

ALTON COLEMAN IS ARRESTED

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Serial murder suspect **Alton Coleman** and his companion Debra Brown -- the subjects of a 53-day search in six Midwestern states -- were arrested in "short and sweet" fashion Friday in a suburban Chicago park.

Coleman, 28, and Brown, 21, both of Waukegan, Ill., were taken into custody shortly before noon after a phone tip from one of **Coleman**'s childhood friends, who told police he had seen the couple walking from downtown Evanston, said David Schram, acting Evanston police chief.

Schram said the arrest "was short and sweet. There was no struggle, even though he had a rather long, honed-down paring knife down his boot, and she had a five-shot .38-caliber pistol with a two-inch barrel."

FIVE OFFICERS arrested **Coleman** and Brown, who were sitting on bleachers across from basketball courts in Mason Park near Evanston's predominantly black west side neighborhood, Schram said.

Detective Susan Triguora, one of the arresting officers, said: "They certainly did not know who I was. I was in an unmarked car when I first drove by."

Coleman has been characterized by police and FBI agents as a gifted con man and conversationalist who has talked himself out of criminal charges. He apparently tried that again during his arrest Friday.

Triguora said **Coleman** got up and began walking away from the bleachers as the officers began moving in to make the arrest. Patrolman Ron Grunnel, one of the other arresting officers, said **Coleman** "was laughing and joking" with police after they took him into custody.

"They tried to talk their way out of it like they'd apparently done in a couple of other instances," Schram said, "but we were pretty sure who we had."

Grunnel said he was "highly relieved that the anxiety of the country is now relieved."

COLEMAN HAD close-cropped hair -- unlike the Jheri-curl hairdo he was wearing when he became a fugitive -- and he gave several fictitious names to arresting officers, Schram said. Other than the haircut, **Coleman** had not changed his appearance, Schram said.

Police were watching for **Coleman**, Schram said, because he was known to have friends in Evanston's black community.

Evanston, home of Northwestern University, is just north of Chicago. Fifteen to 20 percent of Evanston's 80,000 residents are black.

"He knew these people from before he started this crime spree," Schram said. "We figured he might try to come back here and make contact with them. We were watching for him. We've been expecting him."

Coleman and Brown, charged initially with carrying concealed weapons, were positively identified through fingerprint checks, Schram said. After they were identified, the concealed weapons charges were dropped so **Coleman** and Brown could be prosecuted on the more serious federal charges, Schram said.

After being processed in Evanston, Schram said, **Coleman** and Brown were turned over to agents from the Chicago FBI office.

COLEMAN WAS responsible for a major drug bust in Evanston last week, Schram said.

Responding to a tip that **Coleman** was hiding in an Evanston motel, police raided a room at the city's Holiday Inn, Schram said. **Coleman** was not there, but police made a "major" cocaine seizure, Schram said.

Coleman is wanted in at least six slayings and a string of kidnappings, assaults, robberies and car thefts in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Kentucky. Besides a list of federal charges, **Coleman** faces local charges in at least five states.

Wayne Davis, special agent in charge of the Detroit FBI office, said Friday that his office is ". . . now reinterviewing victims and witnesses in the Detroit area to provide a more detailed overview of the actions of **Coleman** and Brown while they were here."

Though a lot of work remains on the Detroit cases, the arrests of **Coleman** and Brown were welcomed by FBI Special Agent Jerry Craig, who supervised the Detroit portion of the investigation.

"We couldn't be any happier," Craig said. "It saves lives, as far as we're concerned. People can rest a lot easier now."

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