

## **Lawyer going to jail for telling witness to lie**

11/20/04

By SHEILA BURKE  
*Staff Writer*

### ***He apologizes for plot to help client accused in robbery***

It was a lie that was used to try to help his client avoid a robbery conviction, but it's going to cost Nashville attorney David Gold 90 days in jail and possibly his law license.

Yesterday Gold pleaded guilty before Davidson County Criminal Court Judge Seth Norman to a felony charge of accessory after the fact of especially aggravated robbery.

Gold, 35, broke down yesterday in court when he apologized to the court and to the bar for his behavior.

The lawyer was caught coaching a woman to lie to authorities to protect a client of his accused in a robbery that involved a vicious dog attack. The lie was meant to cover the tracks of his client, Jeffrey Hammons.

Authorities said Hammons, 38, commanded his pit bull Biscuit to repeatedly attack James Brandon Batey outside an Antioch apartment complex in October. The dog tore off Batey's ears and mauled his throat. Deputy District Attorney General Tom Thurman told the court that Hammons then took Batey's drugs, money and other belongings.

The attorney tried to get a woman who had been with the victim on the night of the attack to lie about what happened.

Thurman told the court that the woman, Tara Wilee, told police that Batey was trying to rape her and the dog who attacked the victim belonged to an unknown man, instead of Hammons. Shortly afterward, Gold learned this was not true. And Wilee subsequently felt guilty and told police the truth, the prosecutor said.

Police then got the woman to call Gold twice. "He told her to stick with her story and not to cave in to police," Thurman said.

Gold agreed to a sentence of two years on supervised probation with all of it suspended but the 90 days in jail. He will begin serving the time on Dec. 17. "I crossed the line. I should not have," Gold told Norman. The lawyer told the judge that his client initially lied to him about the rape story and that he had made the mistake of trying to go forward with it once he found out it was false.

"Mr. Gold meant what he said when he said that he seriously regretted his behavior," his lawyer, David Raybin, said. "He did cross the line, but he has admitted his error and he wants to move on."

He will, however, have his law license suspended.

"We'll get a certified copy of the conviction and send it to the Supreme Court with a suspension order," said Charles High, disciplinary council for the Tennessee Supreme Court's Board of Professional Responsibility. A hearing to determine Gold's final discipline will follow.

As for Hammons, he is being held in the Metro Jail without bail because of a felony probation violation. He also is charged with especially aggravated robbery.