



Department of Justice

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias
Northern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
09/01/2006

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan/>

CONTACT: Patrick Crosby
(404)581-6016
FAX (404)581-6160

EX-BERRY COLLEGE OFFICIAL PLEADS GUILTY TO THEFT OF BERRY COLLEGE TIMBER

Rome, GA - ROBERT LEE PARKER, 54, of Rome, Georgia, pleaded guilty today in federal court to charges of conspiracy and interstate transportation of stolen property, relating to a scheme to defraud Berry College of approximately \$2.5 million in profits from the sale of timber on its land.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of the case, "The Berry College community was shocked to learn that Parker had grossly abused his position as the head of Berry's Land Resources Department to enrich himself. For years, he used Berry's precious timber resources as his own personal cash-cow, depriving Berry College of a valuable source of income that should have been used to pay some of the college's expenses."

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

Once Berry College suspected that timber proceeds were being diverted, PARKER attempted to cover up the scheme by soliciting certain individuals in the timber business to write several back-dated checks purportedly for timber that had been removed from Berry's land. After these individuals gave PARKER the back-dated checks, PARKER reimbursed them with his own personal check. PARKER then submitted the back-dated checks to Berry College, falsely representing that he had just found them. After Berry discovered PARKER's scheme in August 2001, Berry began its own investigation by hiring an investigator familiar with the timber business. Ultimately, Berry referred the matter to law enforcement and

cooperated fully throughout the ensuing investigation and prosecution of this matter. PARKER resigned from Berry College when the scheme was discovered.

Pursuant to the plea agreement, PARKER agreed to forfeit his interest in his residence, located at 21 Palmer Drive, Rome, Georgia. The residence has an estimated value of over \$400,000. As a result of his plea, PARKER faces a maximum sentence of fifteen years in federal prison, although his actual sentence will be determined by the Court after consideration of the federal sentencing guidelines. There is no parole in the federal system. Sentencing for PARKER has been set for November 17, 2006, at 1:30 p.m., before United States District Judge Harold L. Murphy in Rome.

This case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney BJay Pak is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, 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 .