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NYDailyNews.com

Saks shopgal 'very happy' with 90 days in slammer

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SAKS' FORMER top-selling jewelry saleswoman got socked with 90 days in jail and ordered to repay nearly \$100,000 yesterday for swiping tens of thousands of dollars in commissions.

Cecille Villacorta, who prosecutors charged stole more than \$1 million from the posh Fifth Ave. flagship, was delighted.

"I'm very happy," said a beaming Villacorta, who flashed a victory sign after the Manhattan Supreme Court hearing.

Last March, a jury cleared the 52-year-old Philippine native of a top grand larceny charge that carried up to 25 years in prison.

She was convicted of 146 charges, the vast majority of them for falsifying business records.

Prosecutors charged that Villacorta ran an elaborate six-year scheme in which she refunded customers' credit cards for pricey baubles they kept. She then gave them gift cards they didn't pay for, which meant she was stealing from the company to keep clients, while boosting her bonuses, which reached some \$500,000.

In a victim impact statement to the judge, Saks' director of customer service, Andrea Robins, charged that Villacorta had damaged the department store's reputation.

She said that by stealing from Saks, Villacorta was "picking the pocket of all Americans."

The store's top saleswoman from 2000 to 2006, Villacorta sold \$27 million worth of jewelry.

While Assistant District Attorney David Naser had asked for a sentence of two to six years in prison, Villacorta's lawyer, Joseph Tacopina, pleaded for no jail time.

Justice Gergory Carro ordered her behind bars for three months, to do 100 hours of community service and to pay \$96,000 in restitution. He gave Villacorta until Aug. 10 to surrender.

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Ex-Saks jewelry saleswoman Cecille Villacorta is all smiles after being sentenced to 90 days in jail and \$96,000 in restitution for stealing from the department store. If found guilty of grand larceny, she would have faced up to 25 years. Photo by Mariela Lombard