

Palm Beach Post Editorial #1

He was over 50. And they were girls
By Elisa Cramer
HASH(0x5fa474)

Friday, August 04, 2006

If the women whom Palm Beach police say a part-time town resident invited to his home and paid for sex acts were, in fact, women, the solicitation charge against Jeffrey Epstein might feel more sufficient. But, according to police records, they weren't. He was over 50. And they were girls. 14. 15.16.17-year-old girls. That should count for something - the difference between prostitution and pedophilia.

So, it is baffling that Mr. Epstein, who was indicted last month by a grand jury on one felony count of solicitation of prostitution, has not been charged, as Palm Beach police strenuously urged, with unlawful sex acts with a minor and lewd and lascivious molestation.

Conviction of crimes against minors would mean steeper penalties than the maximum five-year prison term Mr. Epstein faces if convicted of the single count of felony solicitation. It also would help carry a message of intolerance to perverts who prey on girls.

Prosecutors did not pursue charges against Mr. Epstein reflecting the age of the victims because they assumed a jury would view the girls not as victims but as promiscuous, untrustworthy, willing participants. The presumption is offensive.

Mr. Epstein, a 53-year-old Manhattan money manager who has hired Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz and defense attorney Jack Goldberger, has denied knowing how old the girls were. But police interviews with five alleged victims and 17 witnesses under oath, as well as phone messages, a high school transcript and other items that police found from searching Mr. Epstein's trash and 7,234-square-foot waterfront home, provide evidence that he knew the girls were teenagers.

One girl couldn't show up when Mr. Epstein wanted because she had soccer. Another time, Mr. Epstein had to wait for his "massage" session because the girl he wanted was still in class.

Why didn't State Attorney Barry Krischer let a jury decide whether to believe the teenagers - including a 16-year-old who went to Mr. Epstein's house to "work" in December 2004 after being asked whether she needed to make money for Christmas gifts?

Prosecutors gave greater weight to the details Mr. Dershowitz provided about the girls in an apparent effort to assail their character. Mr. Dershowitz pointed out to prosecutors that some of the teenagers had talked on myspace.com about marijuana and alcohol use.

The 20-year-old Royal Palm Beach woman who told police she recruited girls for Mr. Epstein has a Web page on Myspace.com that features one girl using the name "Pimpin' Made EZ."

Although no charges of witness tampering have been filed, the parents of at least one of the teenage victims complained to police of being followed and intimidated by two men. Police determined that their vehicles were registered to two private investigators. Mr. Goldberger denied knowing anything about it.

Police also note in their reports that the state attorney's office offered Mr. Epstein a plea deal that would have placed him on probation for five years, allowing him ultimately to walk away with no criminal record at all.

I asked Mr. Krischer's spokesman, Mike Edmondson, why the case was referred to a grand jury instead of Mr. Epstein being charged and facing a trial before a jury. And shouldn't the victims' credibility be a factor to determine whether a crime's been committed, not whether a jury will convict? (After all, as Mr. Goldberger told The Palm Beach Post of Mr. Epstein, "He's never denied girls came to the house.")

Especially, I asked Mr. Edmondson to explain: Why shouldn't the public look at this case and think there are two kinds of justice - one for the wealthy and one for the rest of us?

Mr. Edmondson said he could not comment on the case because it is active, but on the latter point, he offered, for the sake of "philosophical debate": "Whether wealth buys a different standard of justice across the country ... the answer to that would, of course, be yes."

But in this case, he said, "regardless of the battery of attorneys, the outcome would be the same. Every issue that was debated in public was debated in our office before this case went to the grand jury."

In this case, it is not the victims' credibility but the state attorney's that deserves questioning.

Palm Beach Post Editorial #2

Massaging the system
Palm Beach Post Editorial

Thursday, August 10, 2006

Palm Beach police say their 11-month investigation shows that 53-year-old part-time town resident Jeffrey Epstein committed unlawful sex acts with and lewd and lascivious molestation on five underage girls. Defense attorney Jack Goldberger claims that his client, Jeffrey Epstein, had no idea that the untrained girls he hired for massages were minors.

