

Austin grandmother gets 10 years for dealing drugs in her apartment

Written by Administrator

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Clara Combs, the 78-year-old grandmother convicted of drug dealing on November 17 in a jury trial in Scott Circuit Court, was sentenced Tuesday, January 11, to ten years in prison.

Combs' conviction was on a Class B felony charge of dealing in Oxycontin, a controlled substance, according to Prosecutor Jason Mount. Her sentence is to be served with the Indiana Department of Corrections, and she was remanded following the sentencing hearing to the custody of the county sheriff. She is currently being housed at the Scott County Security Center, Scottsburg.

The Austin grandmother has managed a block of apartments on DeHart Drive on Austin's north side for years for the complex's absentee owner. She was charged with two counts of the felony offense in May, 2008, after selling Oxycontin to an Indiana State Police confidential informant on two different occasions that February. The jury found her guilty of one of those charges in the two-day trial held at the Courthouse in downtown Scottsburg.

Over \$20,000 in cash was recovered from her apartment at the time of her arrest.

Combs also has a 2001 felony conviction for dealing pills, Mount noted.

Her sentencing concludes a series of cases against Combs and members of her family, which included her brother Elisha Whitehead; a granddaughter, Lisa Combs; and a sister, Ola Baker. Combs and Baker are still serving their sentences based on drug dealing; Whitehead died in 2010 before he could be sentenced. All such transactions took place at DeHart Apartments, according to ISP and court records.

The investigation of drug dealing in the apartment complex was conducted by the Drug Enforcement Section of the Indiana State Police.

Trial duties in the Combs case were primarily handled by Amanda C. Herald, the drug interdiction prosecutor for the Prosecutor's Office. Herald's position is funded by a grant from the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute.