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In Steven Green's defense

By Times Staff Report
Published February 19, 2007

In his defense

Excerpts of testimonial letters to U.S. District Judge Susan Bucklew on behalf of Steven Green:

"Your honor, sadly, there are some very bad people in this world, but Steve Green is not one of them. We all make mistakes and he has done his best to rectify his mistakes. Steve Green is a very unique person and is not a person who belongs in prison — he is smart, intuitive, interesting, has always been a pillar of strength, and a person all his friends lean on. Additionally, Steve Green's absence would have a tremendous ripple effect on the charitable organizations that rely on his focus and determination."

— Lorraine Bracco, actor, star of The Sopranos and Goodfellas

"Steve has led several successful and memorable special events over the years. I can speak firsthand about his role as event chair of our organization's first benefit art auction and exhibition last spring. That event netted nearly \$150,000 in contributions and sales, and focused attention on the creative gifts of artists with disabilities, whose artwork was the centerpiece of the evening. Steve was the driving force behind the fundraising and publicity, and he played a key role during the event as the evening's principal host."

— Joseph S. Gordon, director of development, the Shield Institute, a non-profit which assists developmentally disabled New Yorkers

"Mr. Green has been an outspoken champion of making our schools safe from bullying and harassment for our children. He has taken an interest in fighting discrimination and intolerance wherever it exists. He has personally advocated on our behalf to his peers, elected officials and policy makers."

—Alan Van Capelle, executive director of the Empire State Pride Agenda Foundation, a New York gay and lesbian civil rights organization

[Last modified February 19, 2007, 22:39:21]

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by wanda 05/10/07 11:59 AM

I did business with Steven Green about 7-years ago and I was very impressed with his properties. The apartments were luxury - wood floors, hollywood kitchens, dishwashers and the tenants were paying modest rents. Not sure when or if it all changed.

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Philanthropist ... and a fraud

In sentencing Steven Green in Tampa today, a judge will weigh his charity against his crimes.

By JEFF TESTERMAN
Published February 20, 2007

At a 2002 charity gala at New York's Plaza Hotel, Steven Green straightened his tuxedo, smiled and relished the moment. On one arm was The Sopranos co-star Lorraine Bracco. On the other was actor-turned-director Penny Marshall. They toasted Green, a tireless fundraiser and board member of the Shield Institute, which assists developmentally disabled New Yorkers. Green started his improbable journey to the Plaza working construction. He clerked at a deli, skipped college and built a real estate empire, building by rundown building. Now at age 37, he oversaw a \$65-million real estate portfolio, slept in mansions valued at \$5-million and flew to appointments in a pair of Cessna Citation charter jets. But as he was feted at the Plaza, the secrets of another side of Steven Green were starting to spill out.

A fire had broken out at Amberwood, a Tampa apartment complex he owned. Hillsborough officials found hundreds of code violations. They padlocked the complex, forcing dozens of tenants into the street. Less than two weeks before the Plaza gala, a bank filed suit to foreclose on the loan Green used to finance Amberwood. But the \$9.49-million judgment the bank won wasn't the worst of it. It turned out the philanthropist had committed fraud by using a falsified Social Security number on the loan application. Green had also failed to file income tax returns for three years, during which his personal income topped \$3-million. Green pleaded guilty to those federal crimes and is scheduled to be sentenced in Tampa today. Determining whether he gets probation or as much as eight years in prison, U.S. District Judge Susan Bucklew will weigh Green's business accomplishments and charity against his crimes. Whom does she sentence? Jekyll or Hyde?

Howard Shiffman wasn't sure what to make of the guy he sat down with at TGIF's restaurant in 2002 to negotiate the sale of the Ashley Square Apartments in Tampa.

"He had a thousand dollars worth of clothes on his back, but he looked like an unmade bed," said Shiffman. "He didn't have a pencil, a pen or a piece of paper in front of him, and he started doing all these fantastic math calculations in his head like a savant, and they were all correct. It was quite amazing."

Shiffman warned Green about an ex-employee Green had agreed to hire. Shiffman had fired her because he said she had set up a "ghost" apartment, falsified the books and took thousands of dollars under the table from the ghost renters.

She was charged with grand theft, but Green didn't mind. He said he was looking for a hard-nosed manager.

