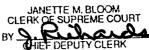
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

ANTHONY M. WRIGHT, Appellant, vs. THE STATE OF NEVADA, Respondent. No. 38688

FILED

MAR 0 5 2004

ORDER OF AFFIRMANCE



This is a proper person appeal from an order of the district court denying a post-conviction petition for a writ of habeas corpus.

We have reviewed the record on appeal and conclude that the factual findings stated in the attached order of the district court are supported by substantial evidence and are not clearly wrong. We further conclude for the reasons stated in the attached order that the district court did not err in denying appellant's petition. Therefore, briefing and oral argument are not warranted in this case. Accordingly, we

ORDER the judgment of the district court AFFIRMED.3

Becker

Becker

J.

Agosti

Gibbons

SUPREME COURT OF NEVADA

¹Riley v. State, 110 Nev. 638, 647, 878 P.2d 175, 180 (1990).

²See <u>Luckett v. Warden</u>, 91 Nev. 681, 682, 541 P.2d 910, 911 (1975).

³Although appellant has not been granted leave to file documents in proper person, we have considered all proper person documents filed or received in this matter in this court, and we conclude that the relief requested is not warranted.

cc: Hon. John S. McGroarty, District Judge
Anthony M. Wright
Attorney General Brian Sandoval/Carson City
Clark County District Attorney David J. Roger
Clark County Clerk

| 1 | ORDR |
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| 2 | STEWART L. BELL DISTRICT ATTORNEY Nevada Bar #000477 700 0CT -2 PM 12: 18 |
| 3 | 200 S. Third Street |
| 4 | Las Vegas, Nevada 89155 (702) 455-4711 Attorney for Plaintiff |
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| 6 | DISTRICT COURT CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA |
| 7 | THE STATE OF NEVADA, |
| 8 | Plaintiff, \{ |
| 9 | -vs- Case No C158310 Dept. No. XVI |
| 10 | ANTHONY WRIGHT, #1524246 |
| .11 | #1324240 { |
| 12 | Defendant. |
| 13 | · · |
| 14 | FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND ORDER |
| 15 | DATE OF HEARING: 9-18-01 |
| 16 | TIME OF HEARING: 8:45 A.M. |
| 17 | THIS CAUSE having come on for hearing before the Honorable JOHN S. |
| 18 | MCGORARTY, District Judge, on the 18th day of September, 2001, the Petitioner not being |
| 19 | present, in Forma Pauperis, the Respondent being represented by STEWART L. BELL, District |
| 20 | Attorney, by and through BERNIE ZADROWSKI, Deputy District Attorney, and the Court |
| 21 | having considered the matter, including briefs, transcripts, arguments of counsel, and documents |
| 22 | on file herein, now therefore, the Court makes the following findings of fact and conclusions of |
| 23 | law: |
| 24 | FINDINGS OF FACT |
| 25 | 1. The Defendant Anthony M. Wright was arrested in connection with over fifty "pattern" |
| 26 | residential burglaries committed in the Sun City area of Las Vegas. On August 9, 1999, the |
| 27 | Defendant was charged by Indictment with forty-two counts that included Attempt Burglary, |
| 28 | Burglary, Burglary While in Possession of a Firearm, Grand Larceny, and Possession of Stolen |
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Property. Based on six previous felony convictions the State also sought habitual criminal status under NRS 207.010. The Defendant pled not guilty and on August 12, 1999, a jury trial commenced.

