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7	By Deputy
8	SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
9	COUNTY OF ALAMEDA
10	WILEY W. MANUEL COURTHOUSE
11	
12	DEODUE OF THE STATE OF CALLEDDAY. GASENIO 57/07/12
13	PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, CASE NO.
14	Plaintiff, DECLARATION IN SUPPORT OF ISSUANCE OF ARREST WARRANT
15	v. PFN: DQM821 CEN: 9328804
16	SHARON ELYCE PEARL, aka SHARON ELYCE PEARL-JACOBVITZ,
17	aka SHERI PEARL,
18	Defendant.
19	I, Hal S. Berman, declare:
20	I was a full time peace officer for eleven years until retiring September 30, 2006. I am
21	currently employed by the California Department of Justice as a retired annuitant Special Agent
22	assigned to the Attorney General's Special Crimes Unit in San Francisco, California. In
23	September of 2003, I was assigned to the Special Crimes Unit to conduct investigations of cases
24	involving identity theft and financial crimes.
25	Prior to my employment with the Attorney General's Office, I worked for more than eight
26	years as an Associate Corporations Investigator for the Department of Corporations' Enforcement
27	Division. In that sworn peace officer position, I handled assignments dealing with criminal
28	investigations that involved a wide variety of complex securities frauds, including the marketing

of securities over the Internet. In the course of my work at the Department of Corporations, I served in over a dozen criminal prosecutions as a criminal investigator or as the chief investigating officer in various California counties.

I have a BA degree from California State University San Francisco and a Basic POST (Peace Officer Standards & Training) certification from Yuba College. I also have a POST Specialized Law Enforcement, Advanced Certificate. In the course of my career, I have taken numerous classes in the investigation of economic crime, including identity theft, computer crime searches, money laundering, digital evidence and technological issues in criminal prosecution.

I have conducted an investigation of Sharon Elyce Pearl ("Pearl"), also known as Sharon Elyce Pearl-Jacobvitz and Shari Pearl. Pearl was the Director of Real Property Operations for the State Bar of California ("Bar"), and in that capacity arranged for the rental of the retail and non-Bar utilized office space in the Bar's building at 180 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA. As detailed below, Pearl has been embezzling a portion of the rents payable to the Bar; I believe Pearl has committed grand theft by embezzlement in violation of Penal Code section 504, a felony. Pearl also failed to report the embezzled funds on her income tax returns in violation of Revenue and Taxation Code section 19706.

Created by the state legislature in 1927, the Bar is a public corporation within the judicial branch of government serving as an arm of the California Supreme Court. All Bar members are officers of the court. Membership in the Bar affords attorneys the right and privilege of practicing law in this state. The Bar's integrated network of functions and services - many of them mandated by law - protects the public and assists attorneys in meeting their professional obligations.

On September 23, 2008, Senior Assistant Attorney General Ronald D. Smetana and I met with Steve Mazer, Director of Operations for the State Bar, and Robert Hawley, Deputy Executive Director of the State Bar. According to information provided by Mazer then and at a later date, the Bar purchased 180 Howard Street some time between mid-1997 and early 1998.

Pearl was hired by the Bar as the Manager, Staff and Building Services, on April 8, 1996. In that capacity she was in charge of facilities management and office services at 555 Franklin

Street, San Francisco. She had no statewide responsibilities, and as the Bar did not have tenants at 555 Franklin, she had no responsibilities related to tenants or rent collection. In October 1999 she was promoted to the Bar's Director of Real Property. By this time the Bar had moved all staff into 180 Howard, and had inherited several tenants who were already in place. Pearl supervised all office services and personally handled building management, including tenant relationships and the collection of rent. She held this position until her employment was terminated on October 3, 2008.

Mazer told me that on June 13, 2008, Pearl submitted a check request for \$10,800, to return a security deposit to former retail tenant, Caboodle Cartridge. The check was issued by the Bar's finance department and delivered to Pearl as requested, but was not cashed. On July 2, 2008, Pearl claimed that the check had been lost in the mail, and requested that a new check be issued. Before issuing the new check, finance checked its records and could find no record of ever receiving a security deposit or rental payments from Caboodle. Between July 3 and September 8, 2008, Bar Finance Manager Christine Wong had ongoing correspondence with Pearl about the fact that finance could find no record of ever receiving a security deposit or rental payments from Caboodle; Wong also oversaw a thorough search of finance's records for evidence of receipt of these payments. Wong's efforts were not successful and she alerted Chief Financial Officer Peggy Van Horn who reported the problem to Mazer.

