



TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS . . . . .	i
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES . . . . .	ii
PRELIMINARY STATEMENT . . . . .	1
STATEMENT OF THE CASE AND FACTS . . . . .	2
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT. . . . .	5
ARGUMENT . . . . .	6
THE TRIAL COURT DID NOT ERR IN DEPARTING DOWNWARD FROM THE THREE YEAR MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCE OR IN SENTENCING MR. NORDBERG PURSUANT TO SECTION 397.12, <u>FLORIDA</u> <u>STATUTES.</u> . . . . .	6
CONCLUSION . . . . .	15
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE . . . . .	15

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

<u>CASES</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
<u>Adams v. Culver</u> , 111 So.2d 665 (Fla.1959) . . . . .	12
<u>Barbera v. State</u> , 505 So.2d 413 (Fla.1987) . . . . .	13
<u>Lambert v. State</u> , 545 So.2d 838 (Fla.1989) . . . . .	12
<u>Nichols v. State</u> , 536 So.2d 1052 (Fla. 4th DCA 1988) . . . . .	14
<u>Rewis v. United States</u> , 401 U.S. 808; 91 S.Ct. 1056; 28 L.Ed.2d 493 (1971) . . . . .	9
<u>Solem v. Helm</u> , 463 U.S. 277, 103 S.Ct. 3001, 77 L.Ed.2d 637 (1983) . . . . .	14
<u>St. George Island, Ltd. v. Rudd</u> , 547 So.2d 958 (Fla. 1st DCA 1989) . . . . .	8
<u>State v. Baxter</u> , 16 F.L.W. 1561 (Fla. 4th DCA 1991) . . . . .	3, 9, 11
<u>State v. Cooper</u> , 510 So.2d 1252 (Fla. 4th DCA 1987) . . . . .	14
<u>State v. Dunman</u> , 427 So.2d 166 (Fla. 1983) . . . . .	8
<u>State v. Herrin</u> , 568 So.2d 920 (Fla. 1990) . . . . .	13
<u>State v. Jackson</u> , 526 So.2d 58 (Fla. 1988) . . . . .	9
<u>State v. Nordberg</u> , Case No. 91-0580 (Fla. 4th DCA October 2, 1991) . . . . .	3, 7
<u>State v. Sachs</u> , 526 So.2d 48 (Fla.1988) . . . . .	13
<u>State v. Scates</u> , 16 F.L.W. 2203 (Fla. 4th DCA August 21, 1991) . . . . .	3, 4, 9
<u>Weekley v. State</u> , 553 So.2d 239 (Fla. 3d DCA 1989) . . . . .	12

OTHER AUTHORITIES

FLORIDA STATUTES

Section 397.011(2)	9
Section 397.10	11
Section 397.12	3. 5-7. 11
Section 784.08	8
Section 893.03(2)(a)(4)	2
Section 893.13(1)(e)	2. 3. 6-9
Section 893.13(1)(e)1	7
Section 893.13(4)	7
Section 893.135	8

FLORIDA CONSTITUT

Article I. Section 17	14
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UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

Amendment XIII	14
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**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

**Petitioner was the defendant** in the Criminal Division of the Circuit Court of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit, In and For Broward County, Florida, and the appellee in the Fourth District Court of Appeal. Respondent **was** the prosecution and the appellant below.

In the brief, the parties will be referred to as they appear before this Honorable Court.

The following symbol will be used:

**R** = Record on Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE AND FACTS

Petitioner Leif Nordberg was charged by Information filed January 29, 1991 with purchase of cocaine at or near a school (R 49-50). Sections 893.03(2)(a)(4) and 893.13(1)(e), Florida Statutes (1989). On February 11, 1991, Petitioner withdrew his initial plea of not guilty and entered a plea of nolo contendere to purchase of cocaine at or near a school (R 21-22).<sup>1</sup>

At the change of plea hearing, Mr. Nordberg testified that he is a Swedish citizen on vacation in Florida for one week at the time of the January 4, 1991 incident (R 23-24). He began drinking alcohol at 1:00 p.m. He consumed about one pint of Southern Comfort by 5:00 p.m. He then took a cab with another person to the scene (R 24-25, 31-32). He did not know that purchase of cocaine near a school was a more serious offense than purchase of cocaine (R 33). He did not know a school was in the area when he was arrested at 6:30 p.m. (R 33).

