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CLERK, SUPREME COURT

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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

STATE OF FLORIDA,

Petitioner,

v.

CASE NO. 84,885

RAYMOND HORTON,

Respondent.

ON DISCRETIONARY REVIEW OF THE
DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL,
FIFTH DISTRICT

MERITS BRIEF OF PETITIONER

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES ii
STATEMENT OF THE CASE AND FACTS 1
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT 4
ARGUMENT 6

POINT ON APPEAL

THE FIFTH DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL ERRED IN FINDING THAT RESPONDENT HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN NOTICE OF THE INTENT TO HABITUALIZE PRIOR TO RESPONDENT ENTERING HIS PLEA; THE PLEA FORM RESPONDENT SIGNED, READ AND UNDERSTOOD GAVE RESPONDENT SUFFICIENT NOTICE, AS IT SET FORTH THE MAXIMUM SENTENCE THAT COULD BE IMPOSED IF RESPONDENT WAS HABITUALIZED AND THAT RESPONDENT WOULD NOT BE ENTITLED TO BASIC GAIN TIME; DUE TO THE CONFUSION CREATED BY THIS COURT'S DECISION IN ASHLEY, INFRA, THIS COURT SHOULD REVISIT AND CLARIFY ASHLEY. 6

CONCLUSION 27
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE 27

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

CASES:

<u>Ashley v. State,</u> 614 So. 2d 486 (Fla. 1993)	4-27 <i>passim</i>
<u>Black v. State,</u> 599 So. 2d 1380 (Fla. 1st DCA 1992)	15, 16, 17
<u>Blackshear v. State,</u> 455 So. 2d 555 (Fla. 1st DCA 1984)	18, 19
<u>Bonaventure v. State,</u> 637 So. 2d 55 (Fla. 5th DCA 1994)	11
<u>Boykin v. Alabama,</u> 395 U.S. 238, 89 S. Ct. 1709 (1969)	15
<u>Critton v. State,</u> 619 So. 2d 495 (Fla. 1st DCA 1993)	11
<u>Dugger v. Grant,</u> 610 So. 2d 428 (Fla. 1992)	15-16
<u>Dugger v. Roderick,</u> 584 So. 2d 2 (Fla. 1991)	20
<u>Glover v. State,</u> 474 So. 2d 886 (Fla. 1st DCA 1985)	20
<u>Green v. State,</u> 623 So. 2d 1237 (Fla. 4th DCA 1993)	11
<u>Griffin v. Singletary,</u> 638 So. 2d 500, 501 (Fla. 1994)	20
<u>Heatley v. State,</u> 636 So. 2d 153 (Fla. 1st DCA 1994)	25
<u>Hinman v. United States,</u> 730 F.2d 649 (11th Cir. 1984)	16, 19, 20
<u>Hock v. Singletary,</u> 8 Fla. L. Weekly Fed. C943 (11th Cir. January 9, 1995)	20
<u>Horton v. State,</u> 646 So. 2d 253 (Fla. 1st DCA 1994)	19, 21, 22, 23, 25
<u>Horton v. State,</u> 644 So. 2d 1036 (Fla. 5th DCA 1994)	3

<u>Koenig v. State,</u> 597 So. 2d 256 (Fla. 1992)	23
<u>Ladner v. Henderson,</u> 438 F.2d 638 (5th Cir. 1971)	19
<u>Levens v. State,</u> 598 So. 2d 120 (Fla. 1st DCA 1992)	19
<u>Lewis v. State,</u> 636 So. 2d 154 (Fla. 1st DCA 1994)	10
<u>Lucas v. State,</u> 630 So. 2d 597 (Fla. 1st DCA 1993)	11
<u>Mansfield v. State,</u> 618 So. 2d 1385 (Fla. 2d DCA 1993)	10-11
<u>Massey v. State,</u> 609 So. 2d 598 (Fla. 1992)	7, 8, 9, 10
<u>Morales-Guarjardo v. United States,</u> 440 F.2d 775 (5th Cir. 1971)	20
<u>Oglesby v. State,</u> 627 So. 2d 585 (Fla. 5th DCA 1993), <u>rev. denied</u> , No. 82, 987 (Fla. March 11, 1994)	7, 10
<u>Polk v. State,</u> 405 So. 2d 758 (Fla. 3d DCA 1981)	18
<u>Pompa v. State,</u> 635 So. 2d 114 (Fla. 5th DCA 1994)	11
<u>Roberts v. State,</u> 559 So. 2d 289 (Fla. 5th DCA 1990)	8
<u>Santoro v. State,</u> 644 So. 2d 585 (Fla. 5th DCA 1994), <u>juris. accepted</u> , case no. 84,758	2-3, 7
<u>Simmons v. State,</u> 611 So. 2d 1250 (Fla. 2d DCA 1992)	18, 19, 20, 22
<u>State v. Ginebra,</u> 511 So. 2d 960 (Fla. 1987)	17-18, 19, 20, 21
<u>State v. Green,</u> 421 So. 2d 508 (Fla. 1982)	21

