

## **Guilty Plea Entered By Phony Lawyer; Ex-Club Owner Admits to Fraud**

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### **Body**

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Paul C. Kurtz, the former Washington impresario and restaurant operator who was charged last year with illegally passing himself off as a lawyer, has pleaded guilty to four of 48 counts of fraud and misuse of a credit card, federal officials say.

Kurtz, 57, of Bethesda, who was briefly a co-owner of the District's legendary Cellar Door nightclub before it shut down in 1982, was charged last year by federal authorities in New York City with numerous instances of acting as a lawyer, when he was not.

Federal prosecutors called Kurtz a con man "of breathtaking audacity," and he was accused of representing "clients" in 14 federal criminal cases, five cases before the Immigration and Naturalization Service and even a case in U.S. Bankruptcy Court.

In one case, shortly before he was arrested July 7, he got a sentencing postponed by falsely telling a federal judge that his elderly mother had just died. But Kurtz also spoke and wrote superb legalese and did have some expertise in the area of federal sentencing guidelines, former colleagues said.

Kurtz, who served two sentences in federal prison in the 1980s on unrelated fraud charges, entered his plea Thursday in federal court in the Southern District of New York, according to the U.S. attorney there, Mary Jo White.

He pleaded guilty to one count involving a federal criminal case, one count involving an immigration case and one count involving his masquerading as a lawyer to see prison inmates. He also pleaded guilty to one count of credit card fraud.

Kurtz had founded a legal counseling service, the National Correctional Counseling Center, after his most recent release from prison. He ran the business out of his condominium apartment in a Bethesda high-rise, where he served on the building's board of directors.

Prosecutors said his bogus lawyering took place between 1992 and last year.

He faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison on the credit card count and five years each on the others, White said in a statement announcing the plea.

Prosecutors noted in a letter to Kurtz's Washington attorney, Brian W. Shaughnessy, that Kurtz's plea "demonstrated acceptance of responsibility for his offense" and saved the government the time and expense of preparing for trial.

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In return, authorities agreed not to prosecute him on the other charges, although the other charges may be taken into consideration at the time of his sentencing, scheduled for Sept. 24.

Neither Kurtz nor his attorney could be reached for comment.

## Classification

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**Subject:** **LAWYERS** (91%); SENTENCING (90%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (90%); **FRAUD** & FINANCIAL CRIME (90%); **GUILTY PLEAS** (90%); IMMIGRATION LAW (90%); CORRECTIONS (89%); PUBLIC PROSECUTORS (89%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); ARRESTS (78%); ADMISSIONS & CONFESSIONS (78%); LITIGATION (78%); JAIL SENTENCING (78%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (77%); LAW COURTS & TRIBUNALS (75%); PRISONERS (75%); IMMIGRATION (74%); SENTENCING GUIDELINES (74%); FINES & PENALTIES (73%); JUDGES (73%); INSOLVENCY & BANKRUPTCY (72%); PRISONS (71%); INSOLVENCY & BANKRUPTCY COURTS (69%); BOARDS OF DIRECTORS (50%)

**Company:** CELLAR DOOR (57%); CELLAR DOOR (57%); US SENTENCING COMMISSION (55%); US SENTENCING COMMISSION (55%)

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