The Palm Beach County State Attorney's Office could have let a jury decide whom to believe. Instead, State Attorney Barry Krischer left the public to wonder whether the system tilted in favor of a wealthy, well-connected alleged perpetrator and against very young girls who are alleged victims of sex crimes.

Mr. Krischer took the unusual step of referring the case to a grand jury, which last month indicted Jeffrey Epstein on one felony count of solicitation of prostitution. That decision came after Harvard law Professor Alan Dershowitz met with prosecutors to undermine the credibility of the 14- to 17-year-old girls who charged that Mr. Epstein had paid them \$200 to \$300 to undress and massage him in his five-bedroom, 7 1/2 -bath home on the Intracoastal Waterway.

The girls, Mr. Dershowitz told prosecutors, had written on Myspace.com about smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol. But if the girls have a credibility problem, what about Jeffrey Epstein? Mr. Goldberger, told The Post: "Mr. Epstein absolutely insisted anybody who came to his house be over the age of 18. How he verified that, I don't know." And prosecutors took him at his word?

Police collected evidence that refutes Jeffrey Epstein's defense. Police searched his home and garage and found phone messages about the girls' school schedules and even a high school transcript, suggesting that Mr. Epstein at least knew that the girls were teenagers.

The state attorney's office has responded to criticism from Palm Beach police and others by noting the higher standard prosecutors face for conviction than law-enforcement officers do for arrest. But in this case, the state attorney bowed to the risk that a jury might look at both Jeffrey Epstein and the girls, and point fingers at both sides.

Even if the girls could be impugned as prostitutes, solicitation of a minor is a crime. Former disc jockey and teacher Bruno Moore was charged with that Tuesday. Investigators say the 34-year-old used the Internet - Myspace.com - to recruit a 13-year old.

Police say Jeffrey Epstein used a 20-year-old woman who had a Myspace.com account to recruit young girls. His actions were sleazy. It would have been good to ask a jury just how criminal they were.

Palm Beach Post Editorial #3

Spare us the outrage

Wednesday, February 13, 2008

An 11-month police investigation led to an indictment on one felony charge of solicitation of prostitution. That was in July 2006, and part-time Palm Beacher Jeffrey Epstein still has faced no repercussions for allegedly preying on underage girls.

So maybe Mr. Epstein is satisfied that he's getting his money's worth from his large legal team, which includes Harvard Law School Professor Alan Dershowitz (remember O.J. Simpson?) and Kenneth Starr (remember Monica Lewinsky?). Jack Goldberger of West Palm Beach, who's also on the team, told Post columnist Jose Lambiet in November: "This case is absolutely going to end without a trial within the next two months."

He was wrong, but Mr. Goldberger remains on Mr. Epstein's payroll, feigning moral outrage at two lawsuits filed this year against the Manhattan money manager. The lawsuits allege sexual exploitation of teenaged girls, one of them as young as 14. Said Mr. Goldberger after the first lawsuit, seeking more than \$50 million, was filed on Jan. 24: "We think this shows what this case is all about: money." Yes, it is - Mr. Epstein's effort to buy his way out of prosecution.

According to the lawyer of a 17-year-old whose parents are suing him, Mr. Epstein masturbated in front of her (she was 14 at the time) and used a vibrator on her at his home in February 2005. Another Epstein attorney, Lilly Ann Sanchez dismissed it: "Jeffrey Epstein did not have sex with this woman."

For those girls who claim that he did, Mr. Epstein's lawyers maintain that he did not know their ages, despite a police search of his home and garbage that found phone messages about the girls' school schedules and even a high school transcript. For all of his money, Mr. Epstein's best defense remains "I didn't know that I was a criminal pervert"?

