



RICHARD A. BROWN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY
QUEENS COUNTY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568
718-286-6000**

Release # 152-2006
www.queensda.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2006

CONTACT: KEVIN RYAN
NICOLE NAVAS
MERIS CAMPBELL
(718) 286-6315

**D.A. BROWN: THREE ASTORIA 'PSYCHICS' CHARGED WITH FRAUD
FOLLOWING UNDERCOVER CRYSTAL BALL CRACKDOWN**

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that three Astoria women claiming to be psychics have been charged with fortune telling following an investigation in which undercover officers posed as clients interested in obtaining readings. In one case, it is charged that the alleged psychic defrauded one of the officers of more than a thousand dollars by claiming to be able to perform exorcism rites to remove evil spirits.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendants are charged with preying upon vulnerable individuals seeking advice for their problems to swindle money for their own benefit. As claimed psychics, the defendants themselves apparently suffered vision deficiencies as they could not see themselves being prosecuted on fraud charges in their futures."

The District Attorney identified the defendants as Sabrina Martell (a/k/a Sabrina Mitchell), 42, of 47-02 30th Avenue; Dorothy Miller, 53, of 32-14 30th Avenue; and Rose Miller (a/k/a Rosa), 73, of 37-17 30th Avenue, all of Astoria. The defendants are being held pending arraignment later today in Queens Criminal Court in Kew Gardens. Martell is charged with fourth-degree grand larceny, first-degree scheme to defraud and fortune telling. The Millers, who are not related, are each charged with petit larceny and fortune telling. If convicted, Martell faces up to four years in prison and the Millers each face up to one year in jail.

District Attorney Brown pointed out that under New York State law a person cannot hold him or herself out as a fortune teller and claim to use occult powers to answer questions, give advice or exorcise evil spirits or curses unless it is stated that the readings are done for entertainment or amusement purposes only.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the criminal charges filed against the defendant Martell, two undercover officers posing as "psychic" clients met various times with the defendant – often at her place of business at 47-02 30th Avenue which advertised "Readings By Julia" on an outside window – between March 28 and June 27, 2006 and paid her \$25 on at least two occasions for her purported psychic services and advice. During the course of this three-month period the defendant allegedly told one undercover agent that she could remove evil spirits for an extra \$900 and that she saw "problems" in the second undercover's life.

The complaint additionally charges that the defendant told the second undercover that someone had given her mother something bad to eat when she was inside her mother's womb and requested \$1,300 from the undercover to bring her ex-boyfriend back and fix a jealousy that another woman had on her. On one occasion, the defendant allegedly performed a purported ritual to determine if God's will was present; specifically, the defendant had the undercover tie three knots on a string, which were allegedly gone when the defendant rolled the string up into a ball. However, the undercover observed the defendant switch the string. The defendant was arrested on June 27, 2006 when the undercover handed the defendant \$1,100 that she had allegedly previously requested.

The District Attorney said that, according to the criminal charges filed against Dorothy Miller, on the afternoon of March 21, 2006, the undercover officer observed the defendant sitting inside 32-14 30th Avenue with the words "Reading By Elena" written on the outside. On at least three occasions between March 21 and June 23, 2006, the undercover gave the defendant between \$25 and \$30 for psychic tarot card readings, during which the defendant allegedly said she could remove evil spirits for additional sums of money, typically ranging from \$275 to \$ 375.

(more)

Finally, it is charged that on March 21 and March 28, 2006, the undercover officer entered Rose Miller's business establishment at 37-17 30th Avenue, which had the words "Psychic Readings by Rosa" on a wooden stand outside the entrance. On each occasion, the undercover allegedly paid the defendant \$35 for a psychic tarot card reading and the defendant made purported psychic predictions after stating that she could tell the officer's future.

In all three cases, it is alleged that the defendants never stated nor there were signs anywhere on their premises indicating that their psychic readings or services were for entertainment purposes only.

District Attorney Brown noted that the investigation is continuing and requested that victims of similar crimes come forward and contact his office.

The investigation was conducted by Detectives Evelyn Alegre and Sergeant John W. Kenna of the District Attorney's Detective Bureau under the supervision of Lieutenant Robert J. Burke and the overall supervision of Chief Lawrence J. Festa and Deputy Chief Albert D. Velardi and Police Officer Michael Tice of the New York City's Police Department's 114th Precinct under the supervision of Lieutenant Joseph Gulotta and Sergeant Adam Ramos of the NYPD's Intelligence Division under the overall supervision of Deputy Inspector Brian McCarthy, Commanding Officer of the 114 Precinct.

Assistant District Attorney Joseph G. D'Arrigo, of the District Attorney's Economic and Environmental Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and Christina Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

#

Note to Editors: An e-version of this press release is posted on the QDA website at www.queensda.org.