

Fredericksburg man convicted for 72nd time

BY KEITH EPPS / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

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A man who now has 72 criminals convictions was ordered Thursday to serve four years in prison.

Duane Graves' latest convictions stem from a Sept. 18 incident in which he found a man's wallet and used a credit card to buy \$7 worth of items.

Graves, who will turn 47 later this month, was sentenced in Fredericksburg Circuit Court to a total of 12 years with all but four suspended.

Judge J. Martin Bass' sentence exceeded the recommended state sentencing guidelines, which called for a maximum penalty of three years and seven months.

In exceeding the recommended maximum, Bass cited Graves' terrible record.

According to the evidence presented by prosecutor Travis Bird, a man dropped his wallet in the area of Play it Again Sports in Eagle Village last year.

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Graves found the wallet and immediately went to a nearby Sunoco station and used the card to make a \$7 purchase.

A short time later, Graves returned to the store and tried to make a second purchase. This time, a clerk asked to see his identification.

Graves displayed the victim's picture identification. Bird said the victim looks nothing like Graves.

The clerk called police and Graves was arrested. He told police that he used the credit card because “I wanted beer.”

Bird said there was \$100 in the wallet that Graves apparently didn’t see. The wallet and its contents were returned to the victim.

Graves’ newest convictions were forgery, credit card theft, identity theft and credit card fraud. The latter two convictions are misdemeanors.

Defense attorney Christopher Reyes asked the judge for mercy, pointing out that Graves didn’t actually steal the wallet and hadn’t had a felony conviction since 2006.

But Bird argued that Graves deserved a sentence at or above the guidelines, noting that he has been convicted of 22 misdemeanors since 2006 and has a criminal history dating back 30 years.

“Sometimes the commonwealth just has to throw up its hands,” Bird said. “The courts have tried for 30 years to change Mr. Graves’ ways, but to no avail.”

Graves’ prior convictions occurred mostly in Fredericksburg and the surrounding area, but he also has convictions in South Carolina and Florida.

The record includes 13 felonies, 13 larcenies and fraud-related charges, assault and numerous alcohol-related convictions.

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