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QUEENS MAN CHARGED WITH STEALING \$11,000
IN TEXT MESSAGE SCAM TO DECEASED MAN'S SISTER IN IRELAND
Defendant Allegedly Conned Victim into Sending Money Using Dead Man's Cell Phone;
Culprit Also Accused of Opening Credit Card in Deceased Man's Name;
Faces Up to 15 Years in Prison if Convicted

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Frederick Gilbert, 53, has been charged with grand larceny, identity theft and other crimes for allegedly stealing \$11,000 from a woman in Ireland by using her dead brother's cell phone to convince her *he* was her sibling – and then repeatedly requesting she send him money in April 2019.

District Attorney Katz said, “The defendant in this case allegedly preyed on a woman in another country to feed his greed. The victim had no idea her brother had died and sadly, this defendant used that to his advantage. The victim was convinced through text messages from the dead man's cell phone that he was her brother and needed money. For about a month, she was allegedly conned her into sending thousands of dollars.”

Gilbert, of 79th Street in Middle Village, Queens, was arraigned Monday before Queens Criminal Court Judge Mary Bejarano on a complaint charging him with grand larceny in the third and fourth degree, criminal possession of stolen property in the third degree, criminal possession of a forged instrument in the second degree and identity theft in the first and third degree. Judge Bejarano ordered the defendant to return to Court on May 5, 2021. If convicted, Gilbert faces up to 15 years in prison.

According to the charges, in March 2019, the defendant used a cell phone belonging to the recently deceased Thomas Munnely to send text messages to the man's sister in Ireland. Pretending to be Mr. Munnely, the text messages allegedly stated that the brother and defendant had an accident at the deceased man's flooring business in Queens. For several days, the victim text messages persuading her to send money to the defendant to cover medical expenses and to settle a threatened lawsuit. Believing that her brother was in financial distress, the victim sent three wire transfers to Gilbert totaling \$11,000. On April 1, 2019, she sent \$5,000; she sent \$3,500 on April 14; and \$2,500 on April 23, 2019. On each occasion, the woman received messages confirming the wire transfers had been received.

DA Katz said, according to the charges, the victim also received a message from her “brother” on April 22, and after sending money on April 23, 2019, she stopped getting text messages from him. Worried, the woman

contacted the New York City Police Department on May 7, 2019 and requested a wellness check. Police informed the woman that her brother had actually died in a local hospital on March 4, 2019.

Continuing, according to the complaint, on March 23, 2019, an online credit card was opened using the personal information of Mr. Munnely. Between April 5 and April 29, 2019, several credit card transactions were made totaling just under \$460. The defendant was allegedly present when a cash advance withdrawal using the same credit card was attempted at a Capitol One branch in Howard Beach, Queens.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Filip Glowa of the New York City Police Department's Grand Larceny Division, along with ADA Catherine Jahn of the Queens District Attorney's Office.

Assistant District Attorney Christine Burke, Section Chief of the DA's Elder Fraud Unit, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Joseph Conley, Bureau Chief of the Frauds Bureau, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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