



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Florida

Tampa
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, July 29, 2009
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CREDIT CARD SCAM ARTISTS SENTENCED TO DECADES IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR 2008 CRIME SPREE

Orlando, Florida - U.S. Attorney A. Brian Albritton announces that U.S. District Judge John Antoon, II late Wednesday sentenced Marianne Marra (age 48, of Boynton Beach) to 16 years and nine months in federal prison for credit card fraud and aggravated identity theft, and sentenced David Scott Hughes (age 48, of Boynton Beach) to eight years and nine months in federal prison for the same crimes. Both defendants were ordered to make full restitution to the victims of their offenses and will be placed on supervised release once they are released from federal prison. Marra had pleaded guilty on April 24, 2009. Hughes had pleaded guilty on May 20, 2009.

According to court documents and evidence presented at the sentencing hearing, Marra stole the credit card numbers from a local hotel by posing as an employee of a credit card company and obtaining the card numbers over the telephone. Marra then called various merchants throughout central Florida, including small jewelry stores, sporting goods stores, hobby shops, and a computer store, and made purchases over the phone using the stolen credit card numbers. Marra often posed as either the United States Attorney or a state prosecutor and provided vivid fake accounts of cases when speaking

to the various merchants. She told some merchants that she was too busy to pick up the merchandise and that her son would pick up the items.

In one case, Marra falsely told the merchant that she was prosecuting the child polygamist case in Texas. Marra ordered tens of thousands of dollars in merchandise on the stolen credit card numbers, and Hughes picked up the items from the stores and elaborated on Marra's stories when dealing with the merchants. The victims, whose card numbers were stolen, were from all over the country and the world. Marra and Hughes were finally caught by the Seminole County Sheriff's Office, which worked with a courier service to conduct a controlled delivery of jewelry to Hughes and arrested him when he took possession of the goods. Hughes led the detectives back to Marra and his hotel room, where the law enforcement officers found the merchandise and over 60 stolen credit card numbers.

Marra had previously been convicted in 42 court cases of over 80 drug offenses and crimes involving fraud and theft. Marra had also served time in federal prison for credit card fraud. Fraud investigators from Massachusetts testified at the hearing that for several decades Marra had engaged in fraudulent activity, involving hundreds of thousands of dollars, in Massachusetts. According to one witness, Marra's first encounter with that investigator was when Marra stole her mother's American Express card in the early 1980s. Witnesses further testified that Marra had previously committed credit card fraud by using the telephone to make fraudulent transactions from both prison and a half way house. While in Massachusetts, according to the witnesses, Marra bought expensive jewelry, wave runners, fur coats and threw parties with the proceeds of her criminal activity. According

to investigators, Marra was involved in the theft of hundreds of credit card numbers over the course of her criminal career, which spanned a quarter of a century.

This case was investigated by the Seminole County Sheriff's Office, the Orange County Sheriff's Office, and the United States Secret Service. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney J. Bishop Ravenel.