

Flett's success story turns sour after he possesses handgun, drugs

He helped ex-cons, but is back in jail

by TRUDY BEYAK
Abbotsford News

AN AWARD-WINNING ex-con publicly praised as a "success story" is back in jail.

Glenn Flett spent the past 13 years helping ex-cons break free of their crime cycle, but now the high-profile murderer is behind bars again for possessing a loaded handgun.

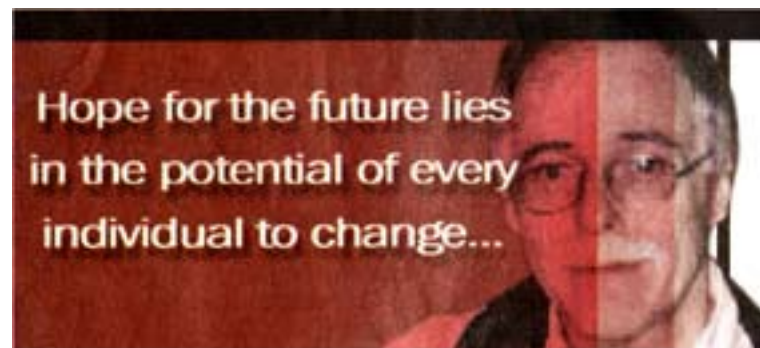
Flett was paroled 13 years ago, after serving a murder sentence for shooting a Hudson's Bay manager during a botched Brinks robbery in Toronto.

Legally known as John Glendon Flett, 54, the Mission resident received a one-year sentence last Friday in Abbotsford provincial court after pleading guilty to possessing a loaded 9 mm handgun.

He was arrested in Merritt on April 12 because he was driving erratically along the Coquihalla Highway, according to Kamloops Crown prosecutor Michael Wong.

Police found a loaded restricted firearm, some replica firearms, 20 mg of marijuana and needles in the vehicle and Flett admitted he had consumed drugs, Wong explained.

He pleaded guilty to possession of a loaded restricted firearm. Four other charges were stayed.



KEVIN PLASTOW GRAPHIC / Abbotsford News

Glenn Flett co-founded a self-help group in Abbotsford, turning around the lives of many ex-cons. Now, he's fallen from grace, but his friends are confident he'll rebound.

Profiled as a "success story" in many newspapers including the *Abbotsford News*, Flett experienced a dramatic turn-around when he became a Christian in 1982 at Kent Institution.

He and his wife Sherry co-founded a self-help program in Abbotsford in 1992 to help ex-cons break the prison cycle.

The non-profit volunteer-based program is called Long-Term Inmates Now in the Community (LINC) and is located at 32463 Simon Avenue.

It is the only program of its kind in Canada. Recognizing Flett's achievements, he received the University College of the Fraser Valley (UCFV) "Volunteer of the Year" award in 1996 and also the Betty Urquhart Community Service Award.

Darryl Plecas, a UCFV professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, is on the board of directors of LINC.

"Glenn had a significant fall down, it is a blow," Plecas said, expressing sadness about Flett's conviction.

"It is a major, major disappointment, but thankfully, nobody got hurt," Plecas said, adding he is confident Glenn will get his life back on-track.

There is more to this story than meets the eye, he said.

"Glenn has a long history of making a significant contribution to helping people get back on their feet again."

See 'FLETT' on page A3



PLECAS

'People need to be accountable . . .'

FLETT / FROM PAGE A1

Glenn and Sherry married in 1992 at William Head Institution and have an eight-year-old daughter.

Sherry declined to be interviewed about her husband's conviction based on her lawyer's advice.

She is actively involved in directing LINC and Sherry is candid about the organization's philosophy with ex-cons.

"People need to be accountable for what they do and for who they are," she said.

LINC is comprised of long-term offenders, parolees, spouses, family and friends. About 80-100 offenders voluntarily participate in the various programs each week.

Plecas said Glenn has not been active in LINC for the past year, and,

therefore, the organization will continue operating normally without his participation.

Glenn has been the subject of numerous media stories, but he declined a request from *The Abbotsford News* for an interview this week.

He received the UCFV Volunteer of the Year award after developing the Partners in Learning program, which pairs tutors from Ferndale Institution with high-risk youth in alternative schools in Mission and Abbotsford.

According to his biography, Glenn led a violent, crime-filled life, spending some 23 years behind bars.

"He was knocking off stores and banks by the time he was 20 years old," according to an *Abbotsford News* story published on July 9, 1996.

"Looking back it's like a nightmare," Glenn told *The News*. "At the time I thought I was being cool."

The prisoner's lawyer Peter Benning declined to comment about the firearm conviction.

Flett is to serve a four month sentence, because the judge considered the fact that Flett had already served four months in jail, counting it as double time, Wong said.

He is also prohibited from possessing a firearm for life.

LINC and Associates - of which Sherry is the director - is under contract with the Correctional Service of Canada to provide numerous services to offenders in jail, as well as to enhance their employment opportunities when released.