

Sentences thrown out for McCorkle, wife

The infomercial guru's conviction on fraud charges was upheld, though.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A federal appeals court in Atlanta dismissed Tuesday the 24-year prison sentences given to an infomercial guru and his wife accused of swindling customers with a get-rich-quick real estate scheme.

The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, while upholding the convictions of William J. and Chantal McCorkle and two others, ruled that a judge erred in sentencing the McCorkles.

The McCorkles, of Lake Mary, were convicted in November 1998 on 151 counts of fraud, money laundering and false statement charges.

The case was returned to the trial court to determine whether, in conspiring to launder money, the McCorkles intended to promote or conceal their unlawful activity.

If the trial court finds that the McCorkles' objective was to promote unlawful activity, they still face a minimum sentence of 24 years.

But if the court determines the McCorkles' objective was to conceal their unlawful activity, they face a sentence of 17.5 years to almost 22 years.

Prosecutors alleged the McCorkles deceived their customers by promising to put up their own money for customers who found property close to foreclosure or depressed property for sale at half its equity. The McCorkles sold tens of millions of dollars worth of videotapes, audio tapes and pamphlets explaining the dubious plan.

Ocala Sentinel

Tuesday, July 16, 2002