

On May 4, 1989, Charles P. Sotto, 9214-C Hunter Creek Drive, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45242 (phone no. 984-4414), was interviewed at the BRI office, 7420 Jager Court, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45230, by BRI Investigators Leroy D. Federle and Tim Jones. Present during the interview was Carolyn D. Sotto, also known as "Carney," wife of Charles Sotto.

At the outset of the interview, Sotto was advised that this inquiry was being conducted at the request of John Dowd, Special Counsel to the Commissioner of Major League Baseball.

Charles Sotto furnished the following information:

He was born July 31, 1961. He is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati (U.C.), having received a BA degree in Economics from that institution in 1984, and has been employed on a full-time basis as a sales engineer with Broadcast Video, 2055 Reading Road, Suite 120, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202, phone no. 621-8080, since July, 1987. Prior to that employment, he worked six months as a computer salesman at the Abacus Computer Store, one year as the manager of the Lazarus Business Products Store, and seven years as a clerk-orderly at Bethesda North Hospital while attending U.C.

Since 1983, Sotto has operated a side business out of his parents home at 10894 Wengate Lane, Cincinnati, Ohio 45241, known as Creative Environmental Images (CEI). CEI was started as a photography business where Sotto marketed framed photographs to McAlpin's Department stores in the Cincinnati area.

During October, 1985, Sotto came up with an idea to market a framed poster autographed by Pete Rose. The poster was a reproduction of the front page of the Cincinnati Enquirer depicting words to the effect "Hit 4192 - Pete Rose breaks Ty Cobb Record." Sotto bought 4000 of these posters from the Cincinnati Enquirer and cut them down to 14" x 24" size (he still has 2500 left over) for framing.

At the end of October, 1985, Sotto traveled to a baseball card show in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for the purpose of having Pete Rose sign some of the posters. He knew Rose was appearing at the show from reading a promotional ad in the Sports Collectors Digest. At the show, Sotto purchased 200 tickets at \$6.00, which meant he was eligible to obtain 200 autographs.

Sotto approached Rose with his posters and Rose signed 200 of them. Sotto mentioned to Rose that he also was from

Cincinnati, and asked Rose how he could arrange to have him sign more of the posters. Rose told Sotto he could catch him at the next show in Kansas City.

At the end of November, 1985, Sotto traveled to Kansas City, mainly for the purpose of having Rose autograph more posters. Sotto believed this show was put on by Renata Gallasso. He met Bill Hungash and Mike Bertolini for the first time at this show. The show was not a success due to a snowstorm that caused bad driving conditions. At the show, Bertolini told Sotto he could get the posters signed for him in Cincinnati, instead of his having to travel to the shows to get Rose to sign them.

The latter part of January, 1986, Sotto phoned Bertolini in New York City advising Bertolini that he (Sotto) needed to have more posters signed by Rose. Bertolini said he was coming to Cincinnati and would be staying at the Holiday Inn on W. 8th Street. Sotto took the posters and some other items to Bertolini at the Holiday Inn, and later returned to pick up the finished (autographed by Rose) items from Bertolini. Sotto paid Bertolini \$3,000 cash for having the items autographed. (Sotto noted that card show promoters like Bertolini wanted cash and would not accept checks for payments.)

During the 1986 baseball season, Bertolini stayed in Cincinnati most of the time. Sotto stayed in contact with Bertolini as Bertolini became a good source for locating certain memorabilia, and getting pictures autographed due to his connection with Pete Rose.

At the beginning of the 1987 baseball season, Bertolini called Sotto advising Sotto that he had a plan to incorporate and wanted to move to Cincinnati to start the business. Bertolini suggested to Sotto that they put on a big card show in Cincinnati. Sotto found Bertolini's proposition interesting and agreed to do the show.

The show was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Cincinnati on or about July 4, 1987, and lasted for two days. Bertolini lined up the ball players and arranged for the national publicity, while Sotto handled the collections from the dealer tables, hiring of support people (relatives) and the local advertising. Sotto's wife collected admission at the door. Bertolini had some "big bruiser" friends of his come in from New York to assist. All receipts from the show were turned over to Bertolini to be placed in a safe deposit box at the hotel.

Sotto advised that Bertolini was responsible for paying the ball players who appeared at the July 4-5, 1987 show. Sotto wasn't sure how Bertolini paid them, but assumed

they were all paid in cash since Bertolini did not have a check book until the end of that summer. Sotto's wife saw Bertolini pay Eric Davis \$4,000.00 cash for his appearance at the show. Pete Rose was paid \$5,000, Davis-\$4,000, Darrel Strawberry-\$4,000, John Franco-\$4,000, Lee Mizelli-\$1,000, Lenny Dykstra-\$1,000, and Lloyd McClendon-\$350. Sotto could not recall what the gross receipts were for the show, but believed it netted about \$10,000. Sotto received \$1,500 for his part in putting on the show, which was a big disappointment to him, considering the amount of time and effort he put into it.

