

Fresh Start

Former auto dealer Antoinette Frink's sentence was commuted by President Clinton and now she tries to put the past behind her and rebuild her life.

by Mary M. Chapman

The night before she got word, a nervous Antoinette Frink nibbled pizza with cellmates at a federal prison in Lexington, Ky., barely allowing herself to think that, after more than 11 long years, she could soon be released.

"I'd gone up and down with the possibility that my sentence would be commuted," Frink, former president of McFrink Chevrolet-Cadillac Inc. in Delaware, Ohio, said in a telephone interview from her sister's home in Georgia.

"I was sort of hopeful, but not too [hopeful]. Then, when I couldn't stand it anymore, I called a relative and asked them to go online to a newspaper, and that's how I found out. My name was on that list, and I thank God. I was out by 6:45 that night."

Frink, 49, was indeed one of 140 pardons and 36 commutations granted Jan. 20 by President Clinton. She had been indicted in December 1988 and convicted that next May, sentenced to a mandatory 15 1/2 years for, basically, selling cars to drug dealers. Federal officials contend that she knew that those vehicles would be used to transport drugs.

Frink, a former teacher who has a master's degree in school psychology, was sentenced under guidelines that prohibit parole but subtract time for good behavior, or "good time," as it's often called. She had been scheduled for release in 2003. For her part, Frink says she didn't do anything wrong.

"I think the whole thing was unfair. In fact, it was indescribable as to how unjust it was," she said. "There's a fine line in business. You're trained all your

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