- The jury returned guilty verdicts for Count VI Possession of a Firearm & Property With 2. a Value of Over \$250; Counts XV, XVIII, XXVI, & XXXV - Possession of Stolen Property With a Value Over \$250; Count XXIII - Possession of a Stolen Firearm; and Counts XXIX and XXXII - Possession of Stolen Property With a Value Under \$250. Based on the previous six certified felony convictions the Defendant was adjudicated a habitual criminal pursuant to NRS 207.010(2).
- 3. The Defendant was sentenced for Count VI to Life With the Possibility of Parole after a minimum of ten years has been served in the Nevada Department of Prisons; for Count XV to Life With the Possibility of Parole after a minimum of ten years served, to run concurrent with Count VI; for Count XVIII to Life With the Possibility of Parole after a minimum of ten years to run consecutive to Count XV; for Count XXIII to Life With the Possibility of Parole after a minimum of ten years served to run concurrent with Count XVIII; for Count XXVI to Life With Possibility of Parole after a minimum of ten years served to run consecutive to Count XXIII; for Count XXXV to Life with the Possibility of Parole after a minimum term of ten years has been served to run concurrent with Count XXVI; for Counts XXIX and XXXII credit for time served.
- Judgment of Conviction was filed December 1, 1999. 4.
- 5. Following Defendant's direct appeal, the Nevada Supreme Court affirmed the judgment of conviction on February 15, 2001. Remittitur was issued on March 15, 2001.
- 6. Defendant filed a Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus (Post-Conviction) on July 23, 2001. Defendant also filed a motion for appointment of counsel entitled "Judicial Notice by Petitioner." On August 7, 2001, Defendant's motion for appointment of counsel was denied.
- 7. Defendant filed a timely direct appeal that was denied on the merits. Any substantive claims that are contained in Defendant's instant petition could have been raised on direct appeal and should not be considered here under NRS 34.810(1)(b)(2).
- 8. In Grounds One through Four, Defendant claims errors occurred at the grand jury

rendering his indictment invalid, and Defendant claims his counsel was ineffective for not properly challenging the indictment in a pre-trial petition for writ of habeas corpus. The record shows that Defendant's counsel did challenge the indictment on all of the grounds raised by Defendant in a pre-trial writ of habeas corpus filed June 15, 1999, except for challenging under NRS 207.016 the introduction of four prior felony convictions by the State at the grand jury. Counsel argued in her pre-trial petition that the introduction of the prior convictions was prejudicial in contradiction of NRS 48.045(2). The court denied the petition on July 13, 1999, ruling that the prior convictions were properly admitted under NRS 48.045(2) as part of a common scheme or plan, or absence of mistake, because Defendant was charged with burglary and possession of stolen property for the instant offense, and the four prior convictions were for burglary and possession of stolen property.

- 9. Defense counsel did challenge all of the claims of error raised by Defendant in her pretrial petition for writ of habcas corpus. Counsel's failure to make one available argument in support of one of Defendant's claims of error does not arise to the level of ineffective assistance of counsel. The State did not seek to introduce four of Defendant's prior convictions at the grand jury for the purpose of establishing habitual criminality. The State offered the prior convictions under NRS 48.045(2) as part of a common scheme or plan and to show lack of mistake. Defense counsel therefore challenged the admission of the prior convictions on that ground. Defendant's speculations as to the State's motives cannot be a basis for ineffective assistance of counsel.
- 10. The Defendant was properly indicted, and defense counsel was not ineffective for failing to challenge the Indictment.
- 11. In Grounds Five and Six, Defendant claims he was illegally searched following his arrest, and his counsel did not properly challenge the search or move to suppress evidence obtained incident to the search. Defendant claims police had no grounds to arrest him, and that officers illegally searched his pockets and found a key to a vehicle he had been driving. Evidence was presented at trial through the testimony of police officers as to Defendant's arrest. On the evening of March 26, 1999, police officers began searching an area around a residence in the

 Sun City area in which the burglar alarm had been activated. Shortly thereafter, the Defendant was found hiding under a bush nearby by a police K-9 dog. Once discovered, Defendant attempted to flee. While being pursued, the Defendant discarded a ski mask, gloves, and extra batteries. A flashlight was later found in Defendant's fanny pack. Defendant was apprehended a short time later. After a brief struggle with police the Defendant was placed under arrest. Police then conducted a search incident to arrest and found the key in Defendant's pocket.

