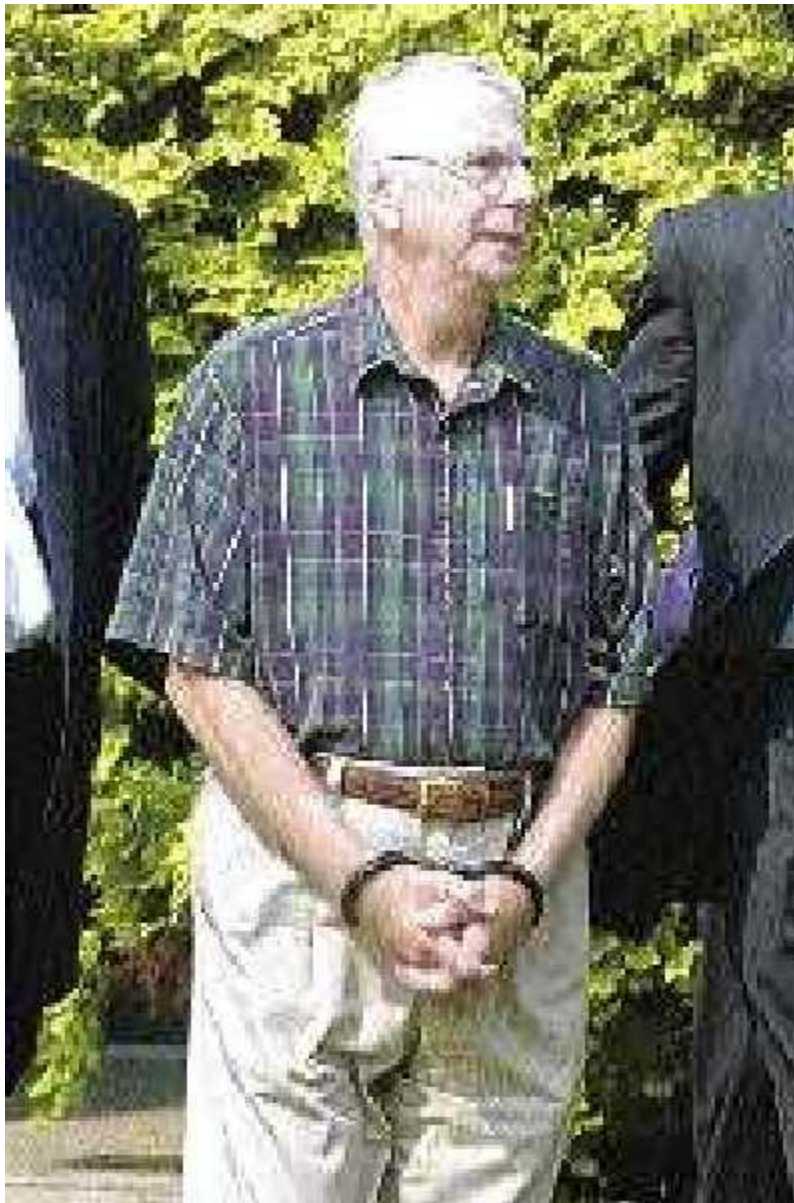


Ex-funeral director sentenced for bilking \$73,000 in escrow

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MEDIA COURTHOUSE — All Patricia Garrity-Marchesani wanted to do was buy a funeral home so that she could help “people deal with the acute pain of loss.”

She had no way of knowing that the previous owner — Theodore Bathurst of Glenolden would leave her holding the bag for more than \$73,000 that he bilked from families for prepaid funeral arrangements.

Bathurst, 68, who sold the funeral business to her in August 2007, was in court Monday as he was sentenced to serve three months of weekends in jail to 23 months for his thievery. His sentence is to start Friday.

Bathurst admitted pocketing money from 20 clients that was supposed to be held in escrow accounts for future funeral arrangements. However, when the time came, the accounts were empty.

The victims, who were in court, and Bathurst's attorney, David Breen, hailed Garrity-Marchesani as the "hero."

She, as the innocent victim and new owner of the McCausland-Garrity Funeral Home in Glenolden, vowed to make good on the contracted arrangements for all the money that Bathurst stole from the 20 victims.

"(Garrity-Marchesani) took care of everything," said Francis Ventrone-Dunn, of Glenolden, who after her mother's death in July 2009 realized the money previously paid for her burial had been pocketed by Bathurst. "(Garrity-Marchesani) was very gracious. She went above and beyond what she had to do. She said she would honor the contract."

However, the victim was not as kind when talking about Bathurst, who she described as "wretched."

"What would possess him to take somebody else's burial money?" asked Ventrone-Dunn. And she said she felt he deserved a longer sentence for the trauma he imposed on the victims.

"I was devastated when I found out that the money deposited for my mother's funeral was stolen," she said. "I'm still upset. He's out there walking the streets like he's done nothing wrong. Absolutely, he belongs in jail for a long time."

Ventrone-Dunn was the first to report the crime to police leading to Bathurst's arrest. He pleaded guilty in December to charges of theft by deception, deceptive business practices and securing the execution of documents by fraud.

Bathurst apologized, blaming the banks for depleting the escrow accounts to pay for money owed by his business. He also promised to make full restitution by May 1 to Garrity-Marchesani or he'd serve a longer period in jail.

"(Bathurst) has been begging and borrowing from everybody he knows to pay this back," said Breen outside the courtroom.

Garrity-Marchesani said that although “Mr. Bathurst chose to dishonor the people who trusted him by taking the money they had set aside for their funerals, I have honored the contracts.”

“Mr. Bathurst may have lost his moral compass, but I have not,” she said.

Senior Judge George Koudelis also sentenced Bathurst to serve four years consecutive probation.

Garrity-Marchesani told the court “she is the one paying for his crimes.”

She said families have come in believing their money is still there and she has to face them.

“I am left to pick up the pieces often when people are facing the worst time in their lives,” she said.

She said because of all the publicity she has endured tough times, through no fault of her own.

“I am the one who is pointed at and accused of stealing from senior citizens and those entering long-term care facilities. Instead of getting to introduce myself and earn the trust of people, I have had to spend my time repairing the damage done by a selfish man who thought nothing of repeatedly lying and stealing. I have had to face the people and survivors who have had their money and trust stolen,” she told the court.