<u>State v. Will,</u>	
645 So. 2d 91 (Fla. 3d DCA 1994)	17, 19, 21, 25
<u>Suarez v. State,</u>	
616 So. 2d 1067 (Fla. 3d DCA 1993)	11
<u>Thompson v. State,</u>	
638 So. 2d 116 (Fla. 5th DCA 1994)	
<u>review pending</u> , case no. 83,951	4-27 <i>passim</i>
<u>Wait v. Singletary,</u>	
632 So. 2d 192 (Fla. 3d DCA 1994)	16
<u>Williams v. State,</u>	
316 So. 2d 267 (Fla. 1975)	15, 16
<u>Wilson v. State,</u>	
645 So. 2d 1042 (Fla. 4th DCA 1994)	25
<u>Wright v. State,</u>	
583 So. 2d 399 (Fla. 1st DCA 1991)	19
<u>Zambuto v. State,</u>	
413 So. 2d 461 (Fla. 4th DCA 1982)	18, 19

OTHER AUTHORITIES:

Section 775.084, Fla. Stat. (1991)	7, 22
Section 775.084(3)(b), Fla. Stat. (1991)	7, 8, 12
Section 775.084(4)(e), Fla. Stat. (1991)	22
Section 944.275(4)(b), Fla. Stat. (1991)	22
Section 944.277(1), Fla. Stat. (1991)	22
Section 944.277(1)(a), (b), (f), (h), (i), and (j), Fla. Stat. (1991)	22-23
Section 944.277(1)(c)-(e), Fla. Stat. (1991)	22
Section 944.277(1)(g), Fla. Stat. (1991)	22
Section 947.146(4), Fla. Stat. (1991)	22
Section 947.146(4)(a), (b), (f), (h), and (i), Fla. Stat. (1991)	23
Section 947.146(4)(c)-(e), Fla. Stat. (1991)	22
Section 947.146(4)(g), Fla. Stat. (1991)	22
Ch. 93-406, Laws of Fla.	15, 22
Fla. R. Crim. P. 3.172(c)	19, 24, 25
Fla. R. Crim. P. 3.172(c)(1)	15, 17, 18
Fla. R. Crim. P. 3.172(c)(8)	19, 24
Op. Att'y. Gen. Fla. 92-96 (1992)	15
2 R. LaFave & Jerold H. Israel, <u>Criminal Procedure</u> section 20.4 (1984)	17

STATEMENT OF THE CASE AND FACTS

Respondent was charged by information with one count of robbery (R 17). Respondent plead guilty as charged (R 2, 20). The written plea agreement contained the following:

4. I have read the information or indictment in this case and I understand the charge(s) to which I enter my plea(s). My attorney has explained to me the total maximum penalties for the charge(s) and as a result I understand the following:

* * *

c. That a hearing may hereafter be set and conducted in this case to determine if I qualify to be classified as a Habitual Felony Offender or a Violent Habitual Felony Offender, and:

(1) That should I be determined by the Judge to be a Violent Habitual Felony Offender, and should the judge sentence me as such, I could receive up to a maximum sentence of 30 years imprisonment and a mandatory minimum of 10 years imprisonment and that as to any habitual offender sentence I would not be entitled to receive any basic gain time.

(2) That should I be determined by the Judge to be a Non-Violent Habitual Felony Offender, and should the judge sentence me as such, I could receive up to a maximum sentence of 30 years imprisonment and a mandatory minimum of 0 years imprisonment and that as to any habitual offender sentence I would not be entitled to receive any basic gain time.

* * *

(R 20) (Appendix A). The plea agreement also set forth that respondent was aware of all of the provisions and representations of the plea agreement, that he discussed the plea agreement with his attorney and that he fully understood it (R 21). Respondent signed the written plea agreement (R 2, 21).

During the plea hearing held on July 30, 1993, respondent stated that he had thoroughly read the plea agreement (R 2-3). Respondent also stated he had an adequate opportunity to ask questions of his attorney about the plea agreement (R 3). Respondent understood the agreement and had no questions about it (R 3). Respondent stipulated to a factual basis based on the facts contained in the affidavits (R 3-4, 20). The trial judge found respondent's plea was freely, voluntarily, knowingly and intelligently made and the plea was accepted (R 4). The plea agreement was filed on July 30, 1993 (R 20).

On August 18, 1993, the trial judge filed notice and order for a separate proceeding to determine if respondent qualified as a habitual felony offender (R 22-23). On August 23, 1993, respondent filed a motion to strike the court's notice of habitual offender sanctions (R 24-25).

On September 15, 1993, the sentencing hearing was held (R 6-14). The motion to strike was denied (R 8, 28). Respondent had no objection to the PSI or the scoresheet (R 8). The trial judge found, based upon respondent's prior convictions, that respondent qualified as a habitual offender (R 9, 35-36). Respondent was adjudicated guilty (R 11). Respondent was sentenced to 8 years incarceration followed by 5 years probation (R 11, 29-33).

Respondent appealed his conviction and sentence to the Fifth District Court of Appeal (R 37). On November 18, 1994, the Fifth District vacated respondent's sentence and remanded pursuant to the Fifth District's opinion in Santoro v. State, 644 So. 2d 585 (Fla.

5th DCA 1994), juris. accepted, case no. 84,758. Horton v. State, 644 So. 2d 1036 (Fla. 5th DCA 1994) (Appendix B). In Santoro, supra, the Fifth District found that the acknowledgement contained in the plea agreement of the penalties that the defendant could receive if habitualized was insufficient to constitute notice of intent to habitualize. The acknowledgement found to be lacking in Santoro is the same as that found in respondent's plea agreement (R 20).