On September 11 and 12, 2008, Pearl spoke with Mazer and others. She admitted her complicity in the Bar not receiving rent payments from Caboodle, first claiming that the Bar had been "scammed," then changing her story to a claim of blackmail by Caboodle's owner. On September 17, 2008, a second tenant, Howard Street Coffee Roastery, turned over its version of rent invoices received from Pearl. These invoices indicated a full balance due to the Bar for rent and utilities, compared to the version in Pearl's file, which indicated zero balance due to the Bar because of a credit for a supposed lump-sum pre-payment in 2005. The Bar now had evidence that Pearl was maintaining "two sets of books," which suggested embezzlement.

¹ In fact, a later search revealed that Pearl had deposited the check to a bank account she controlled and then later had the deposit reversed.

According to Mazer, the Bar's finance department had no formal mechanism in place to track the rent payments that the Bar should have been receiving, nor did it have a mechanism in place to track any gaps in payments from month to month, and simply deposited whatever checks it received from Pearl, with no cross-referencing or reconciliation. In several cases Pearl's files contain no evidence that she took any action to hide the non-payment or to create a paper trail explaining the non-payment; there is simply a gap in her file (that is, no copy of an invoice issued to a tenant, no copy of a check received from a tenant, and no pink cash receipt summary that would accompany a check submitted to finance for deposit) for each month in which rent was not collected by the Bar. This is the case for missing rent payments from tenants Beta Nineties, Tetra Tech, Catholic Charities and Lenos Software.

Since that initial meeting with Mazer, he has provided me with additional information. I learned that as to tenant Howard Street Coffee Roastery, the Bar has discovered an elaborate paper trail to explain why no rent was received. In March 2007 the Bar's auditor from Deloitte & Touche asked Pearl why no rental income was posted for Howard Coffee Roastery in 2006. In response, Pearl produced a copy of a memo from herself to (former employee) Lina Abalos in accounts receivable, dated November 15, 2005, which stated that a check was enclosed from Howard Street Coffee Roastery for \$96,507.60 as a prepayment of rent for December 1, 2005, through July 30, 2007. Pearl's file also contained monthly invoices issued to Howard Street Coffee Roastery, showing rent fully offset by a credit for prepayment, with a zero balance due. (She produced no copy of the \$96,507.60 check, and maintained from March 2007 onward that finance had either lost the check or miscoded the deposit.) At the same time, the Bar obtained copies of the invoices that Howard Street Coffee Roastery received from Pearl, showing full rent due. The invoices indicate that the bottom portion of the invoice should be returned with payment, and the address shown on that portion of the invoice is:

PLOT
The State Bar of California
180 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
Attn: Sharon Pearl

The Bar received no rent payments from Rotee Express (a Pakistani restaurant) since it began its tenancy in September 2007. Rotee told Mazer that at Pearl's direction it has been making its rent checks payable to PLOT. The invoices in Pearl's file indicate a zero balance due, with the rent and utilities being fully offset by a tenant improvement credit. The version of Rotee's lease in Pearl's file contains a provision for the Bar to reimburse Rotee for "up to \$18,500" for the installation of a sump pump; this lease term would supposedly explain the tenant improvement credit on each rent invoice. However, Assistant General Counsel Mark Torres-Gil has confirmed that the provision in the lease to reimburse Rotee \$18,500 for the installation of a sump pump was added without his knowledge.

Rotee turned over a copy of its executed lease; that version contains no provision for the \$18,500 reimbursement. It appears that Pearl falsified the lease for this tenant, creating a version in her tenant file and on file with General Counsel that included a provision for a credit that could later be used to explain the non-receipt of rent, if anyone made an inquiry.

Upon discovering that tenants had been instructed by Pearl to make checks payable to PLOT, the investigation turned to a review of tenant files to find other references to this entity. A letter and a check request for PLOT found in Pearl's file on Lenos Software indicated that, in addition to diverting rent payments by having tenants make checks payable to PLOT, Pearl also had at least one check issued by the Bar to PLOT under the pretext of a real estate brokerage commission that was supposedly due to Lenos' agent. A search in the accounting system showed that the Bar in fact issued three checks to PLOT:

Two checks were issued for \$5,281.00 each, in November and December of 2003. The check requests submitted by Pearl indicated that that these were payments for "commissions to outside broker for the Lenos lease," and listed the payee as PLOT. The check requests noted that PLOT was a "subcontractor for Grubb & Ellis," and referenced the purchase order number for the Bar's brokerage agreement with Grubb & Ellis. Pearl's file on Lenos Software contained a copy of the December check request, along with a cover letter from herself to David Mitchell, company name PLOT, stating that a check was enclosed in payment of 50% of the commission due for the Lenos lease.

