



PRESS-REGISTER

Hurricane scam artist sentenced

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Staff Reporter

A Hurricane Katrina scam artist who in June served as a poster child for that breed of thieves was sentenced to prison Friday for bilking a Mobile family out of money they paid to replace their storm-torn roof.

Shortly after his arrest two months ago, John David Mosley, 34, was one of the featured names during a news conference called by various Mobile leaders, including Mobile Mayor Sam Jones and District Attorney John Tyson Jr., announcing that law enforcement officials would go after those who took advantage of Katrina victims.

Mosley pleaded guilty Friday to theft of property and received a 15-year sentence, with three years to serve and five years' probation.

He was accused of passing himself off as a contractor and negotiating with a south Mobile couple to repair their roof in December 2005.

His tactics, as described by prosecutors on Friday before Mobile County Circuit Judge Sarah Stewart, were what Tyson and others warned against in June -- asking for money in advance, ostensibly to buy construction materials.

Assistant District Attorney Deborah Tillman told Stewart that Mosley asked for and received cash advances from his "honest, hard-working" victims on Dec. 5 (\$1,000), Dec. 13 (\$500), Dec. 20 (\$200) and Dec. 28 (another \$200) -- for a total of \$1,900.

After the late December cash advance, Tillman said, the victims never saw Mosley again and could not reach him on the telephone.

On Friday, the tall, pale, red-headed Mosley had been tentatively scheduled to plead guilty, with the three-year prison term being part of the deal. But he began complaining to Stewart that he was unhappy with his court-appointed attorney.

And he was balking at the plea bargain.

Stewart assured Mosley that she believed the attorney's work on his behalf had been exemplary but nonetheless appointed another lawyer in the courtroom to take over.

The judge expressed the hope that perhaps the new attorney could explain to Mosley how the plea bargain presented by prosecutors might compare to the possibilities resulting in the trial Mosley appeared to be asking for -- a conviction could mean 15 years to life in prison.

Tillman told Stewart that if Mosley went to trial on allegations that he took advantage of Katrina victims "he will not be a sympathetic defendant with a jury."

A few minutes later, Mosley emerged with his new attorney to take the deal and admit that he bilked his victims out of the money.

An essential element of the plea agreement was that Mosley would be made to pay back every penny of the \$1,900 he stole from the Mobile couple.

As the plea agreement and punishment were being set down for the record and formalized, Mosley asked Stewart that he be given drug treatment while serving his three-year sentence.

After court, Tillman said she was unaware until Friday of Mosley having a drug problem.

"I think he has a thief problem," she said.

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