- 12. The Defendant was properly searched following his arrest, and counsel was not ineffective for failing to challenge the search.
- 13. In Grounds Seven and Eight, Defendant claims the search warrants executed in his case were improperly obtained, and defense counsel was ineffective for failing to properly challenge the warrants or move to suppress evidence obtained with the warrants. Defendant raised the validity of the search warrants executed in his case on direct appeal. The Nevada Supreme Court reviewed the search warrants and the affidavits in support of the warrants and found under the totality of the circumstances, there was "a substantial basis for concluding that probable cause existed and, therefore, that the district court did not err in admitting the fruits of the search of 3929 Apple Crest Drive.
- 14. Prior to trial, defense counsel filed a motion to suppress evidence obtained from the execution of the warrants, and the court denied the motion on August 9, 1999. Since both the trial court and the Nevada Supreme Court have held the warrants to have been valid, and defense counsel did challenge the validity of the warrants and attempt to have the evidence obtained from the warrants suppressed, Defendant's claim that counsel was ineffective for failing to do so is belied by the record.
- 15. The search warrants executed during the investigation of Defendant's case were properly obtained, and counsel was not ineffective for failing to challenge the warrants.
- 16. In Grounds Nine, Ten, Thirteen, and Fourteen, the Defendant raises error in the manner in which he was adjudicated an habitual criminal, and claims his counsel was ineffective in her handling of this aspect of the trial. At sentencing, the State proved that Defendant had six prior felony convictions in California. Under NRS 207.010(b) only three previous felony convictions

are necessary to adjudicate a defendant an habitual criminal. Defendant served prison time for four of the prior convictions. Counsel need only perform a cursory records check to verify the convictions and time spent in prison. Defendant provided no evidence to support his claim that he did not have six prior felony convictions. Defendant's bare unsubstantiated claims that his record is incorrect, or that there were constitutional violations that rendered his prior convictions invalid, is insufficient to establish ineffective assistance of counsel.

- 17. The Defendant was properly adjudicated an habitual criminal, and counsel was not ineffective in her handling of Defendant's habitual criminal adjudication.
- 18. In Grounds Eleven and Sixteen, Defendant claims his appellate counsel was ineffective in the handling of Defendant's direct appeal. In Ground Eleven, Defendant claims appellate counsel failed to properly consult with Defendant and to raise the issue of Defendant's adjudication as an habitual criminal. In Ground Sixteen, Defendant claims appellate counsel should have raised all of the ineffective assistance of counsel claims raised in the instant petition.
- 19. There was no error in the manner in which Defendant was adjudicated an habitual criminal. Appellate counsel could not be found to be ineffective for failing to raise on direct appeal a claim that is frivolous. Additionally, claims of ineffective assistance of counsel are not properly brought on direct appeal. The Nevada Supreme Court would not have entertained Defendant's claims of ineffective assistance of counsel had appellate counsel raised them.
- 20. Defendant did not have ineffective assistance of counsel on direct appeal.
- 21. In Ground Twelve, Defendant claims the prosecutor committed misconduct in his opening statement and closing arguments for stating facts that were prejudicial to Defendant's case. Defendant filed a direct appeal in this case that was denied on the merits. In Defendant's appeal, Defendant raised two issues -- that the trial court committed prejudicial error in denying Defendant's motion to suppress evidence that was illegally seized, and that the State failed to prove the element of value on the possession of stolen property charge in Count XV of the Indictment. Defendant had an opportunity to raise issues of prosecutorial misconduct on direct appeal and chose not to.
- 22. Defendant's claims of prosecutorial misconduct should have been raised in Defendant's

direct appeal and cannot be brought in a petition for writ of habeas corpus (post-conviction).

