

New Bedford Travel Agent Ordered to Pay \$44,000 in Restitution To Victims of Scam

A 48-year-old New Bedford travel agent who bilked several of her clients out of more than \$40,000 pleaded guilty last week in Fall River Superior Court to a litany of larceny charges and was ordered to pay all of her victims back in full, District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced.

Lucy Pimental pleaded guilty a multi-count indictment charging her with nine counts of larceny over \$250 and one count of larceny over \$250 of a person over 60 years old.

The defendant was placed on supervised probation for five years and was ordered to pay \$44,309 in restitution to the victims. The case touched on multiple jurisdictions in Bristol County, with victims in Freetown, New Bedford, Dartmouth and Taunton.

The defendant began stealing from clients in February, 2014 after losing her job with a local travel agency, and continued her theft until March, 2015.

The first victim reported to Freetown Police that in February, 2014, she paid more than \$3,000 to the defendant for a Royal Caribbean cruise scheduled to depart in early 2015. The victim had booked four previous trips with the defendant while the defendant was working at a local travel agency. In August, 2014 the victim checked on her reservations and found they had been cancelled due to non-payment. The victim got in touch with the defendant, and was told by the defendant that the cruise was re-booked. In fact, the cruise had not been re-booked and the victim lost more than \$3,000.

In March, 2015, another victim who had previously booked trips with the defendant while the defendant worked at a local travel agency, reported to New Bedford Police that she had lost more than \$10,000 to the defendant's scheme. In this case, the defendant came to the victim's workplace to sell her on "some great deals" to Disney World. The victim gave the defendant more than \$3,600 in cash and her credit card information to pay for the rest of the total for the trip. When the victim realized the trip had never been booked, the defendant promised to repay her, but never did.

In September, 2014 a Taunton victim met with the defendant at a restaurant in Taunton and gave the defendant more than \$5,600 to book a cruise for four people and then a week later gave the defendant another \$9,000 for a planned cruise to Italy. The victim received an email confirming both bookings, but never received a subsequent cancellation notice. The victim eventually made contact with the defendant about the cancelled trips and was given numerous different false promises. The victim in this case lost nearly \$15,000.

In March, 2015, the defendant's Dartmouth doctor, who had treated the defendant for previous serious disease, was also bilked out of more than \$13,000. The victim paid the defendant for a trip for two adults and five children to go on a Disney cruise. The defendant at the time told the victim that despite no longer working at a travel agency, she was still able to get discounted rates. The defendant even told the doctor that her own family was going on the same cruise with them because of the great rates. After realizing the trip had never been booked, the victim attempted to contact the defendant on numerous occasions but was ignored. When they finally got in touch, the defendant told the victim that her phone had fell in the toilet, lied about re-booking the trip and even sent the doctor a fake Jet Blue receipt.

After being arrested in 2015, the defendant denied any wrongdoing, but admitted she owed some of her clients money.

The defendant claimed she was in contact with "Jennifer from New Jersey" to book all the vacations, but could provide no last name for Jennifer or any contact information.

"This was an egregious breach of trust by the defendant who even defrauded her own doctor," District Attorney Quinn said. "I hope the defendant has the same enthusiasm for paying back restitution that she did for stealing and defrauding long-time friends, doctors and clients who put their trust in her."