Petitioner filed a notice to invoke jurisdiction. Jurisdictional briefs were filed by both petitioner and respondent. On March 27, 1995, this court accepted jurisdiction.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

The Fifth District erred in determining that the plea agreement in this case was insufficient to give respondent notice that he may be sentenced as a habitual offender. Respondent read, understood, signed and discussed the plea agreement with his attorney. The plea agreement set forth that respondent could be habitualized, the maximum sentence he faced and that he would not be entitled to gain time. Petitioner asserts this was sufficient notice. It is both improper and impossible to inform a defendant that he "will" be habitualized; the most that may be said is a defendant may or possibly could be habitualized. If the plea agreement was insufficient notice, any error in failing to give respondent separate written notice was harmless as respondent had actual notice that he may be habitualized. The decision in this case should be quashed, respondent's conviction and sentence reinstated and the decision in Thompson, infra, overruled.

Furthermore, this court should re-examine and clarify its decision in Ashley, infra. The decision in this case and in Thompson, infra, crystallizes the problems inherent in the practical application of this court's decision in Ashley, infra. Thompson, infra, and the other cases cited herein indicate that Ashley, infra, raised more questions than it answered. Ashley, infra, should be clarified to reflect that notice which states only the possibility that a defendant may be habitualized is sufficient. Also, the affect of gain time or early release on a defendant's sentence is a collateral consequence, not a direct consequence.

Ashley, infra, should be clarified to reflect that a trial judge need only inform a defendant of the maximum possible sentence which may be imposed, not that he or she may serve more or less of that sentence depending upon which sentencing scheme the defendant is sentenced under. Finally, Ashley should be clarified as to whether or not an objection is required to preserve the issue for appellate review where some form of notice was given and the defendant later claims the notice was insufficient.

ARGUMENT

POINT ON APPEAL

THE FIFTH DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL ERRED IN FINDING THAT RESPONDENT HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN NOTICE OF THE INTENT TO HABITUALIZE PRIOR TO RESPONDENT ENTERING HIS PLEA; THE PLEA FORM RESPONDENT SIGNED, READ AND UNDERSTOOD GAVE RESPONDENT SUFFICIENT NOTICE, AS IT SET FORTH THE MAXIMUM SENTENCE THAT COULD BE IMPOSED IF RESPONDENT WAS HABITUALIZED AND THAT RESPONDENT WOULD NOT BE ENTITLED TO BASIC GAIN TIME; DUE TO THE CONFUSION CREATED BY THIS COURT'S DECISION IN ASHLEY, INFRA, THIS COURT SHOULD REVISIT AND CLARIFY ASHLEY.

In the instant case, a separate written notice of intent to habitualize was not filed prior to the entry of respondent's plea. However, unlike in Ashley v. State, 614 So. 2d 486 (Fla. 1993), the failure to file a separate written notice is not fatal in this case. The plea agreement which respondent read, understood and signed set forth the following:

4. I have read the information or indictment in this case and I understand the charge(s) to which I enter my plea(s). My attorney has explained to me the total maximum penalties for the charge(s) and as a result I understand the following:

* * *

c. That a hearing may hereafter be set and conducted in this case to determine if I qualify to be classified as a Habitual Felony Offender or a Violent Habitual Felony Offender, and :

(1) That should I be determined by the Judge to be a Violent Habitual Felony Offender, and should the judge sentence me as such, I could receive up to a maximum sentence of 30 years imprisonment and a mandatory minimum of 10 years imprisonment and that as to any habitual offender sentence I would not be entitled to receive any basic gain time.

(2) That should I be determined by the Judge to be a Non-Violent Habitual Felony Offender, and should the judge sentence me as such, I could receive up to a maximum sentence of 30 years imprisonment and a mandatory minimum of 0 years imprisonment and that as to any habitual offender sentence I would not be entitled to receive any basic gain time.

* * *

(R 20) (Appendix A). Petitioner asserts that the written plea agreement complied with section 775.084(3)(b), Fla. Stat. (1991) and this court's decision in Ashley, supra.

Petitioner asserts that the Fifth District's decisions in this case and in Santoro, supra, and Thompson v. State, 638 So. 2d 116 (Fla. 5th DCA 1994), are incorrect. In Thompson and Santoro, the Fifth District held that a plea agreement which contained the identical language set forth above was insufficient notice as required by section 775.084 and Ashley, supra. In Thompson, the Fifth district overruled their prior decision in Oglesby v. State, 627 So. 2d 585 (Fla. 5th DCA 1993), rev. denied, Case no. 82, 987 (Fla. March 11, 1994),¹ wherein they held that the identical language in a plea agreement satisfied Ashley and that the harmless error analysis of Massey v. State, 609 So. 2d 598 (Fla. 1992), applied.² Petitioner asserts that the Fifth District not only elevated form over substance in reaching the decision it did in

¹(Appendix C)

²Oglesby sought review by this court based upon conflict with Ashley. This court denied review. Petitioner asserts that by declining to accept jurisdiction this court approved the decision in Oglesby.

Thompson, but also ignored this court's decision in Massey v. State, 609 So. 2d 598 (Fla. 1992). The majority in Thompson likewise ignored the sound and logical reasoning of Judge Goshorn's dissent. Petitioner further arrests that the decision in Thompson, supra, not only expands the decision in Ashley, but crystallizes the problems inherent in the practical application of Ashley.

