

A TV Executive Who Produced Crime Shows Is Now Wanted for Bank Fraud

Mary Carole McDonnell built a career producing true-crime shows with names like "It Takes a Killer" and "I Married a Murderer." Now the FBI says she is a criminal herself.

Federal investigators announced this week that the 73-year-old Michigan native is wanted for allegedly stealing nearly \$30 million from financial institutions in Southern California. The FBI alleges she posed as an heir to the McDonnell Aircraft family and claimed access to a secret \$80 million trust fund.



An arrest warrant was issued for McDonnell on December 12, 2018, in Santa Ana, California. She was charged with bank fraud and aggravated identity theft. The FBI believes she is now hiding in Dubai.

The aircraft company she claimed connection to was real and famous. McDonnell Aircraft Corporation was founded by James Smith McDonnell in 1939 and became known for military fighters like the F-4 Phantom II. The company merged with Douglas Aircraft in 1967 to form McDonnell Douglas, which later merged with Boeing in August 1997.

But investigators say Mary Carole McDonnell had no legitimate claim to the family fortune.

Between July 2017 and May 2018, she allegedly obtained \$14.7 million from Banc of California using this false identity. She allegedly defrauded additional financial institutions in a similar fashion, with estimated losses exceeding \$15 million.

The timing of the alleged bank fraud lines up with trouble at her television company. McDonnell was chief executive officer of Bellum Entertainment, a Burbank-based television production and distribution company she founded in

2004. The company originally operated under the name LongNeedle Entertainment.

In 2017, Her Company Ran Into Issues

In the summer of 2017, Bellum's workers stopped getting paid. About 50 employees filed wage claims against the company with the California Labor Commissioner. The list included actors, producers, crew members and even former FBI agents who appeared as experts on the crime shows.

McDonnell blamed the payroll problems on outside forces. In a June 2017 email to employees, she wrote that the company had been the victim of "significant bank fraud which occurred about a week ago which caused major issues with our account."

Her own nephew didn't buy it. Peter McDonnell, who had been the company's vice president for 10 years, quit on July 31, 2017. He told Deadline he was owed more than \$10,000 and was "unaware of any bank fraud."

"I am frustrated and really angry," he said. "She has hurt a lot of people and I want it to cease."

The workers who appeared on camera were also waiting for payment. Former FBI special agent Tim Clemente and his associates at XG Productions had worked on more than 100 true-crime shows for Bellum. Clemente said he and his colleagues, all former law enforcement officials, were owed about \$50,000 in back wages.

"They give all kinds of different excuses," Clemente told Deadline in 2017. "They say, 'You'll get it next week,' or 'We're processing it.' We've heard that a lot from them."

Bellum Entertainment dissolved in 2017 due to "unresolved financial issues."

She Goes By Many Aliases

The FBI says McDonnell has used several aliases, including Mary Carole Carroll, Mary Carroll McDonnell, Mary C. Carroll and Mary Carroll McDonald. She is described as 5 feet 7 inches tall, around 145 pounds, with blond hair and blue eyes.

Anyone with information about McDonnell's whereabouts is asked to contact the FBI Los Angeles field office at 310-477-6565 or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.