



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

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PRESS RELEASE

On September 19, 1986, Ethics Commission staff attorney Alan Plofsky filed a complaint (Docket No. 86-3) against Ms. Meredith Savage, a regional ombudsman in the Department On Aging. (The Complaint was amended on January 16, 1987.) The Complaint, as amended, alleged that Ms. Savage had violated provisions of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials by taking a car and other items from the estate of a Protective Services client whose case she had worked on in her official capacity.

On March 24, 1987, the Ethics Commission and the Respondent settled this matter by entering into a Stipulation and Order. A copy of the Agreement is attached. As part of the stipulation, Ms. Savage admits, and the Commission finds, that she violated the Code as alleged by taking, without making payment, a restorable 1955 Nash Metropolitan automobile, worth approximately \$350-\$500, from the estate of the Protective Services client in question. Ms. Savage's admitted purpose for taking the car was to restore and sell it for personal financial gain. As part of the settlement, the allegation concerning the taking of other items from the estate was dismissed for insufficient evidence.

The Commission did not pursue this matter as a possible criminal violation, because the State Conservator in the Department On Aging, Mr. Andre Gosselin, who was legally responsible for the estate in question, apparently had authorized the taking of the Nash. Instead, the Commission assessed the maximum civil penalty allowed in this instance, two thousand dollars. (One thousand dollars was to be paid within thirty days and one thousand dollars was suspended on the condition that Ms. Savage refrain from further violations of the Code. The one thousand dollar fine has been paid.) Also, as a result of the investigation, the Chairperson of the Ethics Commission, Ms. Julie Peck of New Haven, has written to the Commissioner on Aging to explain certain aspects of the Stipulation and to express the Ethics Commission's concern about the possibility of opportunities for similar future violations of the Code.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL:  
Alan S. Plofsky, Esq.  
State Ethics Commission  
566-4472

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27 Elm Street — Rear [REDACTED] • Hartford, Connecticut 06106

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STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

DOCKET NUMBER 86-3 ) STATE ETHICS COMMISSION  
IN THE MATTER OF A ) 97 ELM STREET (REAR)  
COMPLAINT AGAINST ) HARTFORD, CONN. 06106  
MS. MEREDITH SAVAGE ) MARCH 2, 1987

STIPULATION AND ORDER

1. The Respondent admits that she violated subsections 1-84(b) and (c) of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials (Chapter 10, Part 1, General Statutes) as alleged in paragraphs 6, 7, and 8 of the Amended Complaint issued in this matter, but denies that the violations were intentional or wilful. (A copy of the Amended Complaint is attached to, and made a part of, this Agreement.) Concerning the lack of any intentional or wilful violation, the Respondent states that: (a) with regard to the violation of 1-84(b), the institutionalization of the Individual in question was entirely appropriate under the circumstances; and (b) with regard to the violation of 1-84(c), the taking of the car in question was authorized by the Conservator of the Individual's estate. (Although legally admitting the violations in question, the Respondent further explains her actions in this matter as follows: The car in question was removed to, and stored at, the Respondent's residence at the request of the Conservator. Both she and the Conservator believed this was necessary under the circumstances. It was never the Respondent's intention to buy the car for her own use, or to sell it and keep the proceeds. The Respondent may have made statements which could have been interpreted by others to indicate that the car was for sale. However, unless the prospective buyer expressed a serious interest in the car, she would not have felt it necessary to have explained that any such sale could not be consummated until approved by the Probate Court. The Respondent states that, if she had arranged for the sale of the car it would have been carried out only with the approval of the Conservator and Probate Court, and that all proceeds of any such sale would have been turned over to the Conservator.)

