

# The Truth About Bilirakis

Everything you really need to know about Gus Bilirakis

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## Adele's Nightmare

*Woman's Plea for Help Turns into Nightmare*

*Tampa Tribune Times- August 9, 1998*

*Adele Fletcher*

Adele Fletcher was an active senior, she drove to Wendy's every day for lunch, did her own nails, and dined with friends on Sundays. People could set their clocks by her daily dog walks with her dog Cricket. *Tampa Tribune Times August 9, 1998.* Then she received an inheritance in the form of the rights to one half of the income from a trust that court records valued at \$945,000. *Tampa Tribune Times August 9, 1998.* Unsure of how to spend the windfall she met with her broker. *Tampa Tribune Times August 9, 1998.* In February 1997 the broker introduced her to Fran Lang, a professional guardian.

*Fran Lang's criminal activities*

Fran Lang was a criminal. In 1996 she was prosecuted for fraud in a case in which adjudication was withheld. In 2000 she would be charged with fraudulent acts occurring between November 1, 1996 and June 3, 1998. She pled guilty to scheming to defraud guardianships and was sentenced in March 2001. *Tampa Tribune March 13, 2001.*

*Lang and Bilirakis Engineer the Guardianship*

In early March, Lang, her associate Peggy Davis, and Gus Bilirakis met with Adele Fletcher at her home. She was presented with a pre-need guardianship form which said that Lang would become the guardian if Adele Fletcher ever became incapacitated. *Tampa Tribune Times August 9, 1998.* Fran Lang was associated with Gus Bilirakis on other guardianships. *Lang's Guardianship list.*

Within three months Lang and Gus Bilirakis petitioned the court to declare Adele Fletcher incapacitated. Gus Bilirakis was the attorney for Lang in her role as guardian, but he owed a fiduciary duty care to Adele Fletcher as well as to Lang. *Florida Attorney General Advisory Legal Opinion, AGO 96-94.* A hearing was held to determine Adele Fletcher's competency on July 2, 1997. Gus Bilirakis participated in the hearing as attorney for Fran Lang. *Deputy Clerk's report on hearing.*

At the hearing the court placed Adele Fletcher under a limited guardianship. She lost the right to marry, drive, and give things away, but she was entitled to have a say where she could live. Later the judge complained that he should have been and was not told about Adele Fletcher's dog or about the \$945,000 trust. *Tampa Tribune Times August 9, 1998.*

On November 6, 1997, Gus Bilirakis and Lang petitioned the court for permission to sell Adele Fletcher's car. The court refused to grant permission. *Probate Review 11/07/97.*

### *Fletcher's Removal from Her Home*

On November 18, 1997, Lang removed Adele Fletcher from her home and placed her in an assisted living facility, Jasmine Hill. Ltr. McPherson to Villanti dated 8/21/1998. She was taken from her home against her will. Ltr. McPherson to Villanti dated 8/21/1998. Her dog, Cricket, was given away by Lang in violation of the law. Tampa Tribune Times August 9, 1998. "What did I do?" Fletcher asked while she sat in Jasmine Hill. "I'm telling myself and everybody else this, I don't know why I'm stuck in this place." Tampa Tribune Times August 9, 1998.

On April 6, 1998 Adele Fletcher signed a note asking to be returned home. On April 20, 1998, a concerned neighbor petitioned the court and asked that Adele Fletcher be returned to her home. Suggestion of Capacity, 4/20/1998. In April 1998 an audit of Lang's guardianship files was begun by the Pasco County Clerk of the Court's office. State of Florida v. Francis Lang, Dye deposition p. 15.

### *Bilirakis Stonewalls*

On May 15, 1998, the court appointed attorney Scott McPherson to represent Adele Fletcher. Ltr: McPherson to Villanti dated 8/21/1998. In response to a letter dated April 20, 1998 imploring the court to return Adele Fletcher to her home and reporting that Fran Lang was preparing to sell Adele's car and home, Gus Bilirakis reported to the court on May 18 and stated that Adele Fletcher did not have sufficient assets to support the cost of living at home. Ltr: Bilirakis to Villanti, May 18, 1998. In a second later dated May 18 in response to a letter dated April 24, 1998, he reported to the court that Fran Lang determined that Adele Fletcher should be placed in an assisted living facility. He justified this action based on claims that Adele Fletcher would not allow the guardian to assess her needs and would not cooperate with private aides. Ltr. Bilirakis to Villanti, May 18, 1998.

### *Fletcher Returns Home*

Stating that Adele Fletcher made it very clear that she wanted to return home, Attorney McPherson wrote Gus Bilirakis and demanded that Adele Fletcher be returned home by July 17, 1998. Ltr: McPherson to Bilirakis dated 7/7/1998. She was returned home on July 13, 1998. McPherson to Villanti dated 8/21/1998. In a hearing held late in July of 1998, Judge Villanti declared that Lang's contention that she didn't need court permission to remove Adele Fletcher from her home was "wrong." Tampa Tribune Times August 9, 1998.

### *Attorney McPherson's Report to the Court*

On August 21, 1998 Attorney McPherson filed a report with the Court. He stated that a News Channel 8 target investigation that showed an oriented Adele Fletcher was accurate. He reported that Lang agreed to resign. He concluded by saying Adele Fletcher was wrongfully removed from her home, that there was no basis whatsoever for concluding that Ms. Fletcher was a danger to herself and that Adele Fletcher was held against her will at Jasmine Estates. He suggested the court consider an attorney ad litem to investigate the history of the guardianship. Ltr. McPherson to Villanti dated 8/21/1998. On August 24, 1998 Fran Lang resigned as guardian for Adele Fletcher. Court Minutes August 24, 1998.

### *Subsequent Proceedings: Bilirakis Withdraws*

On March 30, 1999 a memo went to the court reporting that \$493.00 was paid to staff for services provided prior to the establishment of the guardianship. The court concluded Fran Lang was to refund this payment. Review memo to court dated March 30, 1999. On August 23, 1999, the court issued an order

threatening to hold Fran Lang in contempt of court for failure to file documents related to Adele Fletcher.

On June 14, 1999, Gus Bilirakis moved to withdraw as counsel for Fran Lang and was permitted to withdraw on August 17, 1999. Gus Bilirakis was awarded fees in the amount of \$1505 for services incurred on behalf of Adele Fletcher from April 3, 1997 through December 8, 1997. Pasco Circuit Court Order, January 26, 1998.

### *The Criminal Case Against Lang*

In April 1998 an audit of Lang's guardianship files was begun by the Pasco County Clerk of Court's office. State of Florida v. Francis Lang, Dye deposition p. 15. On July 1, 1999, Lang sought psychiatric care due to depression and anxiety caused by legal and criminal investigations into her work as guardian. Ltr. Griffith to Webb dated Mar. 9, 2001. On October 24, 2000 a felony charge was brought against Fran Lang alleging that between November 1, 1996, and June 3, 1998, she engaged in one or more fraudulent acts. The charge was based on an investigation revealing that Fran Lang diverted money from guardian ward accounts into her personal accounts.

On March 13, 2001, Fran Lang was sentenced following her pleading guilty to a first degree felony charge of scheming to defraud. Tampa Tribune, March 13, 2001. An investigator claimed that at least 11 but as many as 72 of Lang's wards fell victim to her scheme and that at least \$65,000 was diverted from the ward's guardianship accounts to Lang's personal accounts. Tampa Tribune, March 13, 2001.