Section 775.084(3)(b) provides:

Written notice shall be served on the defendant and his attorney a sufficient time prior to the entry of a plea or prior to the imposition of sentence so as to allow the preparation of a submission on behalf of the defendant.

The purpose of the notice requirement is to prevent a defendant from being surprised at sentencing and to allow the defendant and/or the defendant's attorney the opportunity to prepare for the hearing. Massey, at 600; see also Roberts v. State, 559 So. 2d 289, 291 (Fla. 5th DCA 1990). Section 775.084(3)(b) does not specify the form the written notice must take or the words the notice must or must not contain.

The Fifth District has elevated form to a new height over substance in Thompson. In finding the written plea agreement to be insufficient to give the defendant notice of habitual offender sentencing, petitioner asserts that the Fifth District found that the procedural aspect or the actual written notice was of paramount importance to the substantive purpose, preparation of a submission in the defendant's behalf. Petitioner asserts that such a finding places the importance on the wrong portion of section 775.084(3)(b).

In this case, the plea agreement stated that a hearing may be set to determine if respondent qualified as a habitual felony or violent felony offender (R 20) (Appendix A). The plea agreement set forth the maximum sentences respondent was facing if found to be a habitual offender. At neither the plea nor the sentencing hearing did petitioner argue, object or complain that he did not know that he was facing a possible sentence as a habitual offender (R 1-5, 6-14). Petitioner acknowledges that this court has held that such an objection is not necessary for the preservation of the issue for appellate review where no notice has been given. Ashley, at 490. Petitioner asserts that an objection was necessary in this case, as respondent was given notice.³ However, whether an objection was required or not, petitioner asserts that the lack of such an objection in this case is telling and supports petitioner's claim that respondent had knowledge of possible habitual offender sentencing. The written plea agreement was sufficient written notice.

Should this court determine that the plea agreement was

³In Ashley, at 490, this court held that an objection to lack of notice was not required to preserve the issue for appellate review as it is a purely legal sentencing issue. Petitioner asserts that the only time an objection would not be required is in an Ashley-type situation, i.e., the defendant pled with absolutely no notice or knowledge that he or she may be habitualized. Petitioner asserts that in cases such as the instant one, where a defendant has both knowledge and notice that he may be habitualized an objection to the form of the notice is required. Here, respondent was given notice in the plea agreement. There was no objection to the form of the notice. Petitioner asserts that respondent's failure to object waived the issue for appellate review. This court should clarify Ashley so that it is clear under what circumstances an objection is required and when one is not.

insufficient written notice, respondent had actual notice and any failure to provide separate written notice was harmless in this case pursuant to Massey, supra. The Fifth District in Oglesby found that Massey applied to such situations. The Fifth District ignored Massey in overruling Oglesby. See Thompson, supra. Petitioner asserts that it was error for the Fifth District to ignore Massey, as Massey is applicable to the instant case.

In Massey, at 598-599, Massey had actual knowledge that he may be sentenced as a habitual felony offender although he was never served with written notice. This court found any error was harmless. Id. at 600. In the instant case, the plea agreement informed respondent that he could be sentenced as a habitual felony offender and gave respondent and his attorney an opportunity to prepare for the hearing. Respondent went over the agreement with his lawyer prior to entering his plea, understood the agreement and signed the agreement (R 2-3, 20-21).

Petitioner asserts that the purpose of the written notice requirement was accomplished in this case, as respondent had actual notice that he could be facing a habitual offender sentence and what that maximum sentence was. Respondent was given an opportunity to prepare for the hearing. Respondent said nothing as to whether he qualified as a habitual felony offender. "It is inconceivable that [respondent] was prejudiced by not having received the written notice [prior to the entry of his plea]." Massey, at 600. The failure to provide written notice was harmless in this case. Massey, supra; Lewis v. State, 636 So. 2d 154 (Fla.

1st DCA 1994); Mansfield v. State, 618 So. 2d 1385 (Fla. 2d DCA 1993); see also Lucas v. State, 630 So. 2d 597 (Fla. 1st DCA 1993) (any error in failing to determine that predicate offense had not been pardoned or set aside was harmless); Critton v. State, 619 So. 2d 495 (Fla. 1st DCA 1993) (same); Green v. State, 623 So. 2d 1237 (Fla. 4th DCA 1993) (any error in habitualization was harmless); Suarez v. State, 616 So. 2d 1067 (Fla. 3d DCA 1993) (any error in failing to make required statutory findings was harmless where defendant accepted habitual offender sentence and waived right to hearing); Bonaventure v. State, 637 So. 2d 55 (Fla. 5th DCA 1994) (where evidence unrebutted, error in failing to make specific findings in support of habitual offender sentence was harmless); Pompa v. State, 635 So. 2d 114 (Fla. 5th DCA 1994) (same).

In Thompson and in this case, the Fifth District held that the acknowledgement in the written plea agreement did not comply with Ashley because the plea agreement said that respondent may be sentenced as a habitual offender rather than respondent would be sentenced as a habitual offender. Petitioner asserts that this court did not hold in Ashley that a defendant must be told unequivocally that he would be sentenced as a habitual offender prior to entering his plea, only that he may or possibly could be facing such a sentence. The Fifth District played a game of semantics which did not need to and should not have been played.

In Ashley, at 480, this court held that

in order for a defendant to be habitualized following a guilty or nolo plea, the following must take place prior to acceptance of the plea: 1) The defendant must be given written

notice of intent to habitualize, and 2) the court must confirm that the defendant is personally aware of the possibility and reasonable consequences of habitualization. (Footnote omitted; emphasis added).

