
Crime writer wins \$50.9 million verdict against advisor

By Editor Test Thu, Feb 21, 2013

"Notwithstanding eight figure earnings per year during that period, CEI and [Patricia] Cornwell learned that their net worth, while substantial, was the equivalent of only approximately one year's net income," according to the 2009 complaint.

A federal court jury in Boston unanimously found this week that accounting and business management firm Anchin, Block & Anchin LLP acted negligently and in breach of its fiduciary duties in managing the financial affairs of best-selling crime writer Patricia Cornwell (pictured above) and her partner, McLean Hospital neuroscientist Dr. Staci Gruber.

The lawsuit accused the firm of excessive and unauthorized billing, failing to put the clients' interests ahead of its own, and gross mismanagement of Ms. Cornwell's and Dr. Gruber's money over four and a half years, which resulted in the loss of millions of dollars.

Cornwell charged that Anchin, Block & Anchin LLP engaged in high-risk investment strategies without her approval. According to the 2009 [complaint](#),

"In July of 2009, after four and a half years in which Anchin controlled Ms. Cornwell's and CEI's business affairs and investments, including all check writing purportedly on behalf of Ms. Cornwell and CEI, Ms. Cornwell demanded information as to her net worth, and that of CEI. Notwithstanding eight figure earnings per year during that period, CEI and Ms. Cornwell learned that their net worth, while substantial, was the equivalent of only approximately one year's net income. They also learned that Anchin had borrowed on their behalf collectively several million dollars, comprised of mortgages for real property and a loan for the purchase of a helicopter."

"We felt we owed it to ourselves and to others who have been victimized by financial advisors to have our day in court," Ms. Cornwell said publicly after the verdict. "A portion of the monetary verdict we receive will go to McLean Hospital for psychiatric research."

Federal District Court Judge George A. O'Toole, Jr. presided over the seven-week trial at the John Joseph Moakley U.S. Courthouse in Boston. Under Massachusetts law, he may also award Ms. Cornwell and Dr. Gruber payment of their legal fees and multiple damages in a subsequent proceeding.

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