- 23. In Ground Fifteen, Defendant claims he was denied a fair trial because the trial judge knew one of the victims that testified at trial, and defense counsel was ineffective for failing to object or move for a mistrial on that basis. At trial, the judge stated for the record that he had dealings twenty years prior with one of the victims that testified for the State. James Kizzire was one of the burglary victims alleged in the Indictment. Defense counsel advised that she did not have a problem with the situation. Defendant claims he was prejudiced by counsel's unauthorized waiver of a prejudicial conflict.
- 24. The judge's relationship with the victim witness was too remote in time to be relevant, much less compelling. Additionally, the victim witness allegedly had been burglarized by the Defendant. Defendant was charged with over forty counts, including Attempt Burglary, Burglary, Burglary While in Possession of a Firearm, Grand Larceny, and Possession of Stolen Property. The jury only found Defendant guilty of eight possession of stolen property charges for items that were found at Defendant's residence. The jury hung on all of the burglary related charges except for one, which Defendant was found to be not guilty of. Since the charges Defendant was convicted of were proven by direct physical evidence, any relationship the judge may have had with one of the testifying witnesses would have had no prejudicial impact on the resulting verdict.
- 25. In Ground Seventeen, Defendant claims an accumulation of errors denied him due process and a fair trial. Defendant has failed, however, to make a proper showing for post-conviction relief on any of his claims, therefore, because the record is devoid of any error, Defendant's cumulative error contention is without merit.
- 26. In Ground Eighteen, Defendant challenges the court's ability to impose multiple life sentences in a single prosecution. Defendant was charged with forty-two counts that included Attempt Burglary, Burglary, Burglary While in Possession of a Firearm, Grand Larceny, and Possession of Stolen Property. Defendant was found guilty of one count of Possession of a Firearm & Property With a Value of Over \$250, four counts of Possession of Stolen Property With a Value Over \$250, one count of Possession of a Stolen Firearm, and two counts of

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to be run consecutively.

- 27. Defendant's claims that his criminal history was minor, and the court abused its discretion in ordering consecutive life sentences is without merit.
- 28. The State proved that Defendant had six prior felony convictions. The court adjudicated Defendant an habitual criminal. Under Nevada law, the court can impose the sentencing enhancement for each primary offense, and the court has discretion whether to order the sentences to run consecutively. Defendant's citation to cases where the court did not order the sentences in a multiple-count conviction to run consecutively where the defendants had more severe criminal histories, or Defendant's arguments as to what the law in Nevada should be, are without merit.
- 29. The Defendant was properly sentenced to consecutive life sentences for multiple counts under habitual criminal adjudication.
- 30. Defendant's trial counsel was not ineffective.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

- 1. A claim of ineffective assistance of counsel is reviewed under the "reasonably effective assistance" test set forth in <u>Strickland v. Washington</u>, 466 U.S. 668, 104 S.Ct. 2052, 2063-64 (1984); see <u>State v. Love</u>, 109 Nev. 1136, 1138, 865 P.2d 322, 323 (1993). Under this test, Appellant must show first that his counsel's representation fell below an objective standard of reasonableness, and that but for counsel's errors, there is a reasonable probability that the result of the proceedings would have been different. <u>See Strickland</u>, 466 U.S. at 687-88 & 694, 104 S.Ct. at 2065 & 2068.
- 2. In considering whether counsel has met this standard, the court should first determine whether counsel made a "sufficient inquiry into the information . . . pertinent to his client's case."

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 Doleman v State, 112 Nev. 843, 847, 921 P.2d 278, 281 (1996); citing Strickland, 466 U.S. at 690-91, 104 S.Ct. at 2066. Once this decision is made, the court should consider whether counsel made "a reasonable strategy decision on how to proceed with his client's case."

Doleman, 112 Nev. at 847, 921 P.2d 281; citing Strickland, 466 U.S. at 690-91, 104 S.Ct. at 2066. Finally, counsel's strategy decision is a "tactical" decision and will be "virtually unchallengeable absent extraordinary circumstances." Doleman, 112 Nev. at 847, 921 P.2d 281; see also Howard v. State, 106 Nev. 713, 722, 800 P.2d 175, 180 (1990); Strickland, 466 U.S. at 691, 104 S.Ct. at 2066; State v. Meeker, 693 P.2d 911, 917 (Ariz. 1984).