In reaching this holding, this court set forth the following:

Because habitual offender maximums clearly constitute the "maximum possible penalty provided by law"--exceeding both the guidelines and standard statutory maximums--and because habitual offender sentences are imposed in a significant number of cases, our ruling in *Williams* [v. State, 316 So. 2d 267 (Fla. 1975),] and the plain language of [Florida Rule of Criminal Procedure] 3.172 require that before a court may accept a guilty or nolo plea from an eligible defendant it must ascertain that the defendant is aware of the possibility and reasonable consequences of habitualization. To state the obvious, in order for the plea to be "knowing," i.e., in order for the defendant to understand the reasonable consequences of his or her plea, the defendant must "know" beforehand that his or her potential sentence may be many times greater what it ordinarily would have been under the guidelines . . .

Ashley, at 489 (emphasis added).

There is nothing in Ashley to indicate that this court intended that a defendant be told prior to entering his plea that he would, as the Fifth District held, be sentenced as a habitual felony offender. Furthermore, section 775.084(3)(b) does not specify the form the written notice must take or the words it must or must not contain. According to Ashley, the defendant must only know of the possibility that such sentencing may occur. The Fifth District ignored the plain language of Ashley.

The use of the word "may" in the plea agreement told respondent of the possibility that he could be sentenced as a

habitual felony offender. It would be not only improper, but impossible to tell a defendant that he will be sentenced as a habitual offender, as opposed to telling the defendant he or she may be habitualized. While a defendant may have the requisite convictions, the state may be unable to document those convictions. If the state is unable to offer certified judgements and sentences and the defendant does not stipulate to his prior record, the defendant will not be found to be a habitual offender. In such a case, having told the defendant that he would be habitualized was error and may be grounds for the defendant to withdraw his plea. If part of the plea agreement was that the defendant would be sentenced as a habitual offender and the defendant was not so sentenced, the state would also have grounds for invalidating the plea agreement. The purpose of the notice is not to inform the defendant that he or she will be habitualized, but rather that he or she may be habitualized.

Furthermore, as pointed out by the dissent of Judge Goshorn in Thompson, at 118, "[t]here are consequences, both legal and practical" to the state or the trial judge advising a defendant that he will be habitualized.

Requiring the court to announce to a defendant, *before* accepting his or her plea, that the court will (as opposed to may) habitualize requires the court to make its decision prior to receipt and review of a presentence investigation, section 921.231, Fla. Stat. (1993), prior to a sentencing hearing and prior to review of any victim impact, section 921.143, Fla. Stat. (1993), all of which is contrary to the requirements of a sentencing hearing and is sure to raise additional legal challenges and charges that

habitualization is being imposed indiscriminately. Likewise, to require the state to announce that it will (as opposed to may) attempt to habitualize will provide further fodder to the voices challenging the state's use of the habitual offender statutes. In this regard, I note that often at or immediately before a plea, the trial court, the state and indeed the defendant, are unaware of the defendant's exact criminal history. Accordingly, the court can only announce that, if the defendant's history so justifies, the court may consider or the state may seek to habitualize the defendant.

Thompson, at 118-119. Petitioner respectfully requests this court clarify its decision in Ashley to reflect that all that is required for the notice requirement to be met is that the defendant be aware that he or she may or possibly could be sentenced as a habitual felony or violent felony offender. As set forth above by petitioner and Judge Goshorn, this court could not have intended in Ashley that a defendant be told he would be sentenced as a habitual offender, as such would clearly be improper.

Another obvious problem with this court's decision in Ashley is its determination that the affect of gain time or early release on a defendant's sentence is a direct consequence of a plea. While petitioner agrees that a defendant should be told prior to entering a plea that he or she may be habitualized which means the possibility of an enhanced sentenced being imposed, petitioner respectfully submits that this court was in error when it also determined in Ashley that a defendant should be told that "habitualization may affect the possibility of early release through certain programs, . . ." Ashley, at 490 n.8. This court appears to have confused the amount of time a defendant may

actually serve in jail with the maximum sentence which may be imposed upon a defendant. While a defendant should be aware of the maximum penalty he faces, whether as a habitual offender or not, petitioner asserts that how much of that sentence the defendant may actually serve due to the various types of gain time or early release is irrelevant.

In deciding Ashley, this court relied on Boykin v. Alabama, 395 U.S. 238, 242, 89 S. Ct. 1709 (1969); Williams v. State, 316 So. 2d 267 (Fla. 1975); Black v. State, 599 So. 2d 1380 (Fla. 1st DCA 1992); Florida Rule of Criminal Procedure 3.172(c)(1); and Professor LaFave. As will be set forth below, not one of these five authorities holds that a defendant should be told that he or she will not receive gain time or will not be entitled to some form of early release if habitualized.

In Boykin, supra, the United States Supreme Court addressed the acceptance of a guilty plea without an affirmative showing that the plea was intelligent and voluntary. Nowhere in Boykin did the court hold that in order for a plea to be knowing the defendant must know that under certain sentencing schemes he or she may not be entitled to early release and may have to serve the entire sentence imposed. Petitioner asserts that the receiving of gain time or some other form of early release is not a constitutional right. Gain time and early release programs are a creation of the state legislature and can be changed or taken away at anytime by the legislature. See generally Ch. 93-406, Laws of Fla. (repealing section 944.277); Op. Att'y. Gen. 92-96 (1992); Dugger v. Grant,

610 So. 2d 428 (Fla. 1992); Waite v. Singletary, 632 So. 2d 192 (Fla. 3d DCA 1994). It is impossible for anyone to accurately predict how future changes will affect a particular defendant's sentence.

