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## South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

### Fort Lauderdale psychic takes beef with competitor to federal court

By [Jon Burstein](#), Sun Sentinel

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It won't be the stars that determine the winner in a nasty fight within the world of South Florida phone psychics.

The battle will be decided by a federal jury.

Fort Lauderdale psychic and medium Linda Georgian, who hosted the once-popular Psychic Friends Network with singer Dionne Warwick, is suing the operators of a group of South Florida psychic phone lines. She is accusing The Zodiac Group, a Lantana-based company, of falsely telling its customers that she is affiliated with its psychic services.

"[The Zodiac Group] is getting her business, her money and creating confusion in the marketplace," said Paul Andrews, one of her attorneys.

The lawyer for The Zodiac Group says there was no attempt to link Georgian to its phone lines. Georgian once had a contract with the company, and outdated information linking her to The Zodiac Group's phone lines is still floating around on various Internet directories, he said.

"You can find listings and addresses [on the Internet] from 10 years ago, 15 years ago," said Keith Grumer, The Zodiac Group's attorney. "The Web crawlers go out and take data from old phone books and listings and keep it forever."

Georgian's lawsuit is scheduled to go to trial as early as July 25 before U.S. District Judge James I. Cohn at the Fort Lauderdale federal courthouse. It's unclear how much she is seeking in monetary damages, but the lawsuit alleges The Zodiac Group has wrongfully taken in "millions of dollars" using her name.

Phone psychic hotlines have called South Florida home for years — the most famous being Fort Lauderdale-based Psychic Readers Network with its ads featuring Miss Cleo, a Los Angeles-born woman who claimed to be a Jamaican soothsayer. That phone line's parent company cut a deal with the Federal Trade Commission in 2002 to cancel \$500 million in customer bills and pay a \$5 million fine related to its telemarketing practices.

In Georgian's 126-page lawsuit against The Zodiac Group, she accuses the company of violating the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act as well as the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act.

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Georgian, who got into the psychic business with a Fort Lauderdale radio show in 1972, says on her website that she is "the original master psychic" and was "voted #1 psychic in the world." At its peak during the 1990s, the Psychic Friends Network had about 2,300 psychics working for it, according to Georgian's lawsuit.

Georgian had a contract with The Zodiac Group from 2001 to March 2007, allowing the company to use her name and image to promote its phone lines. She claims that after she cut off the relationship, the Zodiac Group continued to display her photo on its websites and promote a phone line as being attached to her.

The lawsuit alleges that as late as September 2009, psychics working for The Zodiac Group were wrongly claiming over the phone that Georgian was still affiliated with the phone line.

"[Psychics] acquire followings over the years, and people want to talk to Linda Georgian or to someone she recommends or endorses," Andrews said. "There's a certain level of trust and familiarity. I guess there is brand loyalty."

The Zodiac Group's attorney argues that once the contract with Georgian ended, the company took down all its advertising and Web information related to her. The Zodiac Group inadvertently left two photos of her on its websites, but did not link her name to any phone numbers and took down the stray photos once they were discovered, Grumer said.

"There is no evidence whatsoever that Georgian was damaged or that defendants profited from this isolated website incident or that any profitable calls were generated by the offensive website content," Grumer said.

In any event, Georgian wasn't a big draw for The Zodiac Group, only representing "a very small percentage" of its business, Grumer said.

People who call psychic phone lines are usually charged by the minute as they ask questions about their love lives, careers and other personal matters.

Many psychic hotlines are run out of large rooms lined with phone operators reading from scripts, said James Randi, a Fort Lauderdale magician who is internationally known as an investigator of paranormal and pseudoscientific claims.

While psychic hotlines used to be big business, they now appear to be on the decline, Randi said.

[jburstein@tribune.com](mailto:jburstein@tribune.com) or 954-356-4491

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