Sotto said that on the second day of the July 4-5, 1987 card show, Cincinnati baseball players Kal Daniels, Tracy Jones, and Curt Stillwell appeared, and each was paid \$1,000 for their appearance.

The July 4-5, 1987 card show in Cincinnati was the only show that Sotto did with Bertolini. Sotto characterized Bertolini as immature, unorganized and a dreamer. Sotto recalled one occasion where he was in Bertolini's car with Bertolini when Bertolini was stopped by the Cincinnati Police, arrested and had his car impounded for non-payment of parking tickets. Sotto was left stranded on the street and had to call a taxi. Bertolini was living at Lytle Place in Cincinnati at the time with a "prostitute" (Sotto's wife's description) named Tammy Apple.

It was also at the July 4-5, 1987 card show in Cincinnati, where Sotto became better acquainted with Pete Rose. Rose had apparently observed and admired Sotto for putting a lot of effort into trying to make the show a success. Sotto advised the Roses took more than a casual interest in Sotto and his wife after they learned that Sotto's wife was a speech therapist, because Rose's son, Tyler, apparently had some difficulty in this area.

In mid-July, 1987, Sotto attended the National Baseball Card (NBC) Convention in San Francisco. The show was run by one Bob Lee. At this convention, Sotto met Randy Thyberg who had seven tables. Through Bertolini, Sotto was able to share half of one of the seven tables operated by Thyberg. (Thyberg became a good source of autographed material for Sotto). Joe Dimaggio was present, but Pete Rose was not at this show.

During August, 1987, Sotto promoted a small card show at the Florence, Kentucky mall that was sponsored by the mall. Kal Daniels, Tracy Jones and Curt Stillwell appeared and each was paid \$500 for their appearance. Pete Rose was not at this show.

In November, 1987, Sotto contacted Rose asking Rose if he would do a card show in Dayton, Ohio, for one Tony Mendenhall. Rose consented. Sotto received a free table at this show because of his being able to get Rose to appear. Rose appeared on a Sunday and received \$7,500. Johnny Bench appeared on the Saturday before and was paid \$12,000. Sotto advised that Rose's standard appearance fee was \$7,500. Sotto was not aware if Rose and Bench received cash or a check for their appearance at this show.

The next card show was done for one Bob Gable in Atlanta, Georgia, in January, 1988. Sotto received two free tables for arranging Rose's appearance. Rose appeared for his standard fee of \$7,500. Other ball players appearing at this show were: Kal Daniels; Jose Canseco; Rhett Butler, and Joe Niekro.

In April, 1988, Sotto and Paul Janszen jointly put together a card show in Louisville, Kentucky, that turned into a financial disaster. Adding to the confusion was the recent death of Ted Kluzewski. Rose waived his standard fee of \$7,500 and was paid \$2,500 cash. Willie McGee, Tommy Helms and Tony Perez also appeared at this show. McGee was paid \$1,000, while Helms and Perez were each paid \$300. They lost money on McGee in that he did not sign many autographs and left the show early. Sotto estimated that he and Janszen each made about \$1,500 after paying expenses. Shortly after this show Janszen asked Sotto if he could see Sotto's mailing and price lists. Sotto made the lists available to Janszen only to learn later that Janszen was sending out a price list of his own to persons on Sotto's mailing list, thus cutting Sotto out of some business.

At the end of April, 1988, Sotto booked a card show by himself that was held at the Clarion Hotel in Cincinnati. The show flopped, causing Sotto to lose \$1,000 after expenses were paid. Sotto attributed the Reds' poor performance at that time of the year as a causal factor for the show's failure. Ball players who appeared at this show were; Kal Daniels; Terry McGriff; and Jeff Treadway. Sotto paid McGriff \$500 by check, while he paid Daniels and Treadway each \$1,000, half by check and half in cash. He did not obtain receipts from them. Although Sotto continued to maintain an interest in card shows and memorabilia, this was the last card show he was to do as he was tired of all the hassle for the amount of gain he was realizing.

Sotto, in November, 1988, flew to a card show near Danbury, CT, in a private jet with Rose, Arnie Metz, and Sotto's wife. The show was put on by Chris Spiro, who contacted Sotto earlier, to arrange for Rose's appearance. The show was actually held at Wilton H.S. in Wilton, CT, and Rose

was the only ball player to appear. Rose was paid \$7,500 cash for this appearance as he would not accept a check from Spiro since he did not know him. Mike Bertolini accompanied them on their return flight to Cincinnati.