In Ashley, at 488, this court quoted from Williams, supra. The Williams decision set forth the three essential requirements for taking a guilty plea. Id. at 271. The second requirement is that the "defendant must understand the nature of the charge and the consequences of his [or her] plea. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that he [or she] knows . . . what maximum penalty may be imposed for the offense with which he [or she] is charged." Id.; see also Hinman v. United States, 730 F.2d 649 (11th Cir. 1984) (district court need only advise a defendant as to the charges, the mandatory minimum penalty and the maximum possible sentence). No where in Williams did this court hold that a consequence of a plea included any reference to whether a defendant would or would not receive gain time or be entitled to some other early release program. The consequence is the maximum sentence which may be imposed, NOT the amount of gain time or other form of early release a defendant will or will not receive.

In order for a plea to be knowing, this court in Ashley, at 489, stated that the defendant must know the maximum possible sentence "and that he or she will have to serve more of it." This court then noted that this view was endorsed by the First District's decision in Black, supra, and Professor LaFave. In quoting from the Black decision, this court quoted from Judge

Zehmer's special concurrence. Judge Zehmer did not state that a defendant must be told that he or she will not receive the same amount of gain time if habitualized. While Judge Zehmer stated that the trial judge failed to determine if Black understood the significance of being sentenced as a career criminal, petitioner asserts that the "significance" referred to is not that Black would receive less gain time, but that Black was facing a maximum sentence that was double what the plea agreement indicated. Neither the majority nor the concurrence in Black hold that a defendant must be told he or she will not receive the same amount of gain time as someone who was not habitualized.

Furthermore, Professor LaFave likewise does not support this court's determination that a defendant should be told that as a habitual offender he or she will serve more of his or her sentence. Professor LaFave's only endorsement is that a defendant should be told of the maximum possible penalty that could be imposed. Professor LaFave makes no mention that a defendant should be told he or she may have to serve more of a sentence depending upon under which sentencing scheme the defendant is sentenced. See 2 Wayne R. LaFave & Jerold H. Israel, Criminal Procedure section 20.4 (1984).

Finally, petitioner asserts that rule 3.172(c)(1) does not require that a defendant be told that if habitualized he will serve a greater portion of his sentence. See State v. Will, 645 So. 2d 91, 95 (Fla. 3d DCA 1994). This court has previously held that rule 3.172(c) "sets forth the required areas of inquiry when the trial court accepts a plea." Id.; State v. Ginebra, 511 So. 2d 960

(Fla. 1987). Rule 3.172(c)(1) requires only that a defendant understand "the nature of the charge to which the plea is offered, the mandatory minimum penalty provided by law, if any, and the maximum possible penalty provided by law . . ." Petitioner asserts that the maximum possible penalty provided by law does not mean the maximum possible sentence less gain time or some other form of early release. The maximum possible penalty provided by law for a third degree felony is five years unless a habitual offender sentence is to be imposed. The maximum possible penalty then doubles and becomes ten years. Irrespective of gain time or early release, the maximum possible time a defendant may be incarcerated for a third degree felony is either 5 years or 10 years as a habitual felony offender.⁴ As the Second District stated in Simmons v. State, 611 So. 2d 1250, 1252 (Fla. 2d DCA 1992):

. . . It is one thing, however, to insist that a defendant be warned his sentence may be extended, and another to require an additional warning that a determinate sentence will not later be shortened.

While the trial judge is required to advise a defendant of the maximum possible penalty provided by law which he or she is facing, the trial judge is not required to advise the defendant of every collateral consequence which may follow a guilty or no contest plea. Zambuto v. State, 413 So. 2d 461 (Fla. 4th DCA 1982); Simmons, at 1252; Polk v. State, 405 So. 2d 758 (Fla. 3d DCA 1981); Blackshear v. State, 455 So. 2d 555 (Fla. 1st DCA 1984); see also

⁴In a perfect world, a defendant would serve the sentence imposed, day for day. However, we do not live in a perfect world and convicted criminals reap this benefit.

Will, at 94 (quoting Ginebra, at 960-961 (emphasis added): "It is clear under both state and federal decisions that *the trial court judge is under no duty to inform a defendant of the collateral consequences of his guilty plea.*"; Hinman, supra (court not required to explain special parole and its consequences).

. . . "The distinction between 'direct' and 'collateral' consequences of a plea, while sometimes shaded in the relevant decisions, turns on whether the result represents a definite, immediate and largely automatic effect on the range of the defendant's punishment."

Zambuto, at 462 (citation omitted). According to Ginebra, at 961,⁵ the trial judge's obligation to ensure that a defendant understands the direct consequences of his or her plea encompasses "only those consequences . . . which the trial court can impose." The other consequences of which a defendant must be informed are contained in rule 3.172(c).

