

Ex-cop admits to committing sex crime on duty

powelltribune.com

2003 Cop Pedophile Kirk Chapman

“To the single count, how would you plead?” asked Fifth Judicial District Court Judge Steven Cranfill, referring to a felony count of third-degree sexual assault.

“Guilty, sir,” Chapman responded.

As part of a plea deal — a deal endorsed by the woman he sexually touched — Chapman received a two- to four-year prison sentence.

However, that prison time is really not much more than words printed on a court document. That’s because Chapman already is serving a three-and-a-half to seven-year prison sentence (to be followed by seven years of supervision) for an unrelated sex crime in Wisconsin — and the deal allows him to serve the Wyoming sentence at the same time.

As one of Chapman’s court-appointed defense attorneys, Bill Simpson, put it Monday, “once he completes the sentence in Wisconsin, then this matter (in Wyoming) will be behind him.”

Chapman, 42, also must pay \$245 to the district court, \$865 for counseling the woman received after the assault and about \$5,200 to cover the cost of transporting him from prison in Wisconsin back to Park County.

Chapman declined to make a statement in court, but the former Powell woman he assaulted submitted one that described the assault as “devastating, even still, and has effected every area of my life and every part of myself.”

In the written statement, the woman called Chapman “not just a criminal, but a predator.”

“He used his badge, knowledge and position to take advantage of women, and forever changed the (lives) of at least two young women in two different states,” she wrote.

Chapman, a 1992 Powell High School graduate, served 10 years with the U.S. Marines and a couple years in school security and law enforcement in Wisconsin before returning to Powell and joining the police department in 2007.

About a year after his hire, Chapman got a speeding ticket for going 76 miles per hour in a 65 mph zone while off-duty.

“No one’s above the law,” the then-cop