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## Attorney, collector Corey Shanus says owner of New Jersey auction house sold him counterfeit items

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A Westchester County attorney with a world-class memorabilia collection said in a federal lawsuit filed Monday in Manhattan that the owner of a prominent New Jersey auction house sold him items supplied by Peter Nash, the former hip-hop artist turned baseball historian, which Shanus later learned were fake.

Collector Corey Shanus said in the the suit that Rob Lifson, the owner and president of Robert Edward Auctions sold him counterfeit items.

Shanus, for example, said in the suit that he paid \$161,000 in 2002 was not created until the 1940s or '50s. Shanus also claimed that he paid more than \$60,000 for an alleged 1861 Grand Match trophy ball that the analysis company said was not created until the 1920s or '30s.

Lifson also inflated memorabilia prices by falsely reporting record sales of rare sports memorabilia in his suit, Shanus claims. The suit seeks almost \$1.1 million in damages and punitive damages, not including interest and legal fees.

Beginning in 2003, Lifson learned that serious questions had cropped up about items supplied by Nash, a member of the 1980s hip-hop band 3rd Bass who was known as Prime Minister Pete Nice. But Lifson repeatedly assured Shanus that Nash's materials were good and did not share his concerns about Nash's items until 2009, the suit says.

"Lifson had good reason to keep from Shanus about various Nash items that were being sold at auctions as rare sports collectibles and to discourage Shanus from inquiring about the authenticity of these items," the lawsuit said. "Unbeknownst to Shanus, upon information and belief, Lifson either individually and/or through REA had loaned a substantial amount of money to Nash and had collateralized that loan by taking a security interest in Nash's collection of sports memorabilia.

"Lifson had been unsuccessful in his efforts to obtain repayment from Nash, and had commenced court proceedings to collect on the Nash indebtedness by, among other things, foreclosing on the collateral...Lifson viewed the collateral as the best, if not the only, source of repayment of his loan."

Shanus and his attorney Tab Rosenfeld declined comment on the suit. Lifson did not return a call for comment.

Shanus alleges in the suit that Lifson began defrauding him when Lifson was an officer at Mastro Auctions and continued after he formed REA.

Mastro Auctions, once sports memorabilia's largest auction house, which appears to be one of the targets of a four-year-old FBI investigation into fraud in sports memorabilia, went out of business in 2009.

Shanus' lawsuit presents a new twist in an ongoing legal feud between Nash and Lifson, who won a \$760,000 judgment against the aging rap star in 2009 after Nash failed to repay hundreds of thousands of dollars in loans.

Bishop Ford Central Catholic High School of Brooklyn agreed last month to pay \$53,000 to settle a lawsuit filed by REA, which claimed the school interfered with its attempt to collect the 2009 judgment from Nash.

The lawsuit, filed by Robert Edward Auctions in New Jersey Superior Court last June, accused Bishop Ford officials of trying to cover up the fact that school president and former basketball coach Ray Nash - Peter Nash's father - wrongfully took more than \$52,000 from school funds to prevent a bank from foreclosing on his son's upstate home.

The school discovered during a 2008 audit that Ray Nash had taken \$52,551 in school funds in 2007 to hold off foreclosure of his son's home. Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes declined to prosecute Ray Nash, saying there was no evidence of criminal intent.

Peter Nash was a hip-hop star in the early 1990s, when his group 3rd Bass was a fixture on MTV and when his music career fizzled, he became a well-respected baseball historian and memorabilia dealer. But according to court documents and former associates, he has spent much of the past decade dodging creditors and tax collectors, engaged in a never-ending series of legal and financial battles.

Sources say FBI agents investigating the alleged theft of baseball documents from the New York Public Library and counterfeit memorabilia have questioned collectors and industry executives about the former hip-hop artist.

- with Scott Shifrel

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