David Mitchell was a real estate broker at Grubb & Ellis who represented Lenos in leasing space at the Bar (a different team from Grubb & Ellis represented the Bar; having the same firm represent both parties, via different teams of agents, is apparently a common occurrence in the brokerage industry). The original letter of intent from Lenos requested that the Bar pay a commission to Lenos' broker, David Mitchell at Grubb & Ellis. Assistant General Counsel Mark Torres-Gil confirmed that paying a commission to the tenant's broker was contrary to both the lease and to the Bar's brokerage agreement, which indicated that the Bar paid commissions only to its own broker. Torres-Gil indicated that during lease negotiations Pearl had informed Lenos, based on his instruction, that the Bar only paid commissions to its own broker, not to the tenant's broker. It appears that Pearl simply attached Mitchell's name to her falsified correspondence in order to make the check requests to PLOT appear legitimate.

The third check to PLOT was for \$9,387.00, issued in August 2005, supposedly for commissions due to Grubb & Ellis for leasing tenant W. Haywood Burns Institute. On the check request Pearl noted "deferred broker commission on H. Burns lease." Torres-Gil confirmed that, as in the Lenos case, no such commission was due to the tenant's broker. This check included, as supporting documentation, an e-mail from Clare Nyhan at Grubb & Ellis to Pearl, forwarding an e-mail from David Mitchell at PLOT to Mary Lyons at Grubb & Ellis, inquiring about the status of payment of the commission. Close inspection of these e-mails leads one to believe that they are not legitimate, but were manufactured by Pearl to provide documentation for the check request. (One e-mail is from dmitchell@plot.com. However, "plot.com" is not a valid domain, and the address is written as "dmitchell@ plot .com" [with a space between @ and plot, and two spaces between plot and .com].)

The Bar's finance department retrieved the three original canceled checks issued to PLOT.

The information on the back of the checks showed that these checks were deposited into Wells

Fargo account in Oakland. I have since learned that the account is in the name of the Piedmont Light Opera Theatre, and that Pearl is a signatory on that account.

The Bar hired an outside auditor, Kevin W. Harper of Kevin Harper, CPA, and Associates, Union City, CA. Harper has finished his audit of the Bar's accounts supplemented by

I have confirmed the information set forth above by reviewing documents produced by the Bar and conducting my own investigation. I have received information from several of the Bar's tenants that demonstrates that rental payments intended for the Bar have been re-directed by Pearl to Wells Fargo Bank account number to the name of Piedmont Light Opera. Theatre.

On October 8, 2008, I spoke with James Tang who is the general manager of Beta Nineties Computer, Inc., a tenant at 180 Howard Street from late 2003 until June 2008. He provided me with copies of all of the rent checks written for the tenancy at 180 Howard Street. While most of the checks are made out to "The State Bar of California," among those checks I found ten checks payable to PLOT and PLOT/The State Bar of California totaling \$44,349.16. According to Tang, Pearl collected the rent from the business directly, or it was left at the lobby of the Bar in an envelope for Pearl. If checks were made out to PLOT or PLOT/The State Bar of California, it was done at Pearl's direction.

The checks payable to PLOT and PLOT/The State Bar of California show an endorsement stamp to pay to the order of a Wells Fargo Bank in Oakland, account number. The checks actually made payable to the Bar show an endorsement stamp with a different Wells Fargo account number and show that they are for deposit only to "The State Bar of California." I have checked with Mazer, who informed me that Wells Fargo Bank account

On October 15, 2008, I spoke with Jane Heng who, along with her husband, Sambath Heng, runs the Howard Street Coffee Roastery at 180 Howard Street. In addition, she provided me with copies of her rent checks, from which I found 40 checks payable to PLOT or PLOT/The State Bar

of California totaling \$183,724.47. The checks payable to PLOT and PLOT/The State Bar of California show an endorsement stamp to pay to the order of Wells Fargo Bank in Oakland, account number. According to Heng, Pearl collected the rent from the business directly, or it was left at the lobby of the Bar in an envelope for Pearl. If checks were made out to PLOT or PLOT/The State Bar of California, it was done at Pearl's direction. According to Heng, Pearl told her that PLOT was a special account, but never disclosed its purpose to her.