Palm Beach Post Editorial #4

Rich man fought the law and he mostly won
Palm Beach Post Editorial

Monday, July 07, 2008

Two years after a grand jury indicted him on a felony charge of solicitation of prostitution, Jeffrey Epstein finally admitted that he lured a teenage girl to his \$8.5 million, 13,000-square-foot Palm Beach mansion for sex. A week ago, the 55-year-old investment banker began serving 18 months in jail.

But that plea deal - guilty of felony solicitation of prostitution and procuring a person under the age of 18 for prostitution - does not account for all five of the girls, one as young as 14, who alleged that Epstein sexually abused them. And why is Epstein serving his term in the overcrowded Palm Beach County Jail and not a state prison, where inmates are sent if their sentences are longer than one year?

The slow, dissatisfying resolution of the case sends a message to the public Post your that there's a different system of justice for the wealthy who hire high-comments powered lawyers. Epstein's legal team included West Palm Beach defense on this attorney Jack Goldberger, Harvard Law School Professor Alan Dershowitz,

who defended O.J. Simpson against murder charges, and Kenneth Starr, the prosecutor who pursued then-President Bill Clinton for lying about sex with young women.

Palm Beach police spent 11 months investigating Epstein before State Attorney Barry Krischer sent the case to a grand jury, instead of charging Epstein so the man who once boasted of accepting only billionaire clients could face a trial. The police had taken a high school transcript, class schedules and phone messages from Epstein's home that showed he knew the girls were underage. Yet Mr. Krischer was more swayed by Epstein's lawyers, who attempted to impugn the girls' character by showing they had chatted on Myspace.com about smoking marijuana and drinking. He should have let a jury decide whether the victims - and Epstein - were credible.

Ultimately, one charge against Epstein finally reflected the age of one victim, and the plea agreement left Epstein labeled a sex offender. With that additional charge, if Epstein had been convicted at a trial, he could have been sentenced to anything from probation to 15 years in prison, Assistant State Attorney Lanna Belohlavek said, adding that the recommended guideline sentence was 21 months.

Epstein also won't have to certify to the court that he is receiving counseling, typically required of sex offenders, because he has a private psychiatrist. But without court supervision, who will ensure Epstein is in fact being treated?

The plea deal also drops a federal investigation of Epstein. If a federal investigation was warranted, how does dropping it before completion benefit the public?

Epstein preyed on girls and denied it. For three years, his wealth and the influence of his lawyers bought him the protection the state attorney owed to the victims.

New York Post – 07/27/2008

New York Post - New York, N.Y.

Date: Jul 27, 2006

Start Page: 014

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IT looks like New York billionaire financier Jeffrey Epstein got off easy when he was hit with a charge of soliciting a prostitute for a "happy ending" in Palm Beach.

Because if Palm Beach police had their way, Epstein, 53 - who surrendered last Sunday and is out on \$3,000 bail - might have been whacked with far more serious charges of paying underage girls for sex.

But a state grand jury found the witnesses in the case were not credible and threw out all but the single charge of soliciting a hooker in his luxurious Palm Beach home. Epstein's

lawyers and friends now say he's the hapless victim of a vendetta by Palm Beach Police Chief Michael Reiter, whom they describe as a "born-again nut case."

According to the police investigation, a copy of which was obtained by the Palm Beach Post, detectives took statements from 17 witnesses and five alleged victims. [REDACTED], 20, a Palm Beach Community College student who described herself as "like a Heidi Fleiss," says she got naked to give Epstein a massage, then brought him six girls ages 14-16 for massages and sex at his home. She said they were paid \$200 per session.

Cops also allege that Epstein's personal assistant, [REDACTED] [REDACTED], who hasn't been charged, set up the liaisons and put fresh sheets on the massage table and supplied massage oils. Police searched through Epstein's garbage and retrieved sex toys and feminine hygiene products.

Epstein's Palm Beach lawyer, Jack Goldberger, told Page Six that the Florida state attorney concluded the cops had looked at evidence from a "one-sided perspective." He added that Epstein had passed an extensive lie-detector test in which he was grilled about underage girls.

