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prison Monday for defrauding clients of her family's fortune-telling businesses out of more than \$17.8 million.

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Convicted psychic swindler Rose Marks was sentenced to just over 10 years in federal prison Monday for defrauding clients of her family's fortune-telling businesses out of more than \$17.8 million.

Looking frail and downtrodden, Marks, 62, of Fort Lauderdale, sobbed as she apologized to her victims, her family and everyone she hurt, saying her former clients had been some of her best and closest friends.

“At the time, I didn't realize what I was doing was wrong,” she said, begging the judge for mercy. “Now, I realize that I caused a lot of hurt and disappointment.”

Handcuffed, dressed in dark blue jail scrubs and with her hair pulled back in a ponytail, Marks began to cry even before the judge got on the bench. At times, she looked like she was having a difficult time breathing.

Marks has been locked up since September when a jury found her guilty of 14 charges after a bizarre monthlong trial.

She was convicted of ripping off numerous clients, including best-selling romance novelist Jude Deveraux, who was a client since 1991, and another woman she had known for 34 years.

In trial, Deveraux and several other victims testified that Marks and her family — several of whom worked under the name Joyce Michael in Fort Lauderdale and New York City — exploited them during vulnerable times in their lives. Victims said the

women of the family were masterful in their ability to use people's spiritual or

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of State Colin Powell.

Deveraux said Marks also exploited her grief after Deveraux's 8-year-old son, Sam, died in an ATV accident in October 2005.

Marks tormented her with claims that the child was not in heaven and that Marks could transfer the child's soul or spirit into the body of another person, reuniting mother and son "to keep him out of the flames," Deveraux said.

Marks told Deveraux that a virgin, who resembled the late Princess Grace of Monaco, had used a leftover embryo to give birth to a child who was the full-blood brother of Sam, Deveraux said. Marks predicted Deveraux would die, assume the body of this woman, be married to Brad Pitt and reunited with Sam, she said.

The woman turned out to be Cynthia Miller, who is married to one of Marks' sons and is scheduled for sentencing on a related fraud charge later this month.

Prosecutors Larry Bardfeld and Roger Stefin recommended Marks should go to federal prison for between 22 and 27 years.

Defense lawyers Fred Schwartz and Alvin Entin had suggested that no more than 7 1/2 years would be sufficient punishment. Marks blamed many of her crimes on alcohol and prescription drug abuse as well as a gambling addiction, all of which she said affected her after her husband and young grandson died.

Though U.S. District Judge Kenneth Marra previously made it clear that he thought the family's crimes were despicable, he rejected the prosecution's request for a much tougher penalty.

The judge said he didn't believe the fraud was sophisticated and, responding to the defense's argument that the Roma, or Gypsy, family was following a centuries-old

tradition of fortune-telling, said he believed the fraud was operated more like “a

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were being told to them. ...There's something else in their mental makeup, their psychological make up, that caused them to want to believe in this.”

The prosecution said the victims were able to document a loss amount of about \$17.8 million but the true losses were significantly higher and the intended losses were even higher than that.

Deveraux, who could prove that she gave Marks \$12 million, had gotten rid of more than six years worth of additional financial records before Fort Lauderdale police detectives, the Secret Service and IRS agents began investigating several years ago.

Referring to Deveraux by the name she uses in her private life, Jude Montassir, the judge said he wouldn't rely on Deveraux's testimony that she gave many millions more to Marks as a reason to punish Marks more.

“Frankly, I did not find Miss Montassir [Deveraux] to be a very reliable witness,” the judge said.

Marks was arrested in August 2011 and charged, along with eight family members, with operating the massive fraud.

Though it's legal to tell fortunes and charge a fee for that, prosecutors went after the family on the grounds that they defrauded victims by promising they would eventually return most of the money the clients gave them, when they had no intention of doing so. The family told clients they would pray and perform rituals over money and valuable possessions to get psychic results, investigators said.

Prosecutors said many of the victims were too embarrassed to report the crimes in the first place, and others were reluctant to go public and testify against the family in court.

The eight other family members — Marks' three adult children, their spouses, her

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because they were coping with bereavement, bad relationships, personal or family illness and other challenges, Marra pointed out that many of the victims were well-educated.

The family's victims included a female graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy who also earned a Masters in Business Administration from Columbia University in New York, a British lawyer, a grandmother who worked as a secretary for an accounting firm, and several men and women who held executive jobs.

Gary Tschetter, a Florida man who testified in the trial that he trusted Marks' advice so much that he lovingly called her “mom,” was the only victim who came to federal court in West Palm Beach to watch as she was sentenced on Monday. He previously said he gave Marks several hundred thousand dollars to advise him about a woman he was pursuing romantically and that Marks had paid back some of the money and was working to get the rest back to him when she was arrested.

After the judge announced Marks' punishment, Tschetter went up to Marks and could be heard quietly telling her: “I forgive you. ... I'll pray for you.”

As he left the courtroom in tears, Tschetter said he had a “lot of sympathy” for Marks and felt badly for her.

Charlie Stack, the retired Fort Lauderdale detective who opened the investigation and spent years proving the case, said he hoped that the Marks family's victims can now move on with their lives and that the case will deter other criminals from swindling vulnerable people.

“Hopefully, between the judge's sentence and the jury's quick decision, a clear message is being sent to the community that these types of crimes will not be tolerated,” Stack said.

With the standard 15 percent time off her sentence for good behavior, credit for

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