2. The Commission finds that the Respondent violated subsections 1-84(b) and (c) of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials, as alleged in paragraphs 6, 7, and 8 of the Amended Complaint. The Commission further finds that the Respondent

was, at a minimum, negligent in adhering to the requirements of the Code and exercised poor judgment in this matter. Concerning the question of any intentional or wilful violation, the Commission finds that: (a) with regard to the violation of 1-84(b), there is no evidence to suggest an intentional or wilful violation, since the institutionalization of the Individual in question was appropriate under the circumstances; and (b) with regard to the violation of 1-84(c), the Commission is unable to determine whether an intentional or wilful violation occurred, since the taking of the car in question was apparently authorized by the Conservator of the Individual's estate. (With reference to the Respondent's explanatory statements in parenthesis in paragraph 1. of this Agreement, the Commission states that its staff investigation of this matter was unable to verify any of the Respondent's explanations, including her claimed intentions regarding the disposition of the car in question.) The Commission also finds that, based on the book value for similar restorable 1955 Nash Metropolitan ans, the car in question had a value of between \$350-\$500 at the time of its taking; and, if and when restored, would have a value of \$2,500 or more.

3. The Commission finds that the violations alleged in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Amended Complaint are dismissed for insufficient evidence.

4. The Respondent waives her rights, under Section 1-82, General Statutes, to a hearing in this case; and agrees with the Commission to an informal disposition of this matter as authorized by subsection 4-177(d), General Statutes.

WHEREFORE, the Commission issues, and the Respondent agrees to, the following Order: In lieu of any other action it is authorized to take with respect to this matter, the Commission orders the Respondent to henceforth comply with the requirements of subsections 1-84(b) and (c) of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials, and to pay a civil penalty of two thousand dollars. One thousand dollars of the penalty is to be paid within thirty days of the signing of this Agreement, and one thousand dollars of the penalty is hereby suspended in recognition of the Respondent's cooperation in settling this matter and contingent on her fully carrying out the terms of this Stipulation and Order.

*Mercedes B. ...*  
Respondent

3/16/87  
Dated

*Julius Peck*  
Chairperson, State Ethics  
Commission

3/24/87  
Dated



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

C O N F I D E N T I A L

DOCKET NUMBER 86-3 ) STATE ETHICS COMMISSION  
IN THE MATTER OF A ) 97 ELM STREET (REAR)  
COMPLAINT AGAINST ) HARTFORD, CONN. 06106  
MS. MEREDITH SAVAGE ) DECEMBER 12, 1986

AMENDMENT TO COMPLAINT

As a result of the Evaluation of this matter, conducted pursuant to subsection 1-82(a), General Statutes, the Complaint against Ms. Meredith Savage is hereby amended to include the following additional allegations:

8. On or about April 19, 1986, the Respondent, without making payment, removed and took possession of various household and personal items from Gretchen Starr's house at 351 Ocean Avenue.

9. Considering the Respondent's official involvement in Ms. Starr's case (paragraphs 2 and 3, above) her actions (paragraph 8, above) constituted a use of her public office or position, or confidential information received through holding such office or position, to obtain financial gain for herself in violation of subsection 1-84(c), General Statutes.

Alan S. Plofsky  
Alan S. Plofsky, Esq.

12/15/86  
Dated

**CONFIDENTIAL**

CONNECTICUT STATE ETHICS COMMISSION  
97 ELM STREET (REAR)  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106  
TELEPHONE NUMBER 566-4472

COMPLAINT

THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION ISSUES A COMPLAINT ALLEGING A VIOLATION OF:

— xx — THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND STATE EMPLOYEES, CHAPTER 10, PART I, GENERAL STATUTES

— — THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR LOBBYISTS, CHAPTER 10, PART II, GENERAL STATUTES

TIME AND DATE MATTERS COMPLAINED OF OCCURRED: On or about April 19, 1986

PLACE VIOLATION OCCURRED: New London/Norwich area

PERSONS INVOLVED: Ms. Meredith Savage

PROBABLE WITNESSES: Officials and employees of the State Departments of Human Resources, Aging, and Income Maintenance (A specific list of witnesses will be provided in advance of any hearing on this matter)

CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH INDICATE THAT THE CODE OF ETHICS DESIGNATED ABOVE WAS VIOLATED ARE AS FOLLOWS (A SHORT, PLAIN STATEMENT ALLEGING A VIOLATION OF CHAPTER 10, GENERAL STATUTES):

(see attached)

(OVER)

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STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

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9/19/86

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SIGNATURE DATE

COMPLAINANT'S NAME AND ADDRESS: *Alan Plofsky, Esq.*  
 STATE ETHICS COMMISSION  
 97 ELM STREET (REAR)  
 HARTFORD, CT 06106

COMPLAINANT'S TELEPHONE NUMBER: 566-4472

I hereby allege that:

1. Since September 9, 1977, and at all times relevant to this Complaint, Ms. Meredith Savage (hereinafter the "Respondent") has been employed by the State of Connecticut as a Regional Nursing Home Ombudsman in the Department on Aging. By virtue of this employment the Respondent is a "State employee" (subsection 1-79(k), General Statutes) subject to the provisions of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials (Chapter 10, Part I, General Statutes).