Epstein's New York lawyer, Gerald Lefcourt, said, "The prosecutor didn't want to bring any charges in this case, but because of the craziness of this police chief, we have the charge of solicitation."

Last night, WPTV in Palm Beach reported that one reason [REDACTED] testimony may have been dismissed is the kinky Web page she has on MySpace featuring photos of her female friends playing with sex toys. One friend even uses the name "Pimpin' Made EZ." [REDACTED], who isn't charged, also writes, "Do what you do to make that money, life is a gamble. Stay hustling."

A spokeswoman for Reiter said, "We think our investigation speaks for itself."

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New York Post – 09/20/2007

JAIL LOOMS FOR SEX-CASE MOGUL

September 20, 2007 -- THE sordid sex case involving Jeffrey Epstein may be coming to an unhappy ending -with a plea deal that would put the publicity-shy billionaire behind bars for 15 months for allegedly soliciting underage teen girls for sex at his Palm Beach mansion.

Sources tell Page Six that Epstein's high-powered lawyers - including Alan Dershowitz, Gerald Lefcourt, Roy Black and Kenneth Starr - have been negotiating a deal with federal prosecutors who are probing, among other things, whether the gray-haired money manager paid West Palm Beach girls for sex or transported them across state lines. Epstein is currently charged by the State of Florida with soliciting young prostitutes for sex - but federal charges would be far more serious.

The Palm Beach Post reported yesterday that Epstein is very close to a deal with the feds that would send him to jail for 1½ to 2 years. Sources tell us that while a deal has not yet solidified, what's under discussion is a guilty plea to at least one charge in exchange for a sentence of 15 months in a Florida state prison, followed by 15 months of home confinement. That would be a fraction of the time he would have to serve if he were to be convicted by a jury.

Epstein's spokesman, Howard Rubenstein, said his client would have no comment. Dershowitz also declined to comment late yesterday.

Palm Beach police records show that on March 15, 2005, a 14-year-old girl alleged she had visited Epstein's estate, where she partially stripped and gave him a massage during which he "pulled out a purple vibrator" and used it on her in exchange for \$300. A further probe uncovered five young women who said Epstein had masturbated and touched their genitals during massages, the records state. A woman named ██████████ - who described herself as "like a Heidi Fleiss" - later admitted bringing six girls between the ages of 14 and 16 to Epstein's house, according to cops.

Despite the allegations, Epstein was only nailed on a single charge of soliciting a hooker - but it sparked a federal probe. Epstein's lawyers and friends have insisted he was the hapless victim of a vendetta by Palm Beach Police Chief Michael Reiter, whom they described as a "born-again nutcase."

Palm Beach Post - 08/14/ 2006

Police chief's reputation helps discredit attacks

By Larry Keller

Palm Beach Post - Monday, August 14, 2006

In the case of Palm Beach financier Jeffrey Epstein, it seems, at times, as if two men are accused of wrongdoing: Epstein and Palm Beach Police Chief Michael Reiter. Epstein, 53, was indicted last month on a charge of felony solicitation of prostitution solely because of Reiter's "craziness," one of Epstein's lawyers said. His department disseminated "a distorted view of the case" and behaved in a "childish" manner when the grand jury didn't indict Epstein on the charges it sought, another Epstein lawyer complained.

To hear the Epstein camp tell it, Reiter, 48, is a loose cannon better suited to be the sheriff of Mayberry. They whisper that he's embroiled in a messy divorce. Reiter did in fact file for divorce from his wife, (NAME REMOVED), last year, after 24 years of marriage. They have a son, 18, and a daughter, 14. The couple is scheduled to go to mediation next week, Aug. 16. Nothing in the court file suggests their split is particularly ugly.

Reiter incurred the wrath of the Epstein camp as well as the state attorney's office for two reasons. First, he pressed for Epstein to be charged with the more serious crimes of sexual activity with minors. Second, he slammed State Attorney Barry Krischer in blunt language seldom used by one law-enforcement official concerning another because of what he perceived as that office's mishandling of the case.