Mr. Nordberg stated that he was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident (R 24-25). He had suffered from the mental illnesses of schizophrenia and paranoia (R 25). His mental illnesses are aggravated when he is under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (R 25-26). He received nine months of alcohol counseling in 1981 (R 28). He used drugs since 1967, primarily amphetamines and hashhish (R 25, 28-29).

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<sup>1</sup> The information also charged Petitioner with misdemeanor possession of cannabis (R 49-50). Pursuant to the plea herein, Petitioner was adjudicated guilty and sentenced to time served (R 45-46, 59-60).

Pursuant to the terms of the plea, Mr. Nordberg was released to the custody of Gonilla North, vice consul of the Swedish embassy in Fort Lauderdale, Florida (R 18-19, 42). He **was** to return by plane to Stockholm, Sweden, where he had a place waiting in a drug program at Hodding Hospital Psychiatric Clinic (R 35-36, 44-45).

After explaining the terms and consequences of the change of plea, the trial judge accepted the change of plea (R 43-44). The judge specifically found that Mr. Nordberg was drug dependent pursuant to Section 397.12, Fla. Stat. (1989). The trial judge placed Mr. Nordberg on three (3) years of probation conditioned upon his placement on hospital treatment and a program of rehabilitation (R 35-36, 44-45, 55-57).

On direct appeal by Respondent, the Fourth District Court of Appeal reversed the sentence citing the three year mandatory minimum set forth in Section 893.13(1)(e). State v. Nordberg, Case No. 91-0580 (Fla. 4th DCA October 2, 1991) (Appendix 1). In ruling that the three year mandatory minimum under Section 893.13(1)(e) controlled, the District Court cited **its** prior decisions in State v. Baxter, 16 F.L.W. 1561 (Fla. 4th DCA 1991) (Appendix at pages 5-6) and State v. Scates, 16 F.L.W. 2203 (Fla. 4th DCA August 21, 1991) (Appendix at 2-4). In State v. Scates, supra, the Fourth District certified the identical issue as a question of great public importance to this Court. The certified question is:

MAY A TRIAL COURT PROPERLY DEPART FROM **THE** MINIMUM MANDATORY PROVISIONS OF SECTION 893.13(1)(e), FLORIDA STATUTES (1989), UNDER **THE** AUTHORITY OF THE DRUG REHABILITATION PROVISIONS OF SECTION 397.12, FLORIDA STATUTES (1989).

State v. Scates, supra, (Appendix pages 3-4). Counsel in Scates filed a notice of intent to invoke discretionary jurisdiction of this Court on August 22, 1991 and Scatea is currently pending before this court (Case No. 78,533). Petitioner thereupon noticed his intent to invoke this Court's discretionary jurisdiction to review this cause on October 16, 1991.

On February 12, 1992, this Court accepted jurisdiction and ordered briefing by the parties on the merits. This brief on the merits by Petitioner follows.



### SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Mr. Nordberg's sentence of three years probation must be affirmed. **The** trial court had full authority and was within its discretionary powers to so sentence Petitioner. Mr. Nordberg meets the criteria for application of Section 397.12, Fla. Stat. Specifically, he falls within the classification as a drug dependent amenable to rehabilitation. The most recent expression of legislative will under Chapter 953 (Laws of Florida) as well as recent case authority gives new force to Section 397.12.

Moreover, there was no language placed in the statute stating that the mandatory minimum sentence "shall not be suspended, deferred or withheld," nor was there any language placed in the **statute** precluding the trial court from staying, suspending, or withholding the mandatory sentence. In fact, there was no language restricting the trial court's discretion in this regard. Furthermore, application of the three year mandatory minimum to Mr. Nordberg would be cruel and unusual punishment wholly disproportionate to the offense for which Mr. Nordberg is convicted.

## ARGUMENT

THE TRIAL COURT DID NOT ERR IN DEPARTING  
DOWNWARD FROM THE THREE YEAR MANDATORY MINIMUM  
SENTENCE OR IN SENTENCING MR. NORDBERG  
PURSUANT TO SECTION 397.12, FLORIDA STATUTES.

