

The Talented Mr. Epstein; Lately, Jeffrey Epstein's high-ying style has been drawing oohs and aahs: the bachelor nancier lives in New York's largest private residence, claims to take only billionaires as clients, and ies celebrities including Bill Clinton and Kevin Spacey on his Boeing 727. But pierce his air of mystery and the picture changes. VICKY WARD explores Epstein's investment career, his ties to retail magnate Leslie Wexner, and his complicated past Vanity Fair March 2003

Mohan Murjani, whose clothing company grew into Gloria Vanderbilt Jeans. Epstein lived large even then. One friend recalls that when he took Canadian heiress Wendy Belzberg on a date he hired a Rolls-Royce especially for the occasion. (Epstein has claimed he owned it.)

In 1987, Hoffenberg, according to sources, set Epstein up in the offices he still occupies in the Villard House, on Madison Avenue, across a courtyard from the restaurant Le Cirque. Hoffenberg hired his new protege as a consultant at \$25,000 a month, and the relationship flourished. "They traveled everywhere together-on Hoffenberg's plane, all around the world, they were always together," says a source. Hoffenberg has claimed that Epstein confided in him, saying, for example, that he had left Bear Stearns in 1981 after he was discovered executing "illegal operations."

Several of Epstein's Bear Stearns contemporaries recall that Epstein left the company very suddenly. Within the company there were rumors also that he was involved in a technical infringement, and it was thought that the executive committee asked that he resign after his two supporters, Ace Greenberg and Jimmy Cayne, were outnumbered. Greenberg says he can't recall this; Cayne denies it happened, and Epstein has denied it as well. "Jeffrey Epstein left Bear Stearns of his own volition," says Cayne. "It was never suggested that he leave by any member of management, and management never looked into any improprieties by him. Jeffrey said specifically, 'I don't want to work for anybody else. I want to work for myself.'" Yet, this is not the story that Epstein told to the S.E.C. in 1981 and to lawyers in a 1989 deposition involving a civil business case in Philadelphia.

In 1981 the S.E.C.'s Jonathan Harris and Robert Blackburn took Epstein's testimony and that of other Bear Stearns employees in part of what became a protracted case about insider trading around a tender offer placed on March 11, 1981, by the Seagram Company Ltd. for St. Joe Minerals Corp. Ultimately several Italian and Swiss investors were found guilty, including Italian financier Giuseppe Tome, who had used his relationship with Seagram owner Edgar Bronfman Sr. to obtain information about the tender offer.

After the tender offer was announced, the S.E.C. began investigating trades involving St. Joe at continued on page 343 continued from page 305 Bear Stearns and other firms. Epstein resigned from Bear Stearns on March 12. The S.E.C. was tipped off that Epstein had information on insider trading at Bear Stearns, and it was therefore obliged to question him. In his S.E.C. testimony, given on April 1, 1981, Epstein claimed that he had found "offensive" the way Bear Stearns management had handled a disciplinary action following its discovery that he had committed a possible "Reg D" violation-evidently he had lent money to his closest friend. (In the 1989 deposition he said that he'd lent approximately \$20,000 to Warren Eisenstein, to buy stock.) Such an action could have been considered improper, although Epstein claimed he had not realized this until afterward.

According to Epstein, Bear Stearns management had questioned him about the loan around March 4. The questioners, Epstein said, were Michael (Mickey) Tarnopol and Alvin Einbender. In his 1989 deposition Epstein recalled that the partner who had made an

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Last

modified 6/18/2007

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