In a letter to Krischer written May 1, Reiter called his actions in the Epstein case "highly unusual." He added, "I must urge you to... consider if good and sufficient reason exists to require your disqualification from the prosecution of these cases." In short, Reiter told the county's top prosecutor for the past 13 years that he ought to get off the case. "It looks like a departure from professionalism," Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle said of Reiter's letter.

Following Epstein's indictment, Reiter referred the case to the FBI to determine whether the super-rich, super-connected defendant had violated any federal laws. Reiter won't discuss the case or the broadsides aimed at him. But others almost uniformly use one word to describe the chief: professional.

"I have always been impressed by Mike's professionalism and his leadership," said Rick Lincoln, chief of the Lantana Police Department and a Palm Beach County cop for 32 years. "The town of Palm Beach has a very professional police department. We all consider Mike to be our peer and a man of integrity." Juno Beach Police Chief H.C. Clark II agreed. Although he doesn't know Reiter well, he has met with him on countywide law enforcement issues. "I've never seen him lose his cool. I've never seen anything but a professional demeanor from him."

Reiter joined the Palm Beach Police Department in 1981, leaving a \$20,000-a-year patrol job at the University of Pittsburgh. His personnel jacket shows consistently excellent job evaluations. Posh Palm Beach is no hotbed of crime, and in his first year on the job, a resident confined to his home with a sick child thanked Reiter for delivering a few Cokes to the house. Reiter refused payment for the beverages. Another resident thanked Reiter for shutting off his car's headlights in his driveway, saying a valet must have been at fault. Reiter worked everything from road patrol to organized crime, vice and narcotics.

And he's no novice at investigations involving the island's rich and famous. He was the lead detective probing the drug overdose death of David Kennedy in 1984. He also was one of the officers who worked the investigation of William Kennedy Smith, who was charged in 1991 — and later acquitted — with raping a woman at the Kennedy family compound in Palm Beach.

Reiter, who has a master's degree in human resource development from Palm Beach Atlantic University, also has attended the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Va., and management courses at Harvard. He's been active in countywide interagency law enforcement organizations and has a "top secret" national security clearance. "He has a perspective that's broader than just addressing the needs of the town," said Town Manager Peter

Elwell, who promoted Reiter from assistant chief to chief in March 2001. Reiter makes more than \$144,000 as the town's top cop. Elwell thinks he's worth it. He's very businesslike, very straightforward. He's not easily agitated or flamboyant. He's about the work," Elwell said. "I think that his service as chief has been outstanding in five-plus years."

New York Times – 09/03/2006

Questions of Preferential Treatment Are Raised in Sex Case Against Money Manager - September 3, 2006

By ABBY GOODNOUGH

PALM BEACH, Fla. — In the summer and autumn of last year, when most of the mansions here stood empty behind their towering hedges, the police stealthily watched one at the end of a waterside lane. They monitored the comings and goings of its owner's private jet, subpoenaed his phone records and rifled through his trash.

The owner was Jeffrey Epstein, 53, an intensely private New York money manager with several billionaire clients. Months earlier, the stepmother of a 14-year-old girl told the Palm Beach police that a wealthy older man, whom the girl later identified as Mr. Epstein, might have had inappropriate sexual contact with her.

In sworn statements to the police, the 14-year-old and other teenage girls said a friend had arranged for them to visit Mr. Epstein's home and give him massages, usually in their underwear, in exchange for cash.

Most of the girls, according to the police, said Mr. Epstein had masturbated during the massages, and a few said he had penetrated them with his fingers or penis. They identified him in photos and accurately described the inside of his home. Some recalled that his employees had fed them snacks or rented them cars.

Mr. Epstein pleaded not guilty in August to the crime he was ultimately charged with, soliciting prostitution. But at a time when prosecutors around the nation have become increasingly severe in dealing with people accused of sex offenses, the case has raised questions about whether Mr. Epstein's prominence won him preferential treatment.

