



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Eastern District of Pennsylvania

615 Chestnut Street

Suite 1250

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106-4476

(215) 861-8200

For Immediate Release

January 22, 2009

READING MAN CHARGED WITH FRAUD

Defendant allegedly sold fictitious autographs on eBay

PHILADELPHIA - Acting United States Attorney Laurie Magid today announced the filing of an Indictment¹ against Forrest R. Smith, III, charging him with three counts of wire fraud and one count of mail fraud. The indictment alleges that between 2002 and December 15, 2008, Smith forged the signatures of famous authors in copies of their books and then sold those books at inflated prices over the internet at the popular auction website, eBay.com ("eBay") to more than 400 unsuspecting purchasers. Among the authors whose signatures Smith forged were deceased novelists Truman Capote, Michael Crichton, James Michener, Norman Mailer, Leon Uris, Kurt Vonnegut, and living authors Tom Clancy, John Grisham, John Irving, Annie Proulx, Anne Rice, Philip Roth, and Tom Wolfe. Over the course of the fraudulent scheme, Smith received more than \$300,000 from the sales of books with forged signatures.

"The system of buying and selling over the Internet depends on trust," said Magid. "This defendant abused that trust to enrich himself. Hundreds of collectors thought they were purchasing valuable books bearing the signatures of renowned authors. In reality, their appreciation for the book or the author was being exploited to satisfy one man's greed."

Smith created and used two different eBay accounts to carry out his fraudulent scheme: one registered in his name with the user identification of "bigdaddy_books," and one registered in his wife's name with the user identification of "bev103162smith." According to the indictment, Smith used the "bigdaddy_books" account to purchase unsigned books, then forged authors' signatures in them and re-sold them as "signed" from the "bev103162smith" account. He was able to carry out this scheme, in part, because he had obtained documents containing authentic signatures of each author and had ink-based stamps made for the signatures. The indictment alleges that Smith then used those ink-based stamps to place the false signatures in the books he sold on eBay.

Counts One and Two of the indictment allege that Smith committed wire fraud on November 16, 2008, when he launched two particular eBay auctions of books with forged author

¹An Indictment or Information is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

signatures: Anne Rice’s “Interview with the Vampire” and Truman Capote’s “A Tree of Night.” Count Three alleges that Smith committed wire fraud on December 8, 2008, when he launched approximately 20 eBay auctions of books containing forged author signatures. Count Four alleges that Smith committed mail fraud on November 24, 2008 by knowingly causing the mail to be used for the delivery of a payment for books containing forged author signatures.

“The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is committed to protecting the public’s full confidence in the U.S. mail system by actively pursuing individuals seeking to use the U.S. mail in furtherance of any scheme devised to defraud the public,” said U.S. Postal Inspector-in-Charge Teresa Thome of the Philadelphia Division.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE DEFENDANT

NAME	ADDRESS	AGE
Forrest R. Smith, III	Reading, PA	47

If convicted of all charges, Smith faces a maximum possible sentence of 80 years imprisonment, a \$1million fine, 12 years of supervised release, a \$400 statutory assessment, and restitution.

The case was investigated by the United States Postal Inspection Service and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Mark B. Dubnoff.

**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY’S OFFICE
EASTERN DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA
Suite 1250, 615 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106**

**Contact: PATTY HARTMAN
Media Contact
215-861-8525**

*COPIES OF NEWS MEMOS AND RELATED DOCUMENTS CAN ALSO BE FOUND AT
<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/pae>*