

# Attorney, accused of embezzling more than \$800,000 from veteran's estate, sentenced to prison

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Former Jackson County lawyer **Richard McQuillan** said he considers it a "lifelong obligation" to pay back the heirs of an estate he said he plundered to help people in the Dominican Republic.

"It is my sincere desire to get out, to work and earn this," said **McQuillan**, 55, who earlier pleaded guilty to three counts of embezzling more than \$20,000 from the estate of Robert Howard, who died in December 2006 at age 84.

First, **McQuillan** is to serve at least six years in prison.

Jackson County Circuit Judge John McBain went well beyond state sentencing guidelines, which called for 10 to 23 months in prison or jail, and sentenced **McQuillan** on Thursday to six to 10 years in prison.

McBain said the guidelines did not adequately reflect the amount of money stolen and **McQuillan's** abuse of his position of trust.

"Action of an attorney like you, it damages the reputation of every attorney in the country," McBain said.

For about 20 years, **McQuillan** said he served as Howard's guardian, taking him to medical appointments and horse races and giving him Christmas and birthday presents. Howard worked at a veterans facility and hardly spent any money. He bought his clothes secondhand and his savings were well-invested, **McQuillan** said.

In early 2007, shortly after Howard's death, **McQuillan** nearly emptied the World War II veteran's estate, which once contained more than \$900,000, **McQuillan** admitted to Probate Judge Diane Rapple on Dec. 31.

"I would like to impress on the court the remorse I have," **McQuillan** said Thursday.

When prodded by McBain, **McQuillan** said most of the stolen money went to people he had met in the Dominican Republic and wanted to help. He said he has a "personality flaw" and liked to think of himself as a hero. His lawyer, Alfred Brandt, said **McQuillan** visited the country several times and sent money, and Brandt has seen documentation of the disbursements.

McBain said **McQuillan** provided an insufficient explanation of what happened to the funds and said he wants an accounting within 30 days.

The cash was to go to Howard's legal heirs, his only living sibling, Marilyn Jacob, an Alzheimer's

patient who lives in Florida; and the sons and daughter of his sister, Jean Marie Howard Rippentrop, who died in 1992.

"This has had a devastating effect on my family," said Marilyn Jacob's husband, Bernard Jacob, in a statement. Jacob, who handles his wife's affairs, was not present at the hearing, but a courthouse employee read the statement to the judge.

Jacob said he believed the money was in an account in the Caribbean, a fact Brandt disputes.

The inheritance could have gone toward Marilyn Jacob's care, which costs about \$5,000 a month, Bernard Jacob wrote, calling **McQuillan's** lies and actions "unbelievable."

"His admitted actions have brought dishonor to the court and the entire legal community," he said.

Of the estate money that was not sent overseas, **McQuillan** gave Jacob \$100,000, he used \$5,585 for Howard's funeral expenses, and \$1,113 went to paying a Probate Court fee, according to court records.

An estimated \$28,400 was used to buy a parcel of land, which has since been conveyed to Howard's estate and sold, Brandt said.

Brandt said the land was for **McQuillan's** wife, who rides horses.

The two have since divorced. **McQuillan's** crimes cost him his marriage, and one of his three sons does not talk to him, Brandt said.

"It has destroyed the family, and it has destroyed his ability to earn a living," Brandt said.

**McQuillan** previously was a respectable, contributing member of the community, Brandt said, but once he took some money it became easier to take more.

McBain said he believed **McQuillan** specifically targeted the estate. He knew the only meaningful heir had Alzheimer's disease, the judge said.

If the law allowed it, "you'd go to prison 10 years," McBain said.