By the account of the police, they found probable cause to charge Mr. Epstein with much more serious offenses: one count of lewd and lascivious molestation and four counts of unlawful sexual activity with a minor.

But instead of proceeding with such charges on his own, the Palm Beach County state attorney took the rare step of presenting a broad range of possible charges to a grand jury, which indicted Mr. Epstein in July on the lesser count. In Florida, prosecutors usually refer only capital cases to grand juries.

Even before the indictment, the Palm Beach police chief, Michael Reiter, had accused prosecutors of giving Mr. Epstein special treatment and asked the state attorney, Barry E. Krischer, to remove himself from the case.

In an editorial, The Palm Beach Post attacked Mr. Krischer, a Democrat whose post is elective, saying the public had been left “to wonder whether the system tilted in favor of a wealthy, well-connected alleged perpetrator and against very young girls who are alleged victims of sex crimes.”

The case has taken a toll on the reputation of Mr. Epstein, who owns a palatial home in Manhattan, has pledged \$30 million to Harvard and once flew former President Bill Clinton on his 727. Politicians including Eliot Spitzer, a Democratic candidate for governor in New York, and Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico, also a Democrat, have returned campaign contributions from him.

But Mr. Epstein fought back, assembling a team of star lawyers, including Gerald B. Lefcourt and Alan M. Dershowitz, a friend of his, to look into the backgrounds of his young accusers.

Mr. Lefcourt says that the police acted “outrageously” and that his client has been wrongfully dragged through the mud.

“He disputes that he ever had sex with any under-age person or anything like that,” said Mr. Lefcourt, whose clients have included Russell Crowe, Martha Stewart and Abbie Hoffman.

Neither the police nor the state attorney’s office would discuss the case in detail. But the police released a thick report on the 13-month investigation after the indictment was unsealed in late July.

The police started investigating Mr. Epstein in March 2005, almost immediately after they were contacted by the stepmother of the 14-year-old, who, according to the report, was in a special school for students with disciplinary problems.

The girl, the report said, told the police that an older friend had “offered her an opportunity to make money” and had driven her to Mr. Epstein’s house one Sunday. The friend, identified by the police as [REDACTED], a local community college student, told the girl to say she was 18 if Mr. Epstein asked, the report said.

The girl told the police that Mr. Epstein’s assistant had led her upstairs to a room with a massage table and that Mr. Epstein had come in and told her to remove her clothes. She said Mr. Epstein had masturbated as she massaged him, had pressed a vibrator against her underwear and had given her \$300 afterward.

In October, the police interviewed Ms. [REDACTED], then 19, who told them Mr. Epstein had routinely paid her to bring teenage girls to his home. The police then interviewed a total of 5 alleged victims and 17 witnesses, many of whom told similar stories about what they had observed or participated in at Mr. Epstein's home. According to the report, at least one said Mr. Epstein had engaged in intercourse with her.

Mr. Lefcourt, his lawyer, said one girl who told the police of having had sex with Mr. Epstein as a minor had lied about both the sex and her age and had not shown up for grand jury questioning. He also said Mr. Epstein had passed a lie-detector test clearing him of any sexual involvement with under-age girls.

A spokeswoman for the Palm Beach police said that early this year, the police went to Mr. Krischer, the state attorney, intending to apply for warrants to arrest Mr. Epstein. Instead, she said, they were told that Mr. Krischer would convene a grand jury to examine the evidence and decide what charges, if any, to bring.

Around that time, the police report said, Mr. Dershowitz met with prosecutors to share information about the accusers, including statements they had posted on MySpace.com, the social networking site, concerning use of drugs and alcohol. According to the report, Mr. Krischer's office then decided to delay the grand jury session for several months.

The Palm Beach police grew frustrated, the report said, and on May 1 the department asked prosecutors to approve warrants to arrest Mr. Epstein.

