

81-YEAR-OLD WOMAN SENTENCED FOR MAIL FRAUD

by Mary Jo Denton

NASHVILLE -- Almost three years after being indicted by a federal grand jury, a Cookeville woman has been sentenced to three years in prison for fraud in connection with an Internet business she and her son ran.



Mary Hopson, 81, who is remembered here for other thefts and fraud, was sentenced in U.S. District Court in Nashville last week to three years in prison and three years of supervised release, according to Jerry E. Martin, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee.

Hopson and her son, **John Hopson**, were indicted in April 2008 on charges of mail fraud and access device fraud in an Internet scheme they conducted from 2005 to 2008.

The two ran an Internet-based knife and cutlery business and through that business, operated a scheme in which they accepted payment from customers but failed to deliver the items purchased, federal prosecutors said.

They also obtained credit and debit card numbers from customers and then used that data to buy items for themselves, according to the indictments in the case.

"The intended total loss was in excess of \$80,000, with actual losses to victims estimated at approximately \$64,000," U.S. Attorney Martin said.

Last September, Mary Hopson pleaded guilty, as her son, John Hopson, had before that. She came before U.S. District Court Judge William Haynes last Friday for sentencing, and John Hopson is set to be sentenced on April 22.

At the sentencing hearing, Hopson's attorney argued that Hopson's age should be considered in that the likelihood of repeating criminal activity declines with age.

But Judge Haynes rejected that argument and noted that "Hopson's fraudulent behavior didn't start until she was 64 years old and had continued almost 17 years until her arrest in 2008," Martin said.

Back in 2006, Hopson was convicted of stealing from her employers at that time, owners of a storage rental business, and she had previously been charged with fraud in connection with the sale of a picture book of Putnam history which she compiled and sold.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 1 April 2011

*See more about Putnam County, TN: at <http://www.ajlambert.com>