

Guilty Verdict For Cop In Sex Case

November 19, 1986 | By Linnet Myers.

chicagotribune.com

A Chicago police officer was found guilty Tuesday of sexually abusing an 11-year-old girl, who told of the crime after she saw a show on child abuse.

A Cook County Criminal Court jury convicted Walter Wells, 58, a Belmont District police officer who has been on the force for 28 years, of aggravated criminal sexual assault and sexual abuse.

Wells, formerly of 4739 N. Kelso Ave., was suspended from police duty pending the outcome of the trial, said Assistant State's Attys. Norma Reyes and Dale Weigand.

According to the child's testimony, the abuse began when she was in 1st or 2d grade and continued until last year, when she was 10. Last November, the girl started trying to avoid all contact with Wells, Weigand said.

But the 5th-grade child started to have headaches from tension and her grades suffered, prompting her school to call her mother in April, he said.

The school nurse talked to the child, who said she had been having headaches because Wells "is bothering me." She then told the nurse what Wells had been doing.

On the witness stand, the girl testified she decided to tell because she had recently seen a show that "tells you to tell somebody if somebody's hurting you."

She said Wells had repeatedly told her never to tell anyone of the abuse

"or he'd get in trouble and I'd get in trouble."

"Did he say anything else?" Reyes asked her.

"Yes," she said.

"What did he say?"

"He said he loved me," answered the child, who then broke down and cried.

When she finished her testimony, Judge Arthur Cieslik leaned down from the bench and told her, "You did a great, great job, okay?"

Wells' lawyer, George Nichols, asked the judge to declare a mistrial because of "certain comments" the judge made in front of the jury about the child's performance on the witness stand.

The judge refused, saying, "We have an 11-year-old witness who is required to make some statements that would be difficult even for an adult. . . . All this court did was make it easier for her."

During the trial, Wells took the stand and denied that he had ever abused the child.