Chief Reiter also wrote Mr. Krischer questioning "the unusual course that your office's handling of this matter has taken" and suggesting that Mr. Krischer disqualify himself. Chief Reiter refused several requests to be interviewed, and his spokeswoman would not say explicitly why he had urged the prosecutor to step aside.

Mike Edmondson, a spokesman for Mr. Krischer, said the state attorney's office sometimes sent noncapital cases to grand juries when there were questions about witness credibility. Mr. Krischer does not recommend a particular charge in such cases, Mr. Edmondson said, but gives the grand jury a list of possible charges.

Bruce J. Winick, a law professor at the University of Miami, said that while prosecutors in Florida rarely referred noncapital cases to grand juries, they sometimes did so with sensitive cases to be extra-cautious.

Mr. Lefcourt said the police were wrong to have released the report so soon, especially without correcting information that later proved wrong. He cited his assertion that one accuser had lied about her age, adding that she had also been arrested on drug charges and had been fired by her employer for stealing.

"What I'm trying to focus on," Mr. Lefcourt said, "is, What's motivating the selective and misleading release of information to the public?"

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New York Times – 06/30/08

Financier Starts Sentence in Prostitution Case -NYTimes.com Page 1 of 4 ge 1 of 4

July 1, 2008

Financier Starts Sentence in Prostitution Case

By LANDON [REDACTED] Jr.

The bad news arrived by phone last week on Little St. James Island, the palm-fringed Xanadu in the Caribbean where Jeffrey E. Epstein, adviser to billionaires, lives in secluded splendor.

Report to the Palm Beach County jail, the caller, Mr. Epstein's lawyer, said.

So over the weekend Mr. Epstein quit his pleasure dome, with its staff of 70 and its flamingo-stocked lagoon, and flew to Florida. On Monday morning, he turned himself in and began serving 18 months for soliciting prostitution.

"I respect the legal process," Mr. Epstein, 55, said by phone as he prepared to leave his 78-acre island, which he calls Little St. Jeff's. "I will abide by this."

It is a stunning downfall for Mr. Epstein, who grew up in Coney Island and went on to live the life of a billionaire, only to become a tabloid monument to an age of hyperwealth. Mr. Epstein owns a Boeing 727 and the largest town house in Manhattan. He has paid for college educations for personal employees and students from Rwanda, and spent millions on a project to develop a thinking and feeling computer and on music intended to alleviate depression.

But Mr. Epstein also paid women, some of them under age, to give him massages that ended with a sexual favor, the authorities say.

Federal prosecutors initially threatened to bring him to trial on a variety of charges and seek the maximum penalty, 10 years in prison. After years of legal wrangling, Mr. Epstein pleaded guilty to lesser state charges.

Upon his release from jail, he must register as a sex offender wherever he goes in the United States.

People from all walks of life break the law, of course. But for the rich, wrapped in a cocoon of immense comfort, it can be easy to yield to temptation, experts say.

"A sense of entitlement sets in," said Dennis Pearne, a psychologist who counsels people on matters related to extreme wealth. The attitude, he said, becomes, "I deserve anything I want, I can have anything I want — and I can afford it."

To prosecutors, Mr. Epstein is just another sex offender. He did what he did because he could, and because he never dreamed he would get caught, they say. Mr. Epstein's defenders counter that he has been unjustly persecuted because of his wealth and lofty connections.

Sitting on his patio on "Little St. Jeff's" in the Virgin Islands several months ago, as his legal troubles deepened, Mr. Epstein gazed at the azure sea and the lush hills of St. Thomas in the distance, poked at a lunch of crab and rare steak prepared by his personal chef, and tried explain how his life had taken such a turn. He likened himself to Gulliver shipwrecked among the diminutive denizens of Lilliput.

"Gulliver's playfulness had unintended consequences," Mr. Epstein said. "That is what happens with wealth. There are unexpected burdens as well as benefits."

