

Scam artist handed 8-year term

By Gary Grado / Tribune

April 25, 2006

A Gilbert man who was sentenced Monday to eight years in prison for ripping off thousands of people with bad credit in a telemarketing scheme was once a successful salesman. Harvey Sloniker also had a high grade point average in college, where he played football, and he's now considering law school.

Those credentials prompted U.S. District Judge Frank Martone, who put the 39-year-old behind bars, to answer one question: Was it a one-time moral lapse or a character flaw that led him to use his talents to form an "evil empire" rather than a legitimate business?

"There's no question the financial scheme here was evil and harmed large numbers of people," Martone said in justifying his sentence.

Sloniker, who was indicted in August 2004 with five others, said alcohol skewed his thinking from 2000 to 2002.

"Things got really stressful," Sloniker said. "Things were clouded.

Sloniker pleaded guilty Jan. 11 to one count each of wire fraud, conspiracy to commit loan fraud and failure to pay taxes.

He admitted in his plea deal that he operated telemarketing boiler rooms throughout Phoenix under various company names such as Corporate Industries Inc. and ATM Machine Wrap Inc.

He would obtain lists of people with bad credit, including many elderly people, and offer them a major credit card for a fee of \$239. But customers would get a card to purchase a limited range of catalog merchandise.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Rachel Hernandez said Sloniker ripped off an estimated 58,000 people.

He also admitted to falsifying applications for home loans and not turning over \$97,461 in federal taxes he withheld from his 600 to 700 employees in the fourth quarter of 2001.

The plea agreement called for a sentencing range between eight and 10 years.

Sloniker's co-defendants, John Desiderio, 39, of Chandler; Richard Nail, 33, of Melbourne, Fla.; Robert Shinn, 47, Kindy Jonagan, 38, and Tye Sloniker, 29, of Gilbert, have pleaded guilty.

Desiderio is to be sentenced today.

Reach reporter Gary Grado at (602) 258-1746 or ggrado@aztrib.com.

Copyright 2006 East Valley Tribune