

Couple sentenced for abusing elderly man

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Prince Frederick, MD – Calvert County Assistant State’s Attorney Kathryn Marsh described it as “the most egregious elderly abuse case” she had ever prosecuted. Calvert County Circuit Court Judge Mark Chandlee concurred and handed down a sentence that so upset the female defendant that she dove to the courtroom floor, wailing hysterically.

The drama occurred Monday, Feb. 9 in Calvert County Circuit Court. The defendant, Teresa Lee Brown, 33 of Chesapeake Beach had pled guilty Jan. 5 to one count of vulnerable adult abuse physical injury. Brown’s husband, Jeffrey Jackson Brown, 39, also of Chesapeake Beach entered an Alford plea in circuit court that same day on a single count of abuse/neglect of a vulnerable adult family member. He was also sentenced Feb. 9.

The victim, Teresa Brown’s father, was remanded to her care following a stroke. According to court records, the abuse occurred between August 2013 and May 2014.

Marsh provided Chandlee with a photograph of the victim taken after the alleged abuses had been discovered. The attorney stated the elderly man resembled “an Auschwitz victim.”

The Browns were permitted to live in the man’s home in exchange for providing care to him. Marsh said what authorities subsequently learned was that the home became infested with ants and maggots. The man subsequently developed staph and Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (mrsa). In the picture provided to Chandlee the man also appeared malnourished.

“She was put in a position of trust,” said Marsh, who told the court that a government agency even allocated money to the Browns for the elderly man’s care. Marsh recommended a six-year jail sentence, adding that she saw no benefit to putting Brown on probation.

Sonji Moore, Teresa Brown’s attorney, said her client had much to deal with at the time her father was in her care. The defendant’s husband had been injured in a motorcycle accident, her mother was incapacitated and she had to care for her three children. The couple was beset with financial problems. “She could not handle it,” said Moore. “Things were overwhelming for her.” Moore said Brown’s effort to care for her father “got out of control. This is probably the most difficult thing she has ever faced. She admits what she did. She regrets it.”

“I called Social Services because I knew Teresa couldn’t handle this,” said Brown’s mother, who spoke during the proceedings. “My daughter does not deserve to suffer like this. I know she has a drug problem.”

The victim has since been placed in a nursing home and has apparently recovered from the ailments incurred while in his daughter’s care. While family members claimed they couldn’t afford to admit the elderly man to a nursing home, Marsh stated the victim has a military pension and social security.

“She has punished herself,” said Moore, who asked that her client be put in a substance abuse program and sentenced “at the bottom of the guidelines.”

“I’ve never hurt anybody in my life, I don’t even spank my kids,” said Brown.

“A picture is worth a thousand words,” said Chandlee, who glanced again at the victim’s picture and declared, “this is outrageous. I don’t believe this man was in your care and you did the best you can. No human deserves to be in this condition. I can’t look the other way. This is the worst case I’ve ever seen. There needs to be a message sent to you and the community that people can’t be treated this way.”

Teresa Brown’s courtroom meltdown began immediately after Chandlee imposed a six-year jail term. The stunned courtroom spectators were then ordered to “clear the courtroom” by a sheriff’s deputy.

Marsh said of Jeffrey Brown that he refused to cooperate with healthcare providers who came to the house to aid the elderly man. The couple, said Marsh, failed to provide proper food, hygiene and medical care to the victim.

“Obviously, the level of care was very poor,” said Jeffrey Brown’s attorney, Joseph F. Vallario Jr. The attorney noted that his client was incarcerated during most of the time the abusive care occurred and that he (Jeffrey Brown) is on “100 percent disability” due to his motorcycle accident. “It was a bad situation but he was there about half the time,” said Vallario. “There are a lot of people to blame.”

Jeffrey Brown had no comment.

“I can’t get over the condition your father-in-law was in,” Chandlee told Jeffrey Brown. “You could have called someone to help but that wasn’t done. You have a prior record. You have other issues.”

Chandlee sentenced Brown to two years for violation of probation and four years for abuse/neglect of a vulnerable adult family member, with the sentences to be served consecutively.

The judge declared his decision a “fair and appropriate sentence.”

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