Those benefits are on full display on his island where, despite his time in jail, Mr. Epstein has commissioned a new estate. The villa will occupy the island's promontory, which offers views of the Atlantic on one side and the Caribbean on the other. It will have a separate library to house Mr. Epstein's 90,000 volumes, a Japanese bathhouse and what he calls a "Ziegfeld" movie theater.

For now, however, those visions of a private paradise have been replaced by the cold reality of a jail cell.

The legal drama began in 2005, when a young woman who gave Mr. Epstein massages at his Palm Beach mansion told the local police about the encounter. She was 14 at the time, and was paid \$200.

The police submitted the results of their investigation to the state attorney, asking that Mr. Epstein be charged with sexual relations with minors. His lawyers say Mr. Epstein never knew the young women were under age, and point to depositions in which the masseuses — several of whom have filed civil suits — admitted to lying about their age.

In July 2005, a Florida grand jury charged Mr. Epstein with a lesser offense, soliciting prostitution. Mr. Epstein's legal team, which would eventually include the former prosecutor Kenneth W. Starr and the Harvard law professor Alan M. Dershowitz, was elated: Mr. Epstein would avoid prison.

But then the United States attorney's office in Miami became involved. Last summer, Mr. Epstein got an ultimatum: plead guilty to a charge that would require him to register as a sex offender, or the government would charge him with sexual tourism, according to people who were briefed on the discussions.

David Weinstein, an attorney in the government's Miami office, declined to discuss the specifics of the case. But he did address the subject of Mr. Epstein's means and prominent legal team, and dismissed a proposal by Mr. Epstein's lawyers — who opposed the application of federal statutes in the case — that he be confined to his house in Palm Beach for a probationary period.

“In their mind that would be an adequate resolution,” Mr. Weinstein said. “Our view is that is not enough of a punishment to fit the crime that occurred.”

The lurid details of the case have captivated wealthy circles in Palm Beach and New York and transformed Mr. Epstein, who shuns publicity and whose business depends on discretion, into a figure of public ridicule.

He said he has been trailed by stalkers and has become the target of lawsuits. In recent months, he said, he received over 100 letters a week asking for money or jobs as a masseuse. He recently received a package of gold-tinted condoms.

It has been a long, strange journey from Coney Island, where Mr. Epstein grew up in middle-class surroundings. He taught briefly at Dalton, the Manhattan private school, and then joined Bear Stearns, becoming a derivatives specialist. He struck out on his own in the 1980s.

His business is something of a mystery. He says he manages money for billionaires, but the only client he is willing to disclose is Leslie H. Wexner, the founder of Limited Brands.

As Mr. Epstein explains it, he provides a specialized form of superelite financial advice. He counsels people on everything from taxes and trusts to prenuptial agreements and paternity suits, and even provides interior decorating tips for private jets. Industry sources say he charges flat annual fees ranging from \$25 million to more than \$100 million.

As it became clear that he was headed for jail, Mr. Epstein has tried to put on a brave face. “Your body can be confined, but not your mind,” he said in a recent interview by phone.

But the strains were showing. “I am anxious,” he said in another recent interview, referring to how inmates would treat him. “I make a great effort to treat people equally, but I recognize that I might be perceived as one of the New York arrogant rich.”

Jail will certainly be a big change. Mr. Epstein is a man of precise, at times unconventional, habits. He starts his mornings with a secret-ingredient bran muffin prepared by his chef. He seems to have a germ phobia. He never wears a suit, preferring monogrammed sweatsuits and jeans. And he rarely attends meetings — “I never have to be anywhere,” he tells his pilots, when he cautions them to avoid flying through chancy weather.

Looking back, Mr. Epstein admits that his behavior was inappropriate. “I am not blameless,” he said. He said he has taken steps to make sure the same thing never happens again.

For starters, Mr. Epstein has hired a full-time male masseur (the man happens to be a former Ultimate Fighting champion). He also has organized what he calls a board of directors of friends to counsel him on his behavior.

And Mr. Epstein has changed his e-mail address to alert people that he will be unavailable for the next 18 months. The new address indicates he is “on vacation.”

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