Prior to Ashley, the loss of or accumulation of gain time was considered to be a collateral consequence. Simmons, at 1252-1253; Horton v. State, 646 So. 2d 253 (Fla. 1st DCA 1994); Will, supra; Levens v. State, 598 So. 2d 120 (Fla. 1st DCA 1992); Wright v. State, 583 So. 2d 399 (Fla. 1st DCA 1991); Blackshear supra; Ladner v. Henderson, 438 F.2d 638 (5th Cir. 1971). Also, when parole was previously available there was no requirement that a defendant be warned about parole eligibility, because parole was viewed as a

⁵Ginebra was superseded by the amendment to rule 3.172(c)(8). While the holding of Ginebra, deportation is a collateral consequence, has been superseded, petitioner asserts that Ginebra remains good law.

matter of legislative and executive grace; not a direct consequence of a plea. Simmons, at 1253; see also Hinman, supra (court not required to explain special parole and its consequences); Morales-Guarjardo v. United States, 440 F.2d 775 (5th Cir. 1971) (fact that trial judge failed to advise defendant of his ineligibility for parole does not invalidate guilty plea). Likewise, there was no duty to warn those who opted for a guidelines sentence that they were ineligible for parole under the guidelines. Id.; Glover v. State, 474 So. 2d 886 (Fla. 1st DCA 1985).⁶ This court's language in Ashley that the defendant should be told "the fact that habitualization may affect the possibility of early release through certain programs" is wholly inconsistent with this court's decision in Ginebra and the above cited cases.

As previously stated, gain time and other early release programs are established by the legislature. The trial judge has no control over how much gain time a defendant may or may not receive. The trial judge also has no control over whether a defendant qualifies for some form of early release. The only situation which petitioner can envision in which the trial judge has some form of control is when the trial judge retains

⁶It appears that this court has determined, post-Ashley, that the earning of provisional credits is a collateral consequence, as provisional credits could not "possibly be a factor at sentencing or in deciding to enter a plea bargain." Griffin v. Singletary, 638 So. 2d 500, 501 (Fla. 1994); see also Dugger v. Roderick, 584 So. 2d 2 (Fla. 1991). The Eleventh Circuit has likewise found Florida's control release is comparable to provisional credits, as "the purpose of control release is to address the administrative problem of prison overcrowding, not to confer a benefit on the prison population." Hock v. Singletary, 8 Fla. L. Weekly Fed. C943, C944 (11th Cir. January 9, 1995).

jurisdiction. The retention of jurisdiction is a consequence which the trial judge can impose and is a direct consequence of a plea. State v. Green, 421 So. 2d 508 (Fla. 1982). However, petitioner disagrees with and questions this court's logic as to why retaining jurisdiction is a direct consequence of a plea. Petitioner asserts that retaining jurisdiction is a direct consequence because the trial judge imposes such a restriction, not because a defendant may have to serve more of the sentence imposed.

As stated above, the only consequence of the sentence which is a direct consequence is the maximum possible sentence which may be imposed by law. Petitioner asserts that "[l]oss of basic gain time is not a consequence which the trial court imposes. Accordingly, loss of eligibility for basic gain time is a collateral consequence of a plea." Will, at 95.

It should be pointed out to this court that Ginebra was not cited in Ashley. It is not at all clear as to whether Ginebra was given any consideration in the writing of the Ashley opinion. The lack of reference to Ginebra gives rise to but one conclusion: "the primary consideration in Ashley was the state's complete failure to advise the defendant of its intent to seek habitual offender sentencing prior to the entry of the guilty." Horton, at 256.

In determining that a direct consequence of a plea is that "habitualization may affect the possibility of early release through certain programs . . .", this court went beyond the issue raised in Ashley. It is not clear in Ashley whether this court

intended that failure to so inform a defendant requires an automatic or per se reversal. Petitioner asserts that the failure to so inform a defendant does not render his or her plea involuntary and does not result in an automatic reversal. Informing the defendant of a collateral matter is aspirational at best. See Horton, at 256; Simmons, at 1253.

Section 775.084(4)(e) provides that a habitual offender sentence is not subject to the sentencing guidelines, that a defendant sentenced as a habitual offender shall not get the benefit of chapter 947, and shall not be eligible for gain time with the exception of up to 20 days incentive gain time as provided for in section 944.275(4)(b). Sections 944.277(1)(g)⁷ and 947.146(4)(g) specifically set forth that a person sentenced or who has previously been sentenced under section 775.084 is not entitled to provisional credits or control release. Those sections also set forth that persons who have been convicted or previously convicted of committing or attempting to commit sexual battery; or assault, aggravated assault, battery, or aggravated battery and a sex act was attempted or completed; or kidnapping, burglary or murder and the offense was committed with the intent to commit sexual battery are not entitled to provisional credits or control release. Sections 944.277(1)(c)-(e) and 947.146(4)(c)-(e), Fla. Stat. (1991). Sections 944.277(1) and 947.146(4) also set forth additional circumstances under which a defendant is not entitled to control release or provisional credits. See section 944.277(1)(a),

⁷Repealed by Chapter 93-406, Laws of Fla.

(b), (f), (h), (i), and (j), Fla. Stat. (1991); section 947.146(4)(a), (b), (f), (h), and (i), Fla. Stat. (1991).

If Ashley in fact did create a per se rule of reversal, "it would make no sense to limit its application to habitual offender cases." Horton, at 256 n.2. It would appear that not only should those who may qualify as a habitual offender be told "that habitualization may affect the possibility of early release through certain programs," but those who have previously been habitualized if not presently habitualized, those who have been or previously been convicted of the enumerated crimes and those who received mandatory minimum penalties should also be warned that their prior and/or current convictions "may affect the possibility of early release through certain programs."

