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## **Classic Car Con Artist Sentenced to 60 years in Prison**

**GALVESTON** – Tuesday, Richard Thomas Finley was sentenced to 60 years in prison for engaging in a theft and fraud scheme that he ran out of his custom car restoration shop “Classic American Street Rods” in the San Leon-Bacliff area. The sentence followed a December jury trial in which Finley was found guilty of felony theft greater than \$300,000.

Finley advertised to his victims that he would perform “engine swaps” on their classic automobiles, upgrading their classic cars’ original engine with a more modern engine that is less expensive to maintain and repair. After receiving complaints from customers, Galveston County Sheriff’s Detective Dona Bouse and other investigators from the Galveston County Auto Crimes Task Force discovered that Finley stole more than \$498,000 from customers from 2018 to 2023. The investigation revealed seventy-two victims. Over twenty classic vehicles were recovered by law enforcement authorities and returned to their rightful owners. Finley was eventually indicted for felony theft.

Over the course of a week-long trial jury beginning December 15, prosecutors called twenty-eight of Finley’s victims to testify about how Finley lied to them, stole their money, and ultimately defrauded them out of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Several victims described how Finley demanded a large amount of money from them upfront to begin work on their classic car, then several months and years would go by with no updates from Finley on when the engine swap would be completed.

When confronted by his victims, Finley would lie about the status of their engine swap. Evidence showed that, meanwhile, Finley was also stealing his victim’s car parts and engine parts from their classic automobiles and then would sell those stolen parts to unsuspecting buyers. All of the victims testified that Mr. Finley never performed the “engine swap” that was promised. After a week-long trial, the jury returned a verdict of guilty on December 19.

Finley elected to be sentenced by the court. On Tuesday, Judge Jeth Jones of the 122<sup>nd</sup> District Court sentenced Finley to 60 years in prison.

The Galveston County Criminal District Attorney’s Office commends the Galveston County Auto Crimes Task Force and Detective Dona Bouse with the Galveston County Sheriff’s Office for their diligent work in this case

*State of Texas vs. Richard Thomas Finley*, Cause No. 23-CR-2396, 122<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Court, Honorable Jeth Jones, presiding. Prosecutors: Chief Assistant District Attorney Shawn Connally and Assistant District Attorney Brock Yates, prosecuting.

NOTE: Court records for Galveston County cases are available from the Galveston County Clerk (for misdemeanor cases; <https://www.galvestoncountytexas.gov/our-county/court-clerk/court-clerk-86>) and the Galveston County District Clerk (for felony cases; <https://www.galvestoncountytexas.gov/our-county/district-clerk>). Most court records are available online at: <https://portal.galvestoncountytexas.gov/portal>. Case records may be searched by cause number or the defendant’s name.

Mugshots of current inmates are available at: <https://p2c.galvestoncountytexas.gov/jailinmates.aspx>.