines and, because its digital now, if you splice you can’t get a clear signal,” said Fullerton.

“My alarm company came out three times and finally Safe Side came in and found what was wrong,” he continued, “The alarm company had to run through all new power and my garage door company had to come redo the whole garage door and he could see all of the wires up there that weren’t his — that were tied in.”

Fullerton had a similar experience at his business.

“The Internet went out, I had no credit card machines — no nothing. I had four U-verse people and a supervisor out there because they were just going, ‘wow.’ The supervisor said, ‘They filleted it like a fish’ and tied into it and jammed the lines back into the box,” said Fullerton.

Fullerton went on to say that the cable company discovered that more than 50 devices had logged into the shop’s modem at all hours of the day and night. “I only have 10 employees and 10 people who know the code which is in the back of my store,”

he said.

As with Fullerton's home, the Internet at the business had to be rewired by U-verse personnel. "They basically had to bypass the system for the whole building and go direct to me because it was so messed up," said Fullerton.

All the lines that the YONET investigators put in place are still present, though disconnected, so Fullerton and his attorney can complete their own investigation if needed.

When called for comment, Lt. Paul Doroshov, a Davis Police officer and manager with YONET, said "there were no wiretaps in this investigation."

Regarding the wiretaps at Fullerton's business and residence, Doroshov said "our stance is that that's an outright fabrication."

In terms of what prompted the investigation, Doroshov could not reveal specifics due to the case currently going through the court system, however he was able to provide a brief statement.

"We can only disclose at this time that we received information about drug sales going on and we conducted an investigation from there," he said. Doroshov also said he believes that all the information will "come out in discovery" through the court process.

"I've never seen this kind of

behavior before, in any case — not a federal case or a state case," said Tully.

"Also, imagine the financial resources that are going into bugging his house. I mean, that's problematic. Somebody approving the time and resources to go do this is pretty mind-blowing," Tully continued.

Fullerton and his attorney believe that all of the wiretaps have been found and are now disabled, but they can't say for sure.

They also believe that the complaint filed by Supervising Deputy District Attorney Robert Gorman, stating that seven pounds of marijuana were found at Fullerton's business, are inaccurate.

Further, the police report that Tully has been able to review says that only three pounds were found — an amount that is double what Fullerton says was actually found at the business.

"The police often don't recognize that someone who uses medical marijuana may have old — basically — trash, that they just haven't thrown away yet," Tully explained.

"In my experience, police departments aren't trained to distinguish old trash that wasn't used versus newer medicine that people will actually use... the police officers will lump everything together to get the largest weight that they can get,"

said Tully.

"I know for sure that there is some evidence in this case that was falsely planted and we look forward to bringing that to light in court as well," said Tully.

Fullerton's wife, Maricel, has also been brought up on aiding and abetting charges and is now concerned about keeping her nurse's license.

"They [police officers] are supposed to protect innocent people, I am a nurse and have never done anything in my life. Now, I have to fight to keep my license," Maricel said.

"Growing up, you are always told by your parents to trust police officers. But when that happened, and they charged you with a ridiculous charge, I just totally lost my faith in them," she continued.

According to Fullerton and his wife, investigators initially told Maricel that they knew that she was innocent — but soon pressed charges against her as well.

"They took my daughter away and she wasn't allowed to come home for 10 days... I've totally lost my faith. It's scary that they can just wrongfully charge people. I'm in constant fear of what's going to happen to us — to my daughter," she went on.

"I don't see a lot of law enforcement truly looking out for the public's financial interest,

usually. I see, in court, a lot of personal vendettas, propping up cases, and pursuing cases where really — if the public knew what was really going on — they would be disgusted with how law enforcement and the courts operate,” said Tully.

“I haven’t negotiated with the DA’s Office yet, so I don’t know if they are going to be reasonable or not... He should have been protected by the law, but you can see how law enforcement acts on their own volition,” he said.

A pre-hearing conference will be held on Friday, May 27 at 10 a.m. in Yolo Superior Court. ■