At sentencing, the trial judge found that Petitioner Nordberg was a drug dependent amenable to rehabilitation pursuant to Section 397.12, Fla. Stat. (1989) (R 35-36, 44-45, 55-57). Following his nolo contendere plea to purchasing cocaine within one thousand feet of a school, Mr. Nordberg was placed on three years of probation (R 35-36, 44-45, 55-57). Section 893.13(1)(e), Fla. Stat. (1989). The trial judge did not abuse his discretion herein for a number of reasons. First, statutory analysis of 893.13(1)(e), Fla. Stat. (1989) demonstrates that imposition of the three year mandatory minimum is not absolute. Second, Mr. Nordberg meets the statutory criteria under Section 397.12 as a drug dependent. The most recent expression of legislative will, via Chapter 953, shows the efficacy of Mr. Nordberg's original sentence. Third, recent cases have upheld downward departure from the sentencing guidelines where the defendant was, like Mr. Nordberg, impaired by substance abuse at the time of the crime and, like Mr. Nordberg, amenable to rehabilitation. Finally, the application of the three year mandatory minimum sentence in Mr. Nordberg's case would be disproportionate to the offense for which he has been convicted. These points will be addressed sequentially.

This case involves the interplay of Section 397.12, which provides alternatives to incarceration for substance abusers like Mr. Nordberg, with Section 893.13(1)(e) which imposes the three

year mandatory minimum for purchase of cocaine within one thousand feet of a school.

Comparison of Section 893.13(1)(e), Fla. Stat. (1989) with other statutes providing mandatory minimums - comparison apparently not considered by the Fourth District Court of Appeal in Nordberg - shows that the three year minimum for selling, purchasing, etc., cocaine within 1,000 feet of a school is not so absolute as the other statutory minimums. Therefore, Section 893.13(1)(e) should not act as an absolute bar to the application of Section 397.12, Florida Statute (1989), which the trial judge here applied to avoid the minimum.

Section 893.13(1)(e) did not originally provide for a minimum three year sentence. See Section 893.13(1)(e), Florida Statutes (1987). Subsequently, the statute was amended to include subsection (4), which added an additional assessment up to the amount of the statutory fine to be used for drug abuse programs. See Section 893.13(4), Florida Statutes (1989). At the same time, subsection (e)1 was amended to include the three year minimum. Section 893.13(1)(e)1, Florida Statutes (1989). The statute now states that the offender "shall be sentenced to a minimum term of imprisonment of 3 calendar years and shall not be eligible for parole or statutory gain-time under s. 944.275 prior to serving such minimum sentence."<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that the legislature intended to impose a minimum three year sentence. However, the legislature failed to include

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<sup>2</sup> The minimum has been amended again in a way not relevant here. See Section 893.13(1)(e)(1), Florida Statutes (Supp. 1990).

the operative words found in other penal statutes imposing mandatory minimum terms. The other statutes which include mandatory prison terms all require harsh sentences but further foreclose the court's discretionary power by stating specifically that the sentence shall not be suspended, deferred, or withheld. Because Section 893.13(1)(e) does not include this language, it does not take away the discretionary power of the trial court to suspend, defer, or withhold.

Section 893.135, Florida Statutes (1989), the trafficking statute, requires mandatory minimum sentences when various amounts of controlled substances are possessed, purchased, delivered, etc. It states, "...sentence shall not be suspended, deferred, or withheld, nor shall such person be eligible for parole prior to serving the mandatory minimum term of imprisonment..." Section **784.08**, Florida Statutes (1989), concerning possession of a firearm in a felony, **also** makes the same provision that sentence shall not be suspended, deferred, or withheld. By contrast, Section 893.13(1)(e) has been amended since its origin, yet at no time has the legislature provided for or limited the discretionary authority of the sentencing court to suspend, defer or withhold imposition of the minimum three year sentence.

The legislature, when enacting penal statutes is presumed to be aware of prior existing laws. State v. Dunman, **427** So.2d 166, **168** (Fla. 1983). Furthermore, the restriction included by the legislature in other mandatory sentence statutes cannot be implied in Section 893.13(1)(e). As stated in St. George Island, Ltd. v. Rudd, **547** So.2d 958, 961 (Fla. 1st **DCA** 1989):

Where the legislature uses exact words and different statutory provisions, the court may assume they were intended to mean the same thing.. . . Moreover, the presence of a term in one portion of a statute and its absence from another argues against reading it as implied by the section from which it is omitted. [Citations omitted].