This Court must begin with the presumption of effectiveness and then determine whether or not Appellant has demonstrated, by "strong and convincing proof," that counsel was ineffective. *Homick v State*, 108 Nev. 127, 141, 825 P.2d 600, 607 (1992); citing *Lenz v. State*, 97 Nev. 65, 66, 624 P.2d 15, 16 (1981). The role of a court in considering allegations of ineffective assistance of counsel, is "not to pass upon the merits of the action not taken but to determine whether, under the particular facts and circumstances of the case, trial counsel failed to render reasonably effective assistance." *Donovan v. State*, 94 Nev. 671, 675, 584 P.2d 708, 711 (1978); citing *Cooper v. Fitzharris*, 551 F.2d 1162, 1166 (9th Cir. 1977). This analysis does not mean that the court should "second guess reasoned choices between trial tactics nor does it mean that defense counsel, to protect himself against allegations of inadequacy, must make every conceivable motion no matter how remote the possibilities are of success." *Donovan*, 94 Nev. at 675, 584 P.2d at 711; citing *Cooper*, 551 F.2d at 1166. In essence, the court must "judge the reasonableness of counsel's challenged conduct on the facts of the particular case, viewed as of the time of counsel's conduct." *Strickland*, 466 U.S. at 690, 104 S.Ct. at 2066.

- 4. Police may conduct a search of a suspects pockets for weapons or evidence following arrest under the search incident to arrest exception to the warrant requirement. <u>State v. Greenwald</u>, 109 Nev. 808, 810, 858 P.2d 36, 37 (1993), citing <u>Chimel v. California</u>, 395 U.S. 752, 89 S.Ct. 2034, 23 L.Ed.2d 685 (1969).
- 5. "Whether probable cause is present to support a search warrant is determined by the totality of the circumstances." *Keesee v. State*, 110 Nev. 997, 1002, 870 P.2d 63, 67 (1994);

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- 6. A defendant's bare, unsubstantiated allegations which are belied and repelled by the record are not sufficient to entitle a defendant to post-conviction relief. Hargrove v. State, 100 Nev. 498, 502-03, 686 P.2d 222, 225 (1984). "Without such limitations on the availability of post-conviction remedies, prisoners could petition for relief in perpetuity and thus abuse post-conviction remedies." *Dickerson v. State*, 114 Nev. 1084, 967 P.2d 1132, 1134 (1998)
- (quoting Lozada v. State, 110 Nev. 349, 358, 871 P.2d 944, 950 (1994)).
- The constitutional right to effective assistance of counsel extends to a direct appeal. 7.
 - Burke v. State, 110 Nev. 1366, 1368, 887 P.2d 267, 268 (1994). A claim of ineffective
- assistance of appcllate counsel is reviewed under the "reasonably effective assistance" test set
- forth in Strickland, 466 U.S. 668, 104 S.Ct. 2052, 2063-64; see also Love, 109 Nev. at 1138, 865
- 12 P.2d at 323. Under this test, Appellant must show first that his counsel's representation fell
- below an objective standard of reasonableness, and that but for counsel's errors, there is a 13
- reasonable probability that the result of the proceedings would have been different. See 14
 - Strickland, 466 U.S. at 687-88 & 694, 104 S.Ct. at 2065 & 2068.
 - Effective assistance of appellate counsel does not mean that appellate counsel must raise
- 17 every non-frivolous issue. Sce Jones v. Barnes, 463 U.S. 745, 751-54, 103 S.Ct. 3308, 3312-15,
 - 77 L.Ed.2d 987 (1983). An attorney's decision not to raise meritless issues on appeal is not
 - ineffective assistance of counsel. *Daniel v. Overton*, 845 F.Supp. 1170, 1176 (E.D.Mich.1994);
- Leaks v. United States, 841 F.Supp. 536, 541 (S.D.N.Y.1994), aff'd, 47 F.3d 1157 (2d Cir.), cert.
 - denied, 516 U.S. 926, 116 S.Ct. 327, 133 L.Ed.2d 228 (1995). To establish prejudice based on
 - the deficient assistance of appellate counsel, the defendant must show that the omitted issue
- 23 would have a reasonable probability of success on appeal. <u>Duhamel v. Collins</u>, 955 F.2d 962,
 - 967 (5th Cir.1992); *Heath v. Jones*, 941 F.2d 1126, 1132 (11th Cir.1991). In making this
 - determination, a court must review the merits of the omitted claim. *Heath*, 941 F.2d at 1132.
 - Claims of ineffective assistance of counsel are not properly brought on direct appeal. 9.
 - Gibbons v. State, 97 Nev. 520, 634 P.2d 1214 (1981). Rather, those claims must first be raised
 - by way of habeas corpus or motion for new trial. <u>Id.</u> This method is preferred because it allows

the defendant to develop a record regarding what counsel did, why he did it and what, if any, prejudice resulted. *United States v. Oplinger*, 150 F.3d 1061, 1071 (9th Cir. 1998).

