

News

My life with a champion fraudster, by his ex-wife

David Brown

Kenner Elias Jones is a priest, doctor, political strategist, charity founder and, most significantly, one of the world's most intriguing fraudsters.

The Welsh conman has charmed his way into hearts and bank accounts of victims for almost half a century with a record of more than 60 convictions.

His former wife has now revealed the secret of his success as she launches a hunt for the 65-year-old fugitive with the publication of a book about him. Lee Mackenzie, 63, is not seeking an apology but to understand what motivates him and to warn others.

Elias Jones has been on the run for 14 years since absconding on the eve of a trial at Lewes crown court, East Sussex. His Canadian ex-wife, an artist and former broadcaster, said: "I have been told he is a psychopath, a narcissist, has imposter syndrome. I believe he is missing something inside: a conscience. When he lies he does not give off the usual signs which would alert you."

She met him in 1979 during a back-packing holiday in Llandudno, north Wales. He had been choirboy before becoming a student at Sheffield Polytechnic, where he was involved in Liberal Party politics, but had returned to Wales after being sentenced to probation for fraud. A year later he wrote to her in Canada, saying that he was in jail after inadvertently becoming involved



Lee Mackenzie moved from Canada to marry Kenner Elias Jones in 1982

World of deception

1975 London Kenner Elias Jones jailed for three years at Old Bailey for theft and forgery.

1980 Coventry Jailed for 15 months for obtaining money by deception.

1987 United States Jailed for nine years for passing bad cheques.

1990 Canada Jailed for possession of stolen cheque book.

1996 Merthyr Jailed for 18 months for deception and fraud.

2003 East Sussex Absconded before trial for alleged theft.

2003 Kenya Posed as a doctor and a priest.

2012 Spain Unpaid \$20,000 hospital bill for six-week stay.

2013 Sweden Reports of asylum claim, alleging persecution in Kenya.

in a fraud while helping a friend. "The man who presented himself to me in those letters was charming, intelligent, funny, well-versed on world affairs. I fell in love with him through the mail."

The couple were married in 1982 and lived in the village of Winchmore Hill, Buckinghamshire. Soon his new bride discovered that the money she had saved to buy them a home had disappeared and he had been using cheques from her empty account with a Canadian bank, leading to a criminal investigation against her in her homeland. Only then did she learn he had at least six previous convictions for fraud.

"He had such plausible explanations for everything. I could not prove he was telling the truth or lying," she said.

She returned to Canada, where they were briefly reconciled until the frauds resumed. Ms Mackenzie spent ten years repaying money to her extended family, which her former husband had obtained by claiming that she was dying.

After their divorce Elias Jones married a Canadian woman 37 years his senior, whom he had met at a church; and after her death a woman in Kenya, where he posed as a priest and doctor.

Ms Mackenzie hopes that her book will help to track him down and assist his victims in coming to terms with what has happened. "I cannot help them get their money back," she said. "All I can do is give them my story." *The Charming Predator* is published by Doubleday.



Rare plants on the verge of extinction

Some of Britain's rarest plants are barely clinging on in the unlikely haven of the nation's road verges (Will Humphries writes).

Roadside green spaces are the last refuge of many wild plants, a study by

Plantlife, Europe's largest conservation charity, suggests. Researchers found 700 species, more than in any other part of the landscape, and 12 per cent (87) are at risk of extinction or falling in numbers. Britain's last native fen ragwort plant, for example, is



Tower mustard, left, crested cow-wheat, above, fen ragwort, right, and wood bitter-vetch are all found mainly on verges

at risk from rubbish dumped near a burger van on the A142 near Ely, Cambridgeshire.

Trevor Dines, botanical specialist at