On November 19, 2008, I spoke with Debra Chong, CEO of Lenos Software ("Lenos"), a Bar tenant since November 2003. Chong said that until recently she dealt exclusively with Pearl, and that she would leave Lenos' monthly rent check at the front desk of the Bar for Pearl. Chong recalled that Pearl directed her to make checks payable to PLOT rather than the Bar. Chong provided me with the rent invoices that she received for Lenos; five called for payment to either PLOT or PLOT/The State Bar of California. Chong provided me with copies of the corresponding checks totaling \$8,601.21.

I spoke with Julia Campbell, the director of corporate real estate of Tetra Tech, Inc. a multinational engineering company that is a tenant of the Bar, on November 25, 2008. Campbell told me that on August 21, 2006, she received an e-mail from Pearl instructing her to make out a check for tenant improvements in the amount of \$14,335.12 payable to PLOT - The State Bar of California. Tetra Tech's bookkeeping system requires an employer identification number ("EIN") in order to make payments, and so one of Campbell's subordinates contacted Pearl to get an EIN for PLOT - The State Bar of California. Pearl faxed in a completed form W-9 with an EIN (the Bar's) for PLOT - The State Bar of California. Later Pearl contacted Campbell asking about the PLOT check because she had not received it. Campbell provided me with copies of the e-mails, the W-9 and the canceled check. In addition, Campbell provided me with a copy of a check dated August 1, 2007, in the amount of \$721.26 that was altered on its face so that above the computer printed "State Bar of California" is handwritten PLOT and then "[illegible] for Tetra Tech." In follow-up to the interview, I received a copy of another check written to the Bar, dated September 29, 2006 in the amount of \$14,355.12, payable to State Bar of California - PLOT.

On December 11, 2008, I interviewed Steve Grant, Director of Facilities for Catholic Charities CYO (CCCYO). He is responsible for payments to the Bar, and told me that CCCYO would receive invoices from Pearl and that a check would be written and left at the Bar's reception desk. Grant provided me with invoices from the Bar and checks written by CCCYO. There are a number of invoices from the Bar for services, conference rooms and repairs where the bottom of the invoice requests that payment be made to P LOT/The State Bar of California. In addition, there are invoices for larger amounts requesting payment to PLOT. I reviewed all of the invoices from the Bar and checks written by CCCYO provided by Grant and found 21 checks (with corresponding invoices) that were payable to PLOT/The State Bar of California, for a total of \$46,911.63.

On January 7, 2009, I interviewed Shantel Brooks, the agent of another 180 Howard Street tenant, W. Haywood Burns Institute. She told me that she did not recall anything out of the ordinary with rent payments, but that Pearl had miscellaneous building expenses made payable to PLOT, the State Bar of California. She provided me with copies of five checks that total \$1,495.30 payable to PLOT.

On January 14, 2009, I interviewed Daniel Wencel, who was one of the principals of Caboodle Cartridge, a company that sold franchises to retail re-manufactured ink and toner cartridges and subsequently sub-leased office space to CFF Group, LLC and Michael Lauren. Wencel signed a lease with the Bar to rent store front space at 180 Howard Street in early 2005 and mailed check no. 1589, dated January 28, 2005, in the amount of \$10,800, payable to The State Bar of California. Wencel confirmed that he recently provided a copy of this check to the Bar. In the course of the interview, I sent Wencel an e-mail with an attached copy of check number 1589 in a pdf file. Wencel later confirmed that the copy was of the same check that he had written to the Bar and mailed to Pearl. Wencel acknowledged that the check was payable to PLOT The State Bar of California and that PLOT appears to have been added to the check. However, Wencel said he had no recollection as to why PLOT was on the check and did not recall any discussions or statements from Pearl regarding PLOT.

On that same date I interviewed Fred Louie, a principal of CFF Group, LLC, who purchased a Caboodle Cartridge franchise and sub-leased store front space at 180 Howard Street from about March of 2005 through June of 2006. Louie made monthly rent payments of about \$1,800 to Pearl, who came to his store each month, provided Louie with an invoice and personally collected the checks written to the Bar. Louie recalled that Pearl instructed him to make the checks payable to The State Bar of California and to include the word "PLOT." According to Louie, Pearl did not provide an explanation for including PLOT on the check and he did not ask for one. In September of 2008, Pearl contacted Louie and requested copies of the checks he had written to Bar. Louie's partner later provided Pearl with a record of all the payments to Bar.

