

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

was this character we never got a handle on. Again we presumed that he was involved with the Pan Am and Emery run that Hoffenberg made, but we never got a chance to depose him."

"From the government's discovery in the main sentencing against Hoffenberg it would seem the government was perhaps a bit lazy," says David Lewis, who represented Mitchell Brater. "They went for what they knew they could get ... and that was the fraudulent promissory notes (i.e., the much larger and unrelated part of Hoffenberg's fraud, based in New York State)... What they couldn't get, they didn't bother with."

Another lawyer involved in the criminal prosecution of Hoffenberg says, "In a criminal investigation like that, when there is a guilty plea, to be quick and dirty about it, discovery is always incomplete... They don't have to line up witnesses; they don't have to learn every fact that might come out on cross-examination."

Epstein was involved with Hoffenberg in other questionable transactions. Financial records show that in 1988 Epstein invested \$1.6 million in Riddell Sports Inc., a company that manufactures football helmets. Among his co-investors were the theater mogul Robert Nederlander and attorney Leonard Toboroff. A source close to this transaction claims that Epstein told Nederlander and Toboroff that he had raised his share of the money from a Swiss banker, whose identity they could not be allowed to know. But Hoffenberg has claimed the money came from him, and Towers's financial statements for that year show a loan to Epstein of \$400,000. (Epstein has said he can't remember the details and has disputed the accuracy of the Towers financial reports.)

Around the same time, Nederlander and Toboroff let Epstein come in with them on a scheme to make money out of Pennwalt, a Pennsylvania chemical company. The plan was to group together with two other parties to take a substantial declared position in the stock. According to a source, Epstein was supposed to help Nederlander and Toboroff raise \$15 million. He seemed to fail to find other investors, say those familiar with the deal. (Epstein has said he was merely an investor.) He invested \$1 million, which he told his co-investors was his own money. But in his 1989 deposition he said that he put in only \$300,000 of his own money. Where did the rest come from? Hoffenberg has said it came from him, in a loan that Nederlander and Toboroff didn't know about.

Two things happened that alarmed Nederlander and Toboroff. After the group signaled a possible takeover, the Pennwalt management threatened to sue the would-be raiders. Epstein was reluctant initially to give a deposition about his share of the money, telling Toboroff there were "reasons" he didn't want to. Then, after the opportunity for new investors was closed, co-investors recall Epstein announcing that he'd found one at last: Dick Snyder, then C.E.O. of the publisher Simon & Schuster, who wanted to put up approximately \$500,000. (Neither Epstein nor Snyder can now recall the investment. Yet in the 1989 deposition Epstein said that he had recruited Snyder, whom he had met socially, into the deal.)

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