

Land Scam Is Foiled

Cops: Suspect tried to steal dead man's estate

BY KYLE CAMPBELL



**Asli
Dincer**



**Asli Dincer tries to hide her face following her arrest last year in East Hampton.
ERICA THOMPSON**

They first met at the Westhampton Beach 7-Eleven—she, the friendly clerk, and he, the eccentric loiterer twice her age, known for his penchant for crossword puzzles and sweeping.

Little did anyone know that Asli Dincer and Murray Frank would one day be engaged to marry or that she would, according to prosecutors, try to scam him out of land worth \$1.7 million.

Ms. Dincer, 44, was arrested by Suffolk County Police on January 23 and charged with first- and fourth-degree grand larceny, both felonies, accused of targeting the late Mr. Frank, a longtime Westhampton Beach resident, Air Force veteran and noted oddball, and his two and a half acres of expensive real estate.

This is the second time Ms. Dincer has faced felony charges in the past six months, albeit for seemingly unrelated charges, as the Turkish national and her husband, Melih, were arrested in July for making terroristic threats directed at an East Hampton synagogue.

Different as they may seem on their surface, both crimes were part of a failed attempt by Ms. Dincer to secure permanent residence in the United States—a plan that authorities said began with taking advantage of a elderly loner and ended with retribution gone awry.

‘A Village Character’

With a bushy beard, unkempt hair and clad in casual wear, pockets stuffed with small handwritten notes tracking injustices he’d witnessed and IOUs he owed, Mr. Frank could often be found at the 7-Eleven on Sunset Avenue, playing scratch-off lottery tickets or filling out The New York Times crossword puzzle.

Between his physical appearance and his automobile of choice—a beat-up red pickup truck with a bed full of old newspapers—Mr. Frank would be more readily labeled a vagrant than a millionaire.

“The way he presented himself, you’d have no idea,” Andrew Saulino, manager of the 7-Eleven, said last week. “He looked like a hoarder.”

Mr. Frank was found dead in his home on May 16, 2014. He was 82. Westhampton Beach Police Chief Trevor Gonce said he had been dead for several days by the time police found him; the Suffolk County medical examiner’s office determined that he died of natural causes. His only family

was his sister Joan, who died a few days later.

Conrad Teller, former Westhampton Beach police chief and mayor, said Mr. Frank was at first a thorn in his side, constantly bombarding him with criticisms of the police department—and, later, a friend.

Mr. Teller said he met Mr. Frank in Eckart's Luncheonette in the village 20 years ago and came to know him for his intelligence and eccentricities, like taking note of all the cars who sped past his home or complaining about excessive radio waves coming from local businesses. "He was just a village character," he said.

If Mr. Frank's appearance during the later years of his life was that of someone who had no money, it was an accurate one, because he often did not. Jehan Khan, a longtime employee of the 7-Eleven on Sunset Avenue, recalls loaning Mr. Frank small sums of money—\$10 here, \$20 there—so he could buy food. Like clockwork, Mr. Frank always paid him back after his military retirement check arrived at the beginning of the month.

Mr. Khan said he eventually grew to learn more about Mr. Frank over the past decade, later urging him to sell at least some of his land to make his life more comfortable, but he refused. Mr. Frank inherited three properties, totaling 2.6 acres along Old Riverhead Road, from his family, and Southampton Town records state that they have a combined total assessed value of \$1.77 million.

"I'd always tell him, 'Sell your land—you're doing nothing with it, make your life better now,'" Mr. Khan recalled this week. "But he never listened."

Seeking Help

Mr. Khan also befriended Ms. Dincer while she worked at the village 7-Eleven. He always knew her as quiet but nice—a sentiment echoed by Mr. Saulino, though he supervised both for only a short time.

Mr. Khan, a native of Pakistan who moved to the United States in 1999, quit his job at the convenience store in 2012, and Ms. Dincer followed suit a short time later. Mr. Saulino said they both left because they did not agree with changes made at the convenience store.

In 2013, Mr. Khan said he came in contact with Ms. Dincer again when she and her husband, Melih, came into the Hess gas station in Quogue where he was working at the time. Mr. Khan recalled that they got to talking, and the couple told him about their predicament: They wanted to remain in the country on a full-time basis, but after a failed business venture distributing potato chips, the couple could get only visitors' visas.

Most importantly, Ms. Dincer wanted to marry someone—and Mr. Frank was the target.

“She told me she wanted a sponsor,” Mr. Khan said. “I thought she was a nice girl, so I wanted to help. I didn't realize she was going after the property.”

Mr. Khan said he got Ms. Dincer in touch with Mr. Frank, thinking that he might be willing to help. The two agreed to marry, and Ms. Dincer moved in with him, he said.

According to Mr. Teller, Mr. Frank didn't tell him about the younger woman who was living with him until things began to sour in late 2013. Mr. Teller said Mr. Frank thought he might have signed some papers that Ms. Dincer gave him, but he couldn't recall what they were or when he signed them.

Mr. Frank made two calls to Westhampton Beach Police regarding Ms. Dincer. The first came on December 30, 2013, with Mr. Frank telling police that he believed that Ms. Dincer was using false pretenses to acquire his property. He told police he might have signed his property over to her but could not say for certain.

Two weeks later, on January 13, 2014, Mr. Frank made another call to police, this time from the bathroom of Country Rotisserie in Riverhead. He told police again that he felt he had signed his property over to Ms. Dincer. He told police he was not in a good frame of mind, records show.

“I figured she was picking on a lonely older guy who was starting on the early onset of senility to feather her own nest,” Mr. Teller said.

Ms. Dincer’s attorney, Jack Piana of Hauppauge-based Piana & Gioe LLC, declined to comment until after his client’s case is resolved.

The Letter

Mr. Khan said Mr. Frank discovered Ms. Dincer’s intentions when he received an anonymous letter detailing her plan, informing him that Ms. Dincer was still sneaking off to see her husband, whom she had since divorced, in Riverhead.

Mr. Khan said the Dincers blamed him for writing the letter and wanted revenge. Mr. Khan said he had no knowledge of the letter, but that didn’t stop the Dincers from naming him and two other Pakistani men as would-be attackers in a series of tips they emailed to the Jewish Center of the Hamptons in East Hampton, according to investigators.

The East Hampton Village Police looked into the unsigned tips, surveying Mr. Khan and the other men and questioning them, but found no evidence linking them to any planned attack.

East Hampton Village Police Chief Gerard Larson said the tips were passed along to the FBI’s New York State Joint Terrorist Task Force, who tracked the tips to a computer in Turkey. That computer belonged to the Dincers.

On July 10, 2014, authorities arrested the Dincers at John F. Kennedy International Airport in Queens and charged both with making terrorist

threats and falsely reporting an incident in the first degree, both class D felonies. They were also charged with menacing in the second degree and conspiracy in the fifth degree, both class A misdemeanors.

Mr. Dincer pleaded guilty to third-degree falsely reporting an incident, relating to the threat against the East Hampton synagogue, on January 23 and was sentenced to one year in Suffolk County Jail. Suffolk County District Attorney spokesman Robert Clifford said there was no evidence linking Mr. Dincer to his wife's larceny scheme.

Ms. Dincer, meanwhile, had been expected to plead guilty to two counts of first-degree attempted grand larceny this past Tuesday, February 10, for trying to steal Mr. Frank's estate but her hearing was postponed because a translator was unavailable, according to Mr. Clifford. It is unclear if she still faces charges for making threats to the Jewish Center of the Hamptons.