Additionally, any ambiguity concerning the ambit of criminal statutes should be resolved in favor of lenity. Rewis v. United States, 401 U.S. 808, 812; 91 S.Ct. 1056, 1059; 28 L.Ed.2d 493 (1971). Otherwise put, penal statutes must be construed strictly and never extended by implication. State v. Jackson, 526 So.2d 58 (Fla. 1988). **Therefore**, the omission from Section 893.13(1)(e) of any language forbidding **the** court to withhold, suspend, **or defer** sentence can only be viewed as a grant **of** authority to allow such suspension, withholding, or deferment of sentence. Based upon the foregoing alone Petitioner contends that the trial judge acted within his discretionary power in imposing sentence. However, there is an additional basis upon which the original sentence herein must be upheld.

In this regard, Petitioner disputes the view of the Fourth District that Section 397.011(2), Fla. Stat. (1989) applies only to simple possession and **not** to purchase. E.g. State v. Scates, supra and State v. Baxter, supra. By adopting this view, the Fourth District narrowly limited the circumstances in which a sentencer can exercise discretion as to render the force and effect of Section 397.011(2) and Chapter 953 of the statutes as well, a nullity. The Fourth District needlessly confines the sentencer's discretion based upon one phrase in subsection 397.011(2) (emphasis added) :

...For a violation of any provision of chapter 893, Florida Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act, relating to possession of any substance regulated thereby, the trial judge, may in his discretion, require the defendant to participate in a drug treatment program...

However, this phrase must be considered in the context of the entire subsection, which defines the legislature's intent and has no limiting language at all:

(2) It is the intent of the Legislature to provide an alternative to criminal imprisonment for individuals capable of rehabilitation as useful citizens through techniques not generally available in state or local prison systems.

\* \* \*

Such required participation may be imposed in addition to or in lieu of any penalty or probation otherwise prescribed by law...

Similarly, the preceding subsection (1) places no limitation on persons dependent on drugs controlled by Chapter 893, of whom Petitioner is one. Subsection (1) more fully delineates the legislature's intent as follows (emphasis added):

(1) It is the purpose of this chapter to encourage the fullest possible exploration of ways by which the true facts concerning drug abuse and dependents may be made known generally and to provide a comprehensive and individualized program for drug dependents in treatment and after care programs. This program is designed to assist in the rehabilitation of persons dependent on the drugs controlled by chapter 893, as well as other substances with the potential for abuse except those covered by chapter 396. It is further designed to protect society against the social problem of drug abuse and to meet the need of drug dependents for medical, psychological and vocational rehabilitation, while at the same time safeguarding their individual liberties.

Petitioner clearly falls within the ambit of subsection (1).

Furthermore, the Fourth District focused only on the preamble to Chapter 397, apparently overlooking Section 397.12, under which Petitioner **was** sentenced, and Section 397.10, a further statement of the legislative intent. These provisions state (emphasis added):

**397.10** Legislative Intent.-- It is the intent of the Legislature to provide a meaningful alternative to criminal imprisonment for individuals capable of rehabilitation **as** useful citizens through techniques and programs not generally available in state or federal prison systems or programs operated by the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. It is the further intent of the Legislature to encourage trial judges to use their discretion to refer persons charged with, or convicted of, a violation of laws relating to drug abuse or a violation of any law committed under the influence of a narcotic drug or medicine to a state-licensed drug rehabilitation program in lieu of, or in addition to, imposition of criminal penalties.

**397.12** Reference to Drug Abuse Program.-- When any person, including any juvenile, has been charged with or convicted of a violation of any provision of chapter 893 or of a violation of any law committed under the influence of a controlled substance, the court...may in its discretion, require the person charged or convicted to participate in a drug treatment program....

