

ADRIAN WALKER

‘Pam family scams’ spawning new revelations



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Kyle Pam (left) spoke with his father, Rolando, before his arraignment on real estate fraud charges in Suffolk Superior Court last week.



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Several generations of Judith Marriro’s family have occupied the multifamily home she lives in — but no longer owns — on Harold Street in Roxbury. How the elderly woman came to be separated from her property last year is now part of a sprawling investigation of the Pam family, Roxbury’s most mysterious real estate entrepreneurs.

Over the past couple of decades, Rolando Pam and his children have built an empire through a series of questionable deals, many of them with vulnerable partners. Their activities were the subject of a two-part investigation by the Globe's Astead W. Herndon and Patricia Wen. The two reporters found sellers who denied selling their properties, nonprofits that had made unlikely deals with members of the Pam family, and a long string of lawsuits. The family's activities have in some circles spawned the nickname "The Pam Family Scam."

Marrero saw the recent Globe stories and found a lawyer, Betsey Crimmins of Greater Boston Legal Services. Marrero's home has an assessed value of \$444,200. But Suffolk County real estate records show that Marrero sold the house to Charise Pam, Rolando's daughter, for just \$5,000. Marrero has considered the Pams family friends. But though her attorney, she says that she did not knowingly sell her property, and that she never received any proceeds.

In the wake of the Globe series, both the attorney general's office and the Suffolk district attorney's office opened investigations into the Pams' business affairs. The transaction involving Marrero's Harold Street house hit their radar immediately. Be relieved that the Pams are not your business partners or landlords or property managers.

The investigators figure to have a busy summer, because there is a lot to plow through. Rolando Pam and his children began by buying up distressed properties. But they allegedly moved on to bigger things. They have also acquired properties from two nonprofits at bargain-basement prices, paying as little as \$100 to buy houses from Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse and Roxbury Action Plan, longstanding Roxbury social service agencies.



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In some Roxbury circles, the Pams' actions are so widely known that they've been given their own nickname: "The Pam Family Scam."

Pam family's deals with nonprofits were less than charitable

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Those dubious transactions mean the Pams won't be the only people with uncomfortable questions to answer. The leadership of both nonprofits, Harold Raymond of VBC and Lloyd King of Roxbury Action Plan, owe the public an explanation for why they sold properties for far less than what they were worth. Shouldn't nonprofits that serve needy populations maximize their profits when they sell property? Did somebody cut a deal for themselves?

The fallout from the Pam family scams could include both civil and criminal actions.

And then there is the suspected arson. A historic building the Pams owned in Dudley Square burned down in 2014. The investigator for the company that insured the building said he found evidence that the fire was "intentional." Pam received \$524,000 in an insurance settlement after the fire, nearly \$175,000 more than he spent to buy it from Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse. The fire raised more questions about the Pam family's questionable practices.

The Pams' weird empire should have raised questions long before now. The people they dealt with weren't necessarily sophisticated about how to protect themselves, and it took an investigation to assemble the pieces of the Pams' years of dicey behavior. Whether they have broken laws remains to be determined, but there's no question that they broke the faith of their neighbors.

Corruption usually flourishes out of the spotlight, and this is no exception. Rolando Pam's career would be inconceivable in, say, Beacon Hill. But his family's business focused on poor people and worked with low-profile nonprofits, and the people who tried to cry foul went ignored. The revelation of the Pams' bad behavior comes too late to help some of their victims, but maybe not all.

Maybe it's not too late to find out what really happened to Judith MARRIRO's family home.

Adrian Walker is a Globe columnist. He can be reached at walker@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @Adrian_Walker.