

## **4 plead guilty in bar fight**

- By DAVID J. MITCHELL
- Advocate River parishes bureau
- Published: Feb 10, 2011 - Page: 4B

GONZALES — Four men facing trial on felony counts stemming from an Ascension Parish barroom fracas last year in which an ex-Bandido motorcycle gang member was beaten and shot and another man was beaten pleaded guilty Wednesday to reduced charges.

Prosecutors had accused Joe Louis “Bandido Joe” Flores, 36, purported Baton Rouge-area president of the Bandidos, with shooting Steven Hoff during a fight at Fred’s on the River bar on Feb. 24.

Hoff had been kicked out of the Bandidos weeks before.

Flores, of Denham Springs, pleaded guilty Wednesday to attempted manslaughter and two counts of second-degree battery.

Judge Ralph Tureau, of the 23rd Judicial District Court, deferred sentencing but said attorneys had agreed the sentences would run concurrently and be capped at no more than 10 years in prison.

Prosecutors also accused Flores and the other defendants of beating Hoff and Hoff’s friend, Brian McDonald, who had pulled a handgun on the Bandidos during the bar scuffle.

Tureau sentenced Chester “Bam” Hunnicutt, 39, of Prairieville; Derrick “Big D” Johnson, 36, Walker; and Jose Felisano Flores, 32, Denham Springs, to suspended prison terms of no more than five years with probation and a share of restitution to the victims.

“I think it was an absolutely perfect end to the case,” Assistant District Attorney Robin O’Bannon said.

After nearly three days of jury selection last week, Flores and the other defendants were set for trial Wednesday on a nine-count indictment that included attempted second-degree murder charges.

Prosecutors also were seeking sentencing enhancements on street-gang charges under that indictment and had video surveillance recordings of the fight and shooting. The defendants had claimed self-defense.

As part of the plea agreement, O'Bannon agreed to dismiss the street-gang charges and the men agreed not to associate with the Bandidos, any of its support gangs or other motorcycle gangs.

The men also agreed not to wear gang colors and to forfeit any gang paraphernalia.

Hunnicutt pleaded guilty to being an accessory after the fact to attempted manslaughter, accessory after the fact to second-degree battery and to intimidation of a witness.

Johnson pleaded guilty to intimidation of a witness and two counts of being an accessory after the fact to second-degree battery.

Jose Flores, Joe Flores' brother, pleaded guilty to six misdemeanor counts, including possessing a firearm at an establishment where alcohol is served.

Hunnicutt and Johnson have said they are Bandidos and Hunnicutt has said he is the sergeant at arms, according to court transcripts.

Signs that a plea was imminent emerged Wednesday during a morning recess in Tureau's courtroom as Joe Flores conferred with his brother, Jose, and his attorneys and embraced his wife.

"I think Joe made the best decision he could under the circumstances," his attorney, André Belanger, said after the plea, adding Flores has a wife and three children.

Raymond Gautreau, Jose Flores' attorney, told Tureau at a later hearing Wednesday afternoon that his client never was a member of the Bandidos, is not a member of the Bandidos and that Flores' only association with the club was through his brother.

At the time of his arrest, sheriff's deputies said Jose Flores was a Bandido.

O'Bannon told Tureau that gang clothing was found in the trunk of Jose Flores' car at Fred's, but Gautreau said those items belonged to Joe Flores and others.