

'Grandparent' scammer fails to hook wary widow



Bill Moak

CONSUMER WATCH

A wary Mississippi widow has thwarted efforts by a crook whom she believes got information from an obituary, then attempted to use it to rip her off with the "grandparent" scam.

This story proves that scammers are not above taking advantage of people going through some of life's greatest trials, but also how quick thinking and a healthy dose of skepticism can help you avoid becoming a victim

You may recall that I recently wrote about this pernicious scam, in which the scammer calls an elderly person pretending to be a grandchild or other relative who's in trouble and needs money fast. But they met their match when they called this 81-year-old Flo-wood widow one morning a couple of weeks ago. She didn't want to share her name but wanted to tell her story to help others who may be at risk. "If I could save just one person from being taken in, it would be worth the trouble," she told me.

Our potential victim, who lost her husband of 63 years in March, believes the crook used information gleaned from an online obituary for her husband. When she got a call recently nur-

portedly from her grandson Brad in Omaha, Nebraska, she immediately sensed that something wasn't right.

"It's bad when they start using the obituaries," she told me. "I can see where people in a bereaved state could be taken in by this scam."

Her internal alarm bells began to ring immediately as she got the call, allegedly from Brad (but in a different voice than usual) who said simply, "This is Brad. The reason I'm talking like this, my nose is broken." But that set off an immediate red flag, since Brad would never just start talking to her without addressing her as "Mom-maw." But she went with it anyway, to see where the story would lead.

"Brad" went on to tell the potential

victim that he had been in a "bad, bad wreck," describing a situation in which a friend named "Sam" had asked for transportation to the doctor's office. On the way, they had been in a car accident. "Sam," the story went, was taken away in an ambulance, and "Brad" was charged with reckless driving. "Sam's lawyer says if I can get the bail money he can get me out of jail," he continued. "So, I thought maybe you could send me some money."

But the wary widow wasn't having any of it, and told the caller that all her money was tied up. "Why haven't you called your dad?" she asked, then the caller hung up abruptly. She knew that,

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