

Keker Takes the Case of Indicted City Staffer

By Brenda Sandburg

RECORDER STAFF WRITER

When the government comes knocking at your door, it helps to have connections to a powerful attorney.

And Zula Jones, the second-highest ranking official at San Francisco's Human Rights Commission, found herself in such a position. When a federal grand jury charged her with participation in a minority-contracting scam, several of her friends picked up the phone and called John Keker.



JOHN KEKER

"Various people who knew Zula asked me to talk to her," Keker said. While declining to say who sought his assistance, he said it was not Mayor Willie Brown or any one else in city government.

Keker of San Francisco's Keker & Van Nest said that after talking with Jones, he "became firmly convinced that she was getting royally screwed," and he agreed to represent her pro bono.

Jones was one of five individuals indicted by a federal grand jury in April. The government alleges that top officials at a San Leandro construction firm, Scott-Norman Mechanical Inc., conspired to set up a front company that represented itself as minority-owned and -operated and that Jones participated in the scheme.

The company, formed by Scott Co. and Al Norman Plumbing, obtained minority contractor certification through the Human Rights Commission and other government agencies. As a result, it obtained a subcontract to do work at the San Francisco International Airport.

Keker, who prosecuted Lt. Col. Oliver North in the Iran-Contra scandal, is one of several well-known criminal defense attorneys involved in the case.

Cooley Godward partner Stephen Neal, who won the release of financier Charles Keating in the savings-and-loan scandal, is representing Scott Co.

Former federal prosecutors are representing two Scott officials named in the indictment. Jerrold Ladar of San Francisco's Ladar & Ladar, who served as chief of the criminal division of the U.S. attorney's office in the late 1960s and early 70s, is representing CEO Joseph Guglielmo.

Former U.S. Assistant Attorney Wayne Lamprey, a partner at San Francisco's Goodin, MacBride, Squeri, Ritchie & Day, is representing Scott Company CFO Richard Davis. And former San Francisco prosecutor James Lassart, a partner at Ropers, Majeski, Kohn & Bentley, is representing Scott executive VP Robert Nurisso.

Al Norman also has a former prosecutor in his corner, Redwood City attorney Charles Smith, who served as deputy DA in San Mateo for nine years. And former federal prosecutor Robert Carey Jr. of Palo Alto's Carey & Carey is representing Al Norman Plumbing.