Taking Ashley to its literal and logical conclusion, it would appear to require that every person charged with a crime in order to make a "knowing" decision should be told, whether he chooses to plead or go to trial, of the affect of gain time or early release on any and all sentences that defendant may possibly face. Although it would appear that this burden would fall primarily on defense counsel, the burden would likewise fall on the prosecutor and the trial judge. See Ashley, at 490 n.8; Koenig v. State, 597 So. 2d 256, 258 (Fla. 1992). Prior to a plea or a guilty verdict after trial, it is doubtful that either the prosecutor or the trial judge would be in a position to inform a defendant on the possible sentences he faces and the affect of gain time or early release, if any, on those sentences. However, it appears under Ashley, the

failure to so inform any defendant, whether pleading or going to trial, would give rise to at the least a claim of ineffective assistance of counsel. Such a claim could result in not only the withdrawal of a plea, but also a new trial. Surely this could not have been this court's intent.

If this court did intend for Ashley to establish a per se rule, petitioner asserts that there should not be a special rule for habitual offenders, but all convicted felons which fall within the exceptions should be treated alike. A consequence of a plea should not be collateral in some cases and direct in other cases; it should either be direct or collateral to all cases. Petitioner asserts, as stated above, that the consequence of early release is purely collateral and should be treated as such with all defendants; the direct consequence is the maximum amount of incarceration which may be imposed, not that the defendant may serve more time than a dissimilarly situated defendant.

Should this court determine that gain time or early release is a direct consequence of a plea petitioner asserts that rule 3.172(c) should be amended to reflect all defendant's should be warned that their previous and current convictions "may affect the possibility of early release through certain programs." The determination of early release consequences by this court to be a direct consequence should be treated as this court treated the determination that deportation was a direct consequence, amend the rule. See Fla. R. Crim. P. 3.172(c)(8).

Petitioner strongly asserts that any early release is a

collateral consequence of a plea and rule 3.172(c) does not need to be amended. However, if this court has in fact determined that the affect of early release on a sentence is a direct consequence, those facing habitual offender sentencing should not be treated specially. All defendants should be treated alike and the rule should be amended.

As is apparent from the decision in the instant case, as well as the decisions in Thompson, Horton and Will, this court's Ashley decision has raised as many questions as it answered. See also Wilson v. State, 645 So. 2d 1042 (Fla. 4th DCA 1994); Heatley v. State, 636 So. 2d 153 (Fla. 1st DCA 1994). The Ashley decision should be clarified to reflect that notice as was given in this case and notice which reflects only the possibility that a defendant may be habitualized is sufficient, thereby addressing the concerns of Judge Goshorn's dissent. Petitioner also requests this court clarify Ashley as to whether this court intended gain time or early release as a direct consequence of a plea. Petitioner again asserts that the affect of gain time and/or early release programs on a defendant's sentence are not direct consequences of a plea. It is impossible for the defense attorney, trial judge or prosecutor to accurately predict how much of a particular sentence a defendant will in fact serve. The direct consequence is the maximum sentence which may be imposed upon a defendant, not the amount of time a defendant will actually serve of the sentence imposed. Petitioner also requests this court clarify Ashley as to whether an objection to the form of notice is required in order to

preserve the issue for appellate review as set forth in footnote 2 of the instant brief.

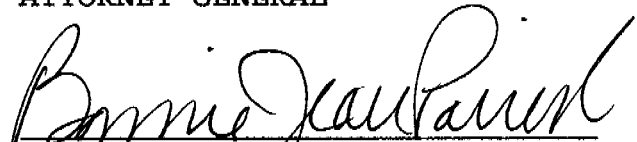
Finally, should this court determine that the affect of habitualization on gain time and early release is a direct consequence of a plea, respondent was aware of this consequence at the time he entered his plea. The plea agreement specifically set forth that respondent would not receive any basic gain time if he was sentenced as a habitual offender (R 20) (Appendix A). This was sufficient to inform respondent that he would be serving more of his sentence. While petitioner requests this court clarify the Ashley decision, irrespective of that request, the written plea agreement in this case was sufficient notice and established that respondent's plea was knowing. If the written plea agreement was insufficient any error was harmless, as respondent had actual notice. The decision in this case should be reversed and the Thompson decision should be overruled.

CONCLUSION

Based on the arguments and authorities presented herein, petitioner requests this court quash the decision in the instant case, overrule the decision in Thompson and clarify its decision in Ashley as requested above.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the above and foregoing Merits Brief of Petitioner and Appendix has been furnished by delivery to Nancy Ryan, Assistant Public Defender, 112-A Orange Avenue, Daytona Beach, Florida 32114, this 15th day of April, 1995.



Bonnie Jean Parrish
Of Counsel

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

STATE OF FLORIDA,

Petitioner,

v.

CASE NO. 84,885

RAYMOND HORTON,

Respondent.

_____ /

APPENDIX

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INDEX TO APPENDIX

INSTRUMENTS

Plea Agreement A

Horton v. State,
644 So. 2d 1036 (Fla. 5th DCA 1994) B

Oglesby v. State,
627 So. 2d 585 (Fla. 5th DCA 1993),
rev. denied, Case no. 82, 987
(Fla. March 11, 1994) C