In January, 1989, Sotto flew to a card show in Rochester, New York, in a private jet with Rose, Metz, Sotto's wife and his sister-in-law. The show was sponsored by Alan George, with Sotto arranging for Rose's appearance thru a contact by one Rich Bachrach. Bachrach was referred to Sotto by Bob Gable. This was a one day show with Rose being the only ball player making an appearance. Rose was paid \$7,500 cash since he was not acquainted with George. Their transportation was paid by the sponsor.

Sotto advised that he and his wife never really socialized with the Roses. He considered Rose more of a business acquaintance where he, Sotto, had easy access to Rose, as Rose made available to Sotto his home phone number. Sotto was never invited to Rose's home to meet Rose's friends. Rose was always nice to Sotto and his wife. Rose opened some other doors for Sotto on business contacts that Sotto doubted he would have otherwise been able to do. Sotto has been to Rose's home in Indian Hill on several occasions, but this was usually to pick up or drop off items to be autographed by Rose.

Sotto stated that Rose has never asked to borrow money from him, nor has Sotto ever borrowed money from Rose. Sotto has never been asked by Rose to place a bet for him, nor has Sotto ever been present or heard Rose place a bet.

Sotto has been to the race track on one occasion. That was when he dropped his wife off at the Greater Cincinnati Airport and diverted over to nearby Turfway Park to see the Pete Rose Room. It so happened that Rose, Rose's wife, Paul Janszen, and Janszen's girlfriend were there when Sotto made this visit.

Sotto stated he has never met and did not know Tommy Gioiosa.

Sotto indicated that Randy Thyberg was now handling Rose's appearances at the card shows and other related functions.

Sotto said that he, personally, was no longer involved in the memorabilia business other than trying to get rid of leftover inventory.

Concerning Paul Janszen, Sotto furnished the following additional information:

Sotto first met Janszen toward the end of 1987, when he, Sotto, went to Rose's house to pick up or drop off some baseball material. Through Sotto's continued contacts with Rose, Janszen started showing an interest in Sotto's memorabilia business. (Janszen was aware that Sotto had a bad business experience with Bertolini relative to the show they put on at the Hyatt Regency in July, 1987.) Janszen proposed to Sotto that they do a card show (Janszen and Sotto). Before Sotto accepted Janszen's proposal, he contacted Rose and asked Rose about Janszen. Rose told Sotto that Janszen was a good guy, not like Bertolini. Thereafter, in April, 1988, Sotto and Janszen put on the card show previously mentioned by Sotto in this interview.

It became obvious to Sotto that Janszen was going out of his way being friendly to Sotto. Sotto felt that Janszen was a sly individual, who was attempting to gather all the information he could about the baseball memorabilia business, while trying to position himself as a buffer between Sotto and Rose.

Sotto observed that about January, 1988, something happened between Rose and Janszen, as Janszen stopped appearing at Rose's house. Rose changed his phone number during this time. However, Janszen's girlfriend, Danita, continued bringing thousands of items to Rose's house for Rose to autograph. Janszen never paid Rose anything for autographing the items.

Sotto recalled having several phone conversations with Janszen in April, 1988, about the time of their card show in Louisville. During one of their phone conversations, Janszen told Sotto that he had a meeting with Rose's attorney, Reuven Katz, and that Katz gave Janszen \$10,000. Janszen told Sotto he needed the money to pay his lawyer for some trouble he was in. Sotto treated Janszen's remark about the \$10,000 as of no concern to him (Sotto). Sotto said he didn't know if the \$10,000 was a loan or something that Rose owed Janszen.

During another phone conversation Sotto had with Janszen in April, 1988, Janszen told Sotto he had something going on with the FBI, that he was an informant, and was going to tape Ron Peters. Janszen told Sotto that the FBI asked him if Pete Rose bet on baseball. Sometime between April, 1988 and July, 1988, Janszen told Sotto that Rose bet on other things besides horse racing, like football and basketball. Janszen never mentioned to Sotto that Rose bet on baseball. Janszen did tell Sotto in so many words that he was going to get Rose. Sotto noted that Janszen was upset, apparently because Rose was unresponsive to an appeal by Janszen to help get him (Janszen) out of the mess he was in, when Janszen thought Rose to be a good friend.

Sotto had two tables at the Joe Morgan card show held at the Eastgate Holiday Inn in Cincinnati, on March 21, 1989. The show was sponsored by Aaron Turner of International Sports Marketing, Oakland, California. At the show, Sotto observed Janszen's girlfriend, Danita, deliver 600 photographs for Morgan to sign. Sotto told Turner that Danita was Paul Janszen's girlfriend. Turner asked who Paul Janszen was. He was told that Janszen was the guy who was causing all the problems for Pete Rose. Later, Janszen told Sotto that he was going to tell the IRS about his (Sotto's) business dealings, because of Sotto's conversation with Turner about Janszen.