- 10. A judge is not automatically disqualified from presiding over a criminal trial merely because he is acquainted with the parties appearing before him. See <u>Jacobson v. Manfredi</u>, 100 Nev. 226, 230, 679 P.2d 251, 254 (1984). Further, a judge's decision to not voluntarily disqualify himself, even in the midst of compelling circumstances, should be accorded substantial weight and should not be reversed on appeal absent an abuse of discretion. <u>Goldman v. Bryan</u>, 104 Nev. 644, 649, 764 P.2d 1296, 1299 (1988).
- 11. As Justice Gunderson put it in his dissenting opinion in <u>LaPena v. State</u>, 92 Nev. 1, 14, 544 P.2d 1187, 1195 (1976), "nothing plus nothing plus nothing is nothing." It is true that although individual errors may be harmless, the cumulative effect of multiple errors may violate a defendant's constitutional right to a fair trial. <u>Pertgen v. State</u>, 110 Nev. 554, 566, 875 P.2d 361, 368 (1994).
- 12. Courts have repeatedly held that enhancement of the penalty for each primary offense is applicable to each felony conviction. *Odoms v. State*, 102 Nev. 27, 33, 714 P.2d 568, 572 (1986); see also, *Schuler v. State*, 668 P.2d 1333 (Wyo.1983); *Wingo v. Ringo*, 408 S.W.2d 469 (Ky.1966), cert. denied, 386 U.S. 946, 87 S.Ct. 983 (1967); cf. *Crew v. State*, 100 Nev. 38, 675 P.2d 986 (1984) (enhancement of penalty of each count pursuant to enhancement statute NRS 193.165 is proper when each count requires proof of an additional fact which the other does not); *Koza v. State*, 100 Nev. 245, 681 P.2d 44 (1984).
- 13. Once habitual criminal status is sought and the requisite number of prior convictions is proven, NRS 207.010 mandates a harsher penalty:
 - 1. Unless the person is prosecuted pursuant to NRS 207.012 or 207.014, a person convicted in this state of:
 - (b) Any felony, who has previously been three times convicted, whether in this state or elsewhere, of any crime which under the laws of the situs of the crime or of this state would amount to a felony, or who has previously been five times convicted, whether in this state or elsewhere, of petit larceny, or of any misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor

| 1 2 | of which fraud or the intent to defraud is an element, is a habitual criminal and shall be punished for a category A felony by imprisonment in the state prison: |
|--------|--|
| 3 | (1) For life without the possibility of parole; |
| 4 | (2) For life with the possibility of parole, with eligibility for parole beginning when a minimum of 10 years has been served; or |
| 5 | (3) For a definite term of 25 years, with eligibility for parole beginning when a minimum of 10 years has been served. |
| 7 | ORDER |
| 8 | Based upon the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law contained herein, it is hereby: |
| 9 | ORDERED, ADJUDGED, and DECREED that Defendant's Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus (Post- |
| 10 | Conviction) is denied. |
| 11 | DATED this 15th day of September, 2001. |
| 12 | $A \wedge A \wedge A$ |
| 13 | DISTRICT II DCF & |
| 14 | DESTRICT SCHOOL P / 7 |
| 15 | STEWART L. BELL DISTRICT ATTORNEY Nevada Bar #000477 |
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| 17 | NI and G. a line |
| 18 | BY W. W. Simm fly BERNIE ZADROWSKI |
| 19 | Deputy District Attorney Nevada Bar #006545 |
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