On January 15, 2009, I interviewed Michael Lauren who ran the Caboodle Cartridge franchise at 180 Howard after Louie from June 2006 through September 2007. Lauren told me that Pearl directed him to make his monthly rent checks payable to "The State Bar of California/PLOT." Lauren did not question Pearl, but followed her direction, wrote the checks as directed and then left them at the Bar's reception desk for Pearl's pick up. In follow-up to the interview, I received from Lauren copies of invoices he received from the Bar, directing him to make payments for the period of August of 2006 through December of 2007 to "PLOT, The State Bar of California." I also received copies of seven checks that were payable to PLOT, The State Bar of California that total \$12,723.98.

I have obtained a search warrant for the PLOT accounts at Wells Fargo Bank and for Pearl's personal Wells Fargo Bank accounts; all accounts are domiciled in Oakland at a Wells Fargo Branch at 40th Street and Piedmont Avenue. PLOT has an address with the bank of 241 Park View Avenue in Oakland; at some points the address for the account was changed to Pearl's personal residence at Oakland, CA 94611. I provided the records obtained pursuant to the search warrant to Special Crimes Unit Auditor Robert Smith. Smith told me that had has scheduled the bank records for the PLOT accounts at Wells Fargo Bank and found that Pearl had embezzled checks that should have gone to the Bar totaling \$554,220.63. Auditor

Smith further informed me that Pearl withdrew from the PLOT accounts \$558,314.92 in the form of withdrawals, checks and transfers to her personal accounts at Wells Fargo Bank.

I have reviewed the bank statements for Pearl's personal account. They show that Pearl used her ATM card to spend much of the money she embezzled, and that the money was spent on clothing shopping in high end stores, spa treatments, meals in expensive restaurants, travel and stays in expensive hotels.

Because federal laws regarding the retention of bank records only specify a five year period, the records received from Wells Fargo for the PLOT account pursuant to the search warrant are incomplete for periods prior to 2002, incomplete for 2002, and more complete for the period November of 2003 forward. Thus, Smith's determination that Pearl stole \$554,220.63 is for the period of November 2003 forward. Taking into account the Bar's audit for the years 2000 through 2003 showing a loss of \$127,527.48, it appears that the total amount of theft is at least \$675,820, but could be as high as \$681,748.11, the combined total of the Bar audit and Smith's analysis, not including the cost of the audit.

I have also spoken with Special Agent Daniel Mayorga of the Franchise Tax Board. I have provided Mayorga with information on the funds Pearl embezzled for the years 2002 through 2007, and he was able to confirm that Pearl failed to report the stolen funds on her tax returns. Mayorga has determined that Pearl owes taxes, interest and penalties for the tax years 1992 through 2007 in the amount of \$110,190. Mayorga told me that Pearl filed her returns for those tax years electronically, and that for each of the years 2002 through 2007, Pearl violated California Revenue and Taxation Code section 19706, in that she willfully, and with the intent to evade tax, made and rendered fraudulent tax returns to the Franchise Tax Board. (Pursuant to Revenue and Taxation Code section 19704, the statute of limitations for a violation of section 19706 is six years from the date of commission.)

Based on the foregoing, I believe that between January of 2000 and September 2008 Pearl embezzled approximately \$675,820 from the Bar, and that she failed to declare the income and pay taxes on the embezzled funds to the Franchise Tax Board. In addition, I believe that Pearl has committed theft in an amount in excess of \$200,000. For that reason, I request that a warrant

issue for the arrest of Pearl, and based on the Alameda County Bail Schedule, I request that bail for Pearl be set in the amount of \$80,000. I have been in contact with Pearl's attorney, Leon "Lee" Mezzetti, and have told him that Pearl would be given the opportunity to surrender once the case is filed and the arrest warrant issues.

In addition, I request that in the event that Pearl seeks to post bail, that she be required to demonstrate to the court that no portion of said bail or any pledge or consideration provided for such bail was feloniously obtained as required by Penal Code section 1275.1. Pearl is currently unemployed, and I am concerned that any assets used to post bail will be from cash or assets acquired through embezzlement from the Bar. Therefore I request an order directed to the Alameda County Sheriff's Department and any other law enforcement agency, that in the event Pearl seeks to post bail, that such deposit not be accepted until a hearing is held on the source of the funds.

Pearl is more particularly described as

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on April 1, 2009, at San Francisco, California.

HAL S. BERMAN

California Department of Justice

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