

# Nursing home boss stole millions while

**A** HEARTLESS nursing home owner pocketed millions in government funds while his helpless residents went hungry and lived amid unimaginable filth.

At the three Georgia homes operated by Harvard-educated lawyer George Houser, 64, broken heating and air conditioning units gave rise to rampant mold and mildew growth. Ceiling tiles became so waterlogged, they fell down on the poor bedridden souls.

And garbage left rotting outside attracted swarms of flies and a horde of rats that easily entered the homes through ill-fitting screens and doors.

Meanwhile, Houser and his wife Rhonda, 48, a real estate agent, spent the better part of \$40 million in Medicare and Medicaid money to live lavishly.

They treated themselves to Mercedes cars, fancy vacations, new homes and pricey furniture.

**HOUSER SHELLED OUT \$4.2 MILLION** FOR land to develop hotels and, incredibly, spent \$1.3 million on a house for his ex-wife. He even saved himself alimony payments by putting his ex on the nursing home payroll in a no-show job.

He was far less generous to residents and workers at the homes – Mount Berry and Moran Lake in Rome, Ga., and Wildwood in nearby Brunswick – who lived in squalor. Broken washing machines went unrepaired, and bills for food, nursing needs and pharmacy services for the 400 residents went unpaid.

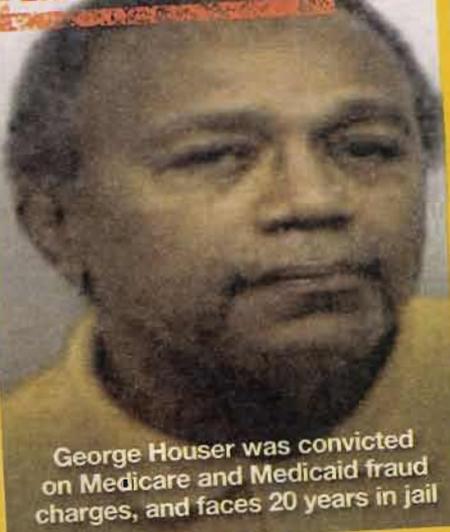
“It almost defies the imagination to believe that someone would use millions of dollars in Medicare and Medicaid money to buy real estate for hotels and a house while his elderly and defenseless nursing home residents went hungry and lived in filth,” said Sally William Yates, U.S. Attorney for the Atlanta area.

Houser’s greed also affected his employees, many of them dedicated caretakers who would take home dirty sheets to wash and purchase food for the residents. Without their knowledge, Houser stopped making health insurance payments, leaving some with huge medical bills.

The nursing homes, which opened in 2004, were shut in 2007 after numerous complaints were received by the Georgia Department of Human Resources.

Houser and his wife were indicted on April 14, 2010. She pleaded guilty last December

**OFFICIAL  
MUG SHOT**



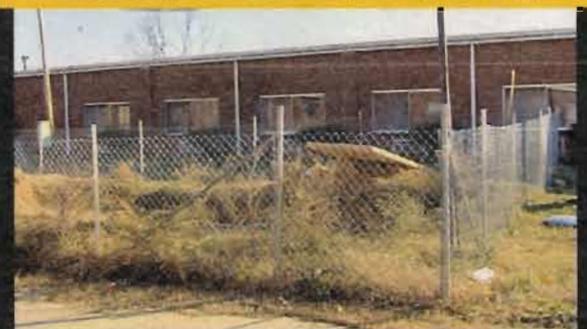
George Houser was convicted on Medicare and Medicaid fraud charges, and faces 20 years in jail

# STARVING SENIORS LIVED IN SQUALOR

**FIEND SPENT CASH** on houses, cars & vacations with wife



A roof leaked so badly at one of the facilities that buckets were used to catch the water and ceiling tiles fell onto bedridden residents. Garbage was left to rot outside, attracting flies and rats, and bathroom floors were stained and filthy



It almost defies the imagination

to a charge that she knew her husband was committing health care fraud. He was convicted on Medicare and Medicaid fraud charges on April 2 and faces 20 years in jail at his sentencing on June 29.

The conviction is little comfort to Loretta Terhune, whose 80-year-old father Morris Ellison entered one of Houser’s nursing homes in 2006 for post-operative recovery. Loretta said her dad was active with a busy social life that included a couple of girlfriends.

But within eight months, Morris was dead. An autopsy showed he was malnourished, dehydrated and had an untreated broken hip after falling numerous times at the home.

Loretta sued Houser for wrongful death before his criminal trial began. It took a jury less than three hours to award her \$43.5 million.

In an interview after the jury returned, coldhearted Houser was asked what he thought about the award. He just laughed.

by **DON GENTILE**

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