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[Times photo, 2002]

Holes in exterior walls and other code violations caused the Amberwood Apartments to be closed because of unsafe living conditions.

Update: [Sentencing postponed](#)

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Sentencing postponed in fraud case

Early Edition: The judge said she would resume the sentencing hearing next Monday.

By JEFF TESTERMAN
Published February 20, 2007

TAMPA — A federal judge heard arguments today about the possible sentence for New York real estate investor and philanthropist Steven Green, but postponed the remainder of the hearing until next week.

Green, 42, faces up to eight years in prison after pleading guilty in November to fraudulent use of a false Social Security number in an application for a \$9.04-million mortgage on Amberwood Apartments, a loan Green's company defaulted on in 2002.

Green also pleaded guilty last year to failing to file income tax returns for the years 1999, 2000 and 2001, a period in which he had personal income in excess of \$3.1-million.

In today's hearing, U.S. District Judge Susan Bucklew listened to Green's attorneys and federal prosecutors debate whether the loss attributable to Green on the Amberwood loan was zero or more than \$4-million. If the loss was zero, Green could be eligible for probation; if the loss is in the millions, he could be eligible for 51 to 63 months in prison under sentencing guidelines.

Bucklew said she would consider the loss question this week and resume the sentencing hearing at 9 a.m. Monday.

[Last modified February 20, 2007, 14:33:00]

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by ERICA 02/26/07 12:12 PM

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[Times photo: Carrie Pratt] Steven Green walks toward the federal courthouse in Tampa today.

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Friday, November 1, 2002

Tampabay: Landlord's fire claim looks bogus

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Landlord's fire claim looks bogus
A company Steven Green hired for repairs does not appear to exist. The signature of a man who was dead appears on a bid.

[Times photo: Ken Helle] An address given as the contractor's is a townhouse on Harbour Island once rented by Steven Green.

By JEFF TESTERMAN, Times Staff Writer
© St. Petersburg Times
published August 13, 2002

TAMPA -- The day before Thanksgiving in 1999, a fire damaged several units at Steven Green's Cedar Pointe Apartments. Hillsborough County fire investigators estimated the damage at \$40,000 and labeled the fire "suspicious."

Several weeks later, Green filed an insurance claim, saying he had a contracting company's bid for the repair at the run-down complex.

The amount of the claim? \$135,000.

GRAPHIC: Green's claim
Documents obtained by the St. Petersburg Times raise numerous doubts about the validity of the claim by Green, a controversial landlord whose apartments have set records for code violations and fines in Hillsborough:

- The company that Green said submitted the bid for the repair work -- Tampa Bay Contracting Corp. -- it appear among companies with a state contractor's license.
- The business suite shown as the address for Tampa Bay Contracting is not a suite at all. It is a townhouse on Harbour Island in downtown Tampa once rented by Green. The phone number listed for the company on the bid form is actually the number for a cellular phone formerly used by Green.
- Most tellingly, Tampa Bay Contracting's bid was signed by a dead man, Donald Kappas, listed on the bid as a principal of the contracting firm, died on Oct. 4, 1999, seven weeks before the fire at Cedar Pointe Apartments. Kappas was a friend of Green's, but there is no evidence he had any connection with Tampa Bay Contracting. In fact, Kappas worked for a venture capital company in New York City. Green knew Kappas had died; he went to his funeral.

According to one of Green's former employees, the repair work at Cedar Pointe was done by someone who was paid half Tampa Bay Contracting's purported bid of \$135,000.

"A handyman by the name of Larry Schmidt and a couple of helpers did that work," said Tony Zappone, a former Green property manager.

Zappone said Schmidt was paid about \$68,000 to complete the repair work at Cedar Pointe Apartments, a 76-unit complex off Sligh Avenue, just west of 56th Street.

Green no longer owns Cedar Pointe. He sold the complex in July 2000, eight months after the fire.

Reached at his New York office last week, Green said there was nothing irregular about the insurance claim or repair work at Cedar Pointe.

He described Tampa Bay Contracting as a real company run by Kappas, "a dear friend" he had tried to help after Kappas fell on hard times.

Why was Green's townhouse apartment used for Tampa Bay Contracting's address? Because Kappas "slept on my sofa while he was in Tampa," Green said. "He had nowhere else to go."

"I remember loaning him the money to start the corporation," Green said. "Then he died. I was a pallbearer for him."

http://www.sptimes.com/2002/08/13/TampaBay/Landlord_s_fire_claim.shtml



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Green Strikes Again

BY ROCHELLE RENFORD

Transplanted New York landlord Steven Green again attracts law enforcement attention for neglecting his rental units, this time in Tampa.

The article told the story of a New York City landlord who sat in the Bronx House of Detention and contemplated moving to Florida. In New York, Green had amassed \$3-million in building code fines, owed thousands of dollars to the electric company and was facing lawsuits from tenants. Green eventually lost 11 buildings to foreclosure. All the while, he lived in a 12,000-square-foot, 21-room mansion.

Green did move to Tampa and the *Planet* found that his shady business practices moved with him.

Two years ago, Green was primarily accused of callousness in getting rid of tenants by encouraging code inspectors to condemn units in the New Terrace Oaks Apartments after he purchased the Tampa complex. Since then, Green may have moved from callous to criminal.

At the Green-owned Marathon Key complex in Tampa, which is empty while renovations are completed, Green racked up \$37,000 in code fines. At Green's Horizon Pointe apartments, Tampa code inspectors condemned six units.

Then, on May 2, residents of more than 100 units in Green's Amberwood Apartments were ordered to gather their belongings and find another place to live.

Hillsborough County code enforcers teamed up with the fire marshal's office to condemn the north Tampa property as unsafe. Code violations ran the gamut, from electrical problems to serious structural decay, said Don Shea, director of the county Community Improvement Department. So far, the violations number between 500 and 600, Shea said.

Shea is working with the fire marshal's office to compile a report with details of the violations for State Attorney Mark Ober. With so many violations, Shea said it could take a week to sort through them all, but there's no guarantee that Green can be held criminally responsible.

"As Steve Green told me on Friday morning, "You don't see any paint on my hands," said Shea.

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Letters

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Disproving Green's claim that he isn't to blame for the Amberwood conditions could take a long time. His contractors may have to prove that it was Green, not they, who committed the more egregious code violations, such as covering up structural damage instead of fixing it.

However, Green has it coming at him from all directions. In addition to Ober looking at Green, several contractors are suing the landlord for non-payment. Tampa Electric is investigating misuse of its meters at his properties.

ABC Commercial Services is one of the companies lining up to get money from Green. ABC attorney James Stanton filed suit this week to recover more than \$30,000 from Green for plumbing, electrical, air-conditioning and heating work.

Last October, ABC filed to foreclose on the Amberwood property because of Green's outstanding bills. When the notice was sent to Green, a representative from his office called and offered to pay the back bills in two installments. ABC stopped the legal proceedings and the first payment came on time. The second payment, due in December, has yet to be received, according to Stanton.

ABC executives eventually realized other apartment complexes that hadn't been paying them for work also belonged to Green. Stanton said Green created a new company almost every time he purchased a property and it wasn't always easy to pick up on Green's involvement before ABC's work was done. ABC has identified five other Green companies that owe money.

Stanton's client isn't the only Green vendor with unpaid invoices. Marissa Lovrenscius, who owned Zoli and Son Painting with her husband, said her once-thriving business is teetering on the brink of collapse because of Green. "He's put me into debt," Lovrenscius said. "He wiped out our savings and then some."

Zoli and Son painted apartments that were being prepared for renters, said Lovrenscius. "He says he fixed all these places up and he did fix them up," said Lovrenscius. "But at our expense."

Tracking down Green to squeeze a payment out of him became an adventure, according to Lovrenscius. She once sat in his office from 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., when Green figured out that she was serious about not leaving without a check. He sent a messenger with \$5,000 of the \$12,000 he owed.

Another time, Lovrenscius got a tip that Green was in town and hunted him down from complex to complex until the embarrassment wore him down. "He didn't want me going looking for him when he was out showing people the properties and asking for money," said Lovrenscius.

Green promised to pay but didn't follow through. Lovrenscius is now suing for more than \$40,000 that she said Green owes her company. She is angry but she's not alone. Doing research for her attorney to reduce legal expenses, Lovrenscius said she has learned there are contractors with liens against every Green property she has found to date.

Green's Tampa lawyer didn't return *Planet* messages seeking comment.

Contact Staff Writer Rochelle Renford at 813-248-8888, ext. 163, or rochelle.renford@weeklyplanet.com.

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