



Department of Justice

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias
Northern District of Georgia

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CONTACT: Patrick Crosby

(404)581-6016

FAX (404)581-6160

EX-BERRY COLLEGE OFFICIAL SENTENCED FOR DEFRAUDING BERRY COLLEGE

Rome, GA - ROBERT LEE PARKER, 54, of Rome, Georgia, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Harold L. Murphy on charges of conspiracy and interstate transportation of stolen property that stemmed from a scheme to defraud Berry College of profits from timber on its land.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of the case, "It is always painful to find out that an important institution has been defrauded by an official it trusted. Today's sentence reflects the seriousness of Mr. Parker's crimes and brings a measure of justice to Berry College."

PARKER was sentenced to 4 years, 8 months in federal prison to be followed by 3 years of supervised release. He was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$3,057,560 to Berry College.

According to Nahmias and the information presented in court: Beginning in approximately 1995 and continuing until 2001, PARKER was involved in a scheme to steal timber and money from Berry College. Unbeknownst to Berry College officials, PARKER, who was the Director of Land Resources during that time period, permitted a now-defunct timber company, "North Georgia Forest Products," to harvest timber on Berry's land without paying Berry for the timber removed and sold to wood mills. In exchange for allowing the removal of Berry's timber at such a discounted price, proceeds for the timber were paid to PARKER personally or to third parties for PARKER's benefit, including to PARKER's interior decorator.

Once Berry suspected that timber proceeds were being diverted, PARKER attempted to cover up the scheme by soliciting two others to write several back-dated checks for timber that had been removed from Berry's land. PARKER reimbursed them with his own personal check. PARKER then submitted the back-dated checks to Berry and represented that he had just found these checks.

The evidence showed that PARKER was also involved in several real estate “flips” in which he would cause the College to pay a premium for pieces of land owned by third parties and then, unbeknownst to Berry, PARKER would receive a commission from the seller of the land for setting up the transaction. After Berry discovered PARKER’s scheme, PARKER was forced to resign from Berry College in August, 2001. Berry College has cooperated fully with law enforcement in the investigation and the prosecution of PARKER.

As part of the sentence and the plea agreement filed in this case, PARKER forfeits his interest in his residence, located at 21 Palmer Drive, Rome, Georgia. The house is estimated to be worth over \$400,000.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney BJay Pak prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.