

'76 art theft informer held on parole violation

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Myles J. Connor of Milton, an ex-convict who played a key role in the recovery of a stolen Rembrandt in 1976, was back in jail yesterday awaiting a hearing before the Massachusetts State Parole Board.

Boston police reported that the 35-year-old Connor was arrested Monday by two detectives and three parole officers near his Milton home and placed in Worcester County Jail.

Officials said he was picked up for associating with known felons and will be given a hearing to determine whether his parole should be revoked. His parole expires in 3½ years.

Connor shot State Police Lt. Col. John R. O'Donovan in a fight in Boston's Back Bay in 1966. O'Donovan, then a detective, was wounded in the stomach, and Connor, a fugitive at the time, also was wounded in the gun battle.

He had nearly four years yet to serve on a 12- to 20-year sentence in the O'Donovan shooting when he was paroled in 1972. While free, he entertained in Greater Boston nightspots with a rock-n-roll group known as "Myles and the Wild Ones."

In July 1974, FBI agents arrested Connor and charged him with the theft of \$165,000 in paintings, including some by Andrew Wyeth, stolen from the Woolworth estate in Monmouth, Maine. He failed to appear for trial and became a fugitive again.

FBI agents captured him on Sept. 12, 1975. Facing a possible 10-year federal prison sentence and nearly four years in a Massachusetts prison, he reportedly made a deal with investigators, who recovered the priceless Rembrandt, "Portrait of Elizabeth van Rijn," which was stolen from the Museum of Fine Arts in April 1975.

The painting was recovered from an individual wearing a ski mask in the parking lot of a Greater Boston restaurant in January 1976. Although those who figured in the recovery declined to discuss Connor's role, other investigators said he dictated from his cell in Charles Street Jail the terms for the return of the painting.

As a result, he avoided a federal prison sentence, served his time in a Massachusetts institution, went on work release and was paroled in January 1978.

Connor turned to music, heading the "Myles Connor Rock and Roll Review," but reportedly was kept under intermittent surveillance by state and federal investigators.

He was the subject of a Parole Board investigation last spring after an FBI agent's statement was introduced at the Blackfriars murder trial quoting one of the defendants as having said Connor suggested the drug robbery, which resulted in five murders, and wanted 50 percent of the loot in return for "providing the score."