

Michigan couple declared guilty of extorting Stamos

By John Flesher
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

MARQUETTE, Mich. — A Michigan couple were convicted Thursday of trying to extort \$680,000 from actor John Stamos by threatening to sell old photos of him with strippers and cocaine to the tabloids unless he paid up.

Allison Coss, 24, and Scott Sippola, 31, were found guilty of conspiracy and using e-mail to threaten a person's reputation — charges that could land them in prison for up to five years.

FBI agents arrested the two in a sting in December at an Upper Peninsula airport after Stamos' lawyer complained that the actor was the target of an extortion attempt.

Defense attorneys told the jury that it wasn't a crime to sell photos to Stamos before going to the tabloids. FBI agents, however, testified that a search of the couple's home failed to turn up any evidence of embarrassing pictures.

Stamos, 46, was too late to the courtroom to hear the verdict but

was present minutes later when the judge polled each juror, a common step in trials. He smiled and looked relieved. Sippola was expressionless while Coss wiped her eyes.

Dozens of fans waited to congratulate the former "ER" and "Full House" star as he left the federal courthouse. In a written statement, Stamos said he was "shocked and perplexed" by the "false stories" offered by Coss and defense lawyers.

"These slanderous allegations to smear my reputation were part of their defense to redirect attention away from the federal crime of extortion," he said. "There was no hot tub, no drugs, no nudity and nothing sexual in nature involved in my friendship with this woman. They lied about everything."

Coss, who met Stamos in Florida in 2004 at age 17, said she had a photo of him with cocaine but that it disappeared during an FBI raid on her home. Agents denied it.

"I don't think Shakespeare could write a story to set up a fake



Damian Dovarganes/Associated Press

Stamos, 46, said there were never any pictures of him with cocaine and strippers.

blackmail scheme to set up a real blackmail scheme. But that is exactly what they did," Assistant U.S. Attorney Maarten Vermaat told the jury.

"This is completely 100 percent

made up," he said of the "get-rich-quick scheme."

As Stamos watched and listened from the front row, defense attorney Sarah Henderson said Coss and Sippola were "in over their heads" but didn't commit a crime.

"What happens to the pictures? I don't know the answer to that. I wish I did," Henderson told the jury, adding that it would be a "stretch" to believe Coss and Sippola would craft a scheme but have nothing to sell to Stamos or the tabloids.

There is no dispute that Stamos met Coss after he had just separated from his supermodel wife, Rebecca Romijn and stayed in touch with her.

Stamos testified that he did not use cocaine and inappropriately in 2001. He said Coss sent him e-mails last year saying a man was harassing her about having incriminating photos of the pair.

"I'll bust him up. ... We didn't take any bad pies. I'm too smart," Stamos replied in an e-mail.

Defense lawyer Frank Stupak Jr. said the verdict was disappointing but the trial was fair.



Courtesy of HankCochran.com

Hank Cochran, left, smiles with Willie Nelson, right.

Singer, 74, dies

By Joe Edwards
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Hank Cochran, a consummate songwriter who composed a string of country hits including "Make the World Go Away" for Eddy Arnold, died Thursday. He was 74.

Martha E. Moore, his publicist, said Cochran died at his home in Hendersonville north of Nashville. He had been in declining health in recent years, and suffered an aortic aneurysm in March. He was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer two years ago.

He co-wrote the following No. 1 hits: Patsy Cline's "I Fall to Pieces"; George Strait's "Ocean Front Property"; and "Set 'em Up Joe" by Vern Gosdin.

He also wrote the No. 1 hits: "Don't You Ever Get Tired of Hurting Me" by Ronnie Milsap; "He's Got You" by Cline and Loretta Lynn and "I Want to Go With You" by Arnold.

Moore said Cochran's close friends Billy Ray Cyrus, Jamey Johnson and Buddy Cannon visited him Wednesday night and they sang songs together.

Cochran said recently: "I'm sure thankful to be where I am, and that the good Lord has run enough songs through me that I'm seriously satisfied with. As long as he keeps giving them to me, I'm going to try to do something with them."

Gibson investigated for possible abuse

By Anthony McCartney
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

LOS ANGELES — Detectives investigating Mel Gibson for a possible domestic violence case have received audio recordings from a court deciding the actor-director's child custody case, authorities said Thursday.

Sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore said CDs were turned over during a closed session in the custody case. The hearing was attended by several sheriff's investigators, including detectives who look in possible child abuse.

Whitmore declined to say whether the investigation into

domestic violence allegations had expanded. "I'm not going to get into why they're there," he said.

Attorneys for Gibson and ex-girlfriend Oksana Grigorieva did not speak to reporters after the hearing. The former couple are involved in a dispute over custody arrangements of their 8-month-old daughter.

The case is sealed and all proceedings have been done in closed session.

Gibson's criminal attorney, Blair Berk, also attended the hearing.

Whitmore said detectives will now work to authenticate the recordings released by the court.

He did not say how many recordings were included or how long they were.

It is unclear whether the recordings include those that have been posted by the celebrity website RadarOnline.com. The site has posted more than 20 minutes of recordings of arguments between a man who sounds distinctly like Gibson and a woman identified by the site as Grigorieva.

Detectives are looking into allegations that Gibson harmed Grigorieva during a January confrontation. He said he does not know when the case would be turned over to prosecutors.



Acquires Britain/Associated Press

Gibson and Grigorieva pose at a movie premiere in Paris.

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HOROSCOPES

By Jacqueline Bigar

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Friday, July 16, 2010.

This year, open up to new possibilities and better friendships. You also might notice that your professional associations are slightly more quirky or eccentric than in the past. You are not going to change people; rather, enjoy their differences. If you are single, you yearn to share your life with someone. Although you will meet many new people, choosing the right person for you will take time. If you are attached, your personal and domestic life proves to be a tremendous solace. Invest more time with your loved one. LIBRA can test your patience.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic, 4-Positive, 3-Average, 2-No-so, 1-Difficult.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
*** You might be as serious as a judge as you start your day, but when all is said and done, there is a remarkable change of mood by noon. The weekend bug might have hit. Others find you curiously rebellious. Remember which side your bread is buttered on. Tonight: Free at last.

TAURUS (April 20-May 21)
*** What you haven't completed becomes an issue. You might feel like you cannot finish all this work. You will. Organize, close the door and screen your calls. A last-minute problem or misunderstanding could slow you down. Tonight: Head home.

GEMINI (May 22-June 20)
**** Once you get going, you'll enjoy yourself even working. A meeting could be equally as distracting. Understand that you are ready for the weekend. Don't allow anyone to mar your happy mood. Tonight: Celebrate.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
**** You might feel limited in some sense, but it would be foolish to let an insecurity or a problem stop you. Your style of communication makes such a difference. Exciting news might head your way. Tonight: Join a friend or two.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
*** Lighten up a little, even if you feel happier being serious, or so you think. Creativity surrounds finances and sounds a yellow caution light. You know when you have gone too far or have pushed too hard. A partner or associate sheds light on this matter. Tonight: Be reasonable, and don't go overboard.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
**** How you feel when you open your big baby blues this a.m. could change radically in a few hours. You also might not have guessed that all this excitement was possible. One party might be very quirky yet delightful. Another demonstrates his or her support. Tonight: You are king- or queenpin ... go for it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
*** Fanciful rather than imitate. You really are out of sorts and not sure of yourself. You have an interesting way of letting someone know that he or she has pushed too far. An unexpected twist could set you back. Relax and go with the flow. Tonight: Vanish. Quickly. You need to clear.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
**** Zero in on what is important, and leave the rest for another day. A child, a potential sweetie or a heartfelt project might suddenly demand your attention. You will want to be there for this person. Tonight: Where the fun is.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
**** Understanding evolves to a new level if you can express yourself and share some feelings. Someone reveals a very intriguing side to him- or herself. Avoid being controlling with others. You could experience a backfire. Tonight: Fate. Very late.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
**** You have frequently experienced Friday life you today. You have already mentally departed for the weekend, but you are still there at your desk. Try to look focused, at least. A phone call or a talk could have you shaking your head. Tonight: Opt for something very different.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
**** A partner makes it clear how very important you are to him or her. A business associate might do the same. Realize that you don't have to return the compliment, and simply say "thank you." Tonight: Happiest around one person rather than a crowd.

BORN TODAY
Dancer Michael Flatley (1958), dancer, actress Ginger Rogers (1911), founder of Christian Science Mary Baker Eddy (1821)

Jacqueline Bigar is on the Internet at www.jacquelinebigar.com

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