2. In the course of her official duties, the Respondent, in January of 1985, first became involved with the case of a Ms. Gretchen Starr. Specifically, after the referral of Ms. Starr to the Department on Aging for possible self-neglect, on January 18, 1985 the Respondent visited Ms. Starr in her home at 351 Ocean Avenue, New London, Connecticut. As a result of this visit the Respondent referred Ms. Starr's case to the Protective Services Unit in the State Department of Human Resources for intervention and provision of protective services.

3. Subsequently, the Respondent again had occasion to become directly involved in Ms. Starr's case. Specifically, on or about April 14, 1986, at the request of the State Conservator in the Department on Aging (Mr. Andre Gosselin) appointed for Ms. Starr, the Respondent accompanied Conservator Gosselin to Ms. Starr's home at 351 Ocean Avenue. The purpose of the Respondent's visit, which was undertaken as part of her official duties, was to assist in the determination of whether Ms. Starr should be placed in a nursing home due to inability to function at home alone. Prior to this April 14 visit the Respondent was aware that the placement of Ms. Starr in a nursing home would result in the sale of her house and other assets by Conservator Gosselin. Based on this visit the Respondent concurred with Conservator Gosselin's opinion that Ms. Starr required immediate institutionalization. On April 18, 1986 Ms. Starr was, in fact, placed in Camelot Convalescent Home, Norwich, Connecticut. On or about April 19, 1986, the Respondent, acting in the course of her official duties, again accompanied Conservator Gosselin to Ms. Starr's house at 351 Ocean Avenue. The stated purposes of her visit were to serve as a witness to the contents of the house and to offer her opinion as to the value of Ms. Starr's assets. (The Respondent is knowledgeable in such matters as a result of her employment as a private antiques and used merchandise dealer.)

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4. On or about April 19, 1986, the Respondent entered into an agreement with Conservator Gosselin to purchase Ms. Starr's 1955 Nash Metropolitan automobile for \$200. At the time of this agreement the Respondent knew that Mr. Gosselin was acting in his official capacity as State Conservator in the Department on Aging. The Respondent also knew that there had been no public advertisement or other notice regarding the sale of the car and no opportunity for members of the public to bid on or otherwise attempt to purchase the car. On or about April 20, 1986, the Respondent, at her own expense, had the Nash moved to her home at Route 2A, Preston, Connecticut. The Respondent's stated purpose for purchasing the car in question was to restore and resell the vehicle. Only subsequent to allegations of a conflict of interests made by employees of the Department of Human Resources against the Respondent was this purchase voided and the Nash removed, on May 9, 1986, from the Respondent's property.

5. Considering the Respondent's official duties in cases such as Gretchen Starr's (paragraphs 2 and 3, above) her purchase of Ms. Starr's car with the intent to restore and resell the vehicle (paragraph 4, above) constituted her acceptance of other employment which will impair her independence of judgment as to her official duties in violation of subsection 1-84(b), General Statutes.

6. Considering the Respondent's official involvement in Gretchen Starr's case (paragraphs 2 and 3, above) her purchase of Ms. Starr's car on a preferential basis with the intent to restore and resell the vehicle (paragraph 4, above) constituted a use of her public office or position, or confidential information received through holding such office or position, to obtain financial gain for herself in violation of subsection 1-84(c), General Statutes.

7. Considering the circumstances of the Respondent's purchase of Ms. Starr's car (paragraph 4, above) said purchase constituted a violation of subsection 1-84(i), General Statutes, which prohibits a state employee from entering into a contract with the State, valued at one hundred dollars or more, unless the contract has been awarded through an open and public process including prior public offer and subsequent public disclosure of all proposals considered and the contract awarded.