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D.A. BROWN: BROOKLYN GRAND JURY STENOGRAPHER PLEADS GUILTY TO OFFICIAL MISCONDUCT; ADMITS RECEIVING PAY FOR FREELANCE COURT REPORTING WORK WHILE CLOCKED IN AS WORKING AS GRAND JURY STENOGRAPHER AND RECEIVING CITY WAGES; ORDERED TO MAKE FULL RESTITUTION

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a Brooklyn grand jury reporter has pled guilty to official misconduct for stealing nearly \$2,000 in City wages by performing freelance court reporting jobs during the work day at the same time he was clocked in and supposedly at work as a grand jury stenographer.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendant thought he could beat the clock and cheat the City by punching in at the office and then slipping out during working hours to perform freelance court reporting jobs while also receiving City wages. But he was mistaken, his scheme was discovered and now he will pay back what he stole."

District Attorney Brown identified the defendant as Gary Merola, 50, of 10112 4th Avenue in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn who had been employed as a grand jury stenographer since 1973 earning \$56,597 a year. The defendant pled guilty today to Official Misconduct before Brooklyn Criminal Court Judge William Garnett who indicated that he will sentence the defendant on May 13, 2003 to a conditional discharge.

The District Attorney said that the defendant agreed to resign his City employment effective today and to not seek other City employment and to make full restitution to the City of \$1,984.

According to District Attorney Brown, the defendant has admitted that from January, 1999 until September, 2002 he periodically freelanced for three court reporting services -- AK-RET Reporting Services, Jaguar Reporting, Inc. and Jay Deitz & Associates Court Reporting Services *- during the same daytime hours his time card indicated he was at work as a grand jury stenographer and stole \$1,984 in City monies.

The case was prosecuted by the Queens District Attorney's office which was acting in the capacity of Special District Attorney.

District Attorney Brown expressed his appreciation to Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes and Department of Investigation Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn for their assistance in the prosecution.

The investigation was conducted by Examining Attorney Julio Rodriguez of the New York City Department of Investigation under the supervision of Julia Davis, Inspector General for Executive Offices and Non-Mayoral Agencies.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Yvonne Francis of District Attorney Brown's Integrity Bureau under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys James M. Liander, Chief, and Carmencita N. Gutierrez, Deputy Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Assistant District Attorney Linda M. Cantoni, Counsel to the Investigations Division.