Reading all of the statutes in *pari materia*, it is plain that the legislature intended that an offender such as Petitioner could in the trial judge's discretion be placed in drug treatment rather than prison. Consequently, in limiting the sentencer's discretion exclusively to possessory offenses, the Fourth District in Baxter and **its** progeny, and in the case sub judice overlooked two principles of statutory construction. First,

"...[i]t is a well settled rule of statutory construction...that a specific statute

covering a particular subject matter is controlling over a general statutory provision covering the same and other subsections in general terms. . ."

Adams v. Culver, 111 So.2d 665, 667 (Fla. 1959) (and cases quoted and cited therein).

Second, where a criminal statute is susceptible of different interpretations, it must be construed in favor of the accused. Lambert v. State, 545 So.2d 838 (Fla. 1989); Weekley v. State, 553 So.2d 239 (Fla. 3d DCA 1989). Applying these principles of statutory analysis to the present facts demonstrate that Mr. Nordberg's original sentence must be affirmed.

The Fourth District's holding that because Mr. Nordberg was charged with "purchase" rather than "possession" he could not have the chance for rehabilitation and treatment, effectively emasculates the sentencer's authority and discretion, a result that the legislature could surely not have **intended**.<sup>3</sup>

It is undisputed that Mr. Nordberg was under the influence of alcohol when the buy occurred. The evidence also included Mr. Nordberg's testimony that he suffered from mental illnesses, schizophrenia and paranoia, which are aggravated when he is under the influence of alcohol as well as drugs (R 25-26). These additional circumstances could only have aggravated the degree of his impairment at the time this offense was committed (R 25-26).

Petitioner established by his testimony that he was a substance abuser, was under the influence at the time of his offense, and was therefore eligible for a downward departure from

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. State v. Baxter, Appendix at 5-6.



the guidelines under Barbera v. State, 505 So.2d 413 (Fla. 1987) and State v. Sachs, 526 So.2d 48 (Fla. 1988). This court must affirm the trial court's sentence.

In Barbera v. State, 505 So.2d 413 (Fla. 1987), this Court upheld a downward departure where, as in Mr. Nordberg's case, substance abuse impaired the defendant's mind at the time of the crime. More recently in State v. Herrin, 568 So.2d 920 (Fla. 1990), this Court stated that substance abuse, coupled with amenability to rehabilitation, could be considered by the sentencer in mitigation. Under criteria set forth in these cases, Mr. Nordberg established his amenability to rehabilitation by his candid acknowledgment of his drug dependency and by testimony showing that his contact with the criminal justice system arose solely from his drug dependency,

On the basis of Barbera and Herrin, Petitioner's original sentence must be affirmed.

Finally, Petitioner contends that imposition of the three year mandatory minimum sentence would constitute cruel and unusual punishment wholly disproportionate to the severity of the offense. The sentencing guidelines call for a range of three and one-half (3½) to four and one-half (4½) years in state prison for Mr. Nordberg an offender without a prior criminal record. The penalty sharply contrasts to the recommended guidelines range for a first offender convicted of burglary of a dwelling (non-state prison sanction), robbery without a weapon (non-state prison sanction), battery on a law enforcement officer (non-state prison sanction), or lewd and lascivious assault upon a child (non-state prison sanction). Thus, the three year mandatory minimum would constitute

cruel and unusual punishment in Mr. Nordberg's case. Solem v. Helm, 463 U.S. 277, 103 S.Ct. 3001, 77 L.Ed.2d 637 (1983). Amendment XIII, United States Constitution; Article I, Section 17, Florida Constitution.


If this Court does affirm the Fourth District's reversal of Petitioner's original sentence, then it must be with leave for Petitioner to withdraw his plea, since it was entered on the expectation of the reduced sentence. Nichols v. State, 536 So.2d 1052 (Fla. 4th DCA 1988) and State v. Cooper, 510 So.2d 1252 (Fla. 4th DCA 1987).

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing arguments and the authorities cited therein, Petitioner respectfully requests this Court reverse the decision of the Fourth District below.

Respectfully Submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I **HEREBY** CERTIFY that a copy hereof has been furnished by courier to Jacqueline Barakat, Assistant Attorney General, Elisha Newton Dimick Building, Room **240**, 111 Georgia Avenue, West Palm Beach, Florida 33401 this 19<sup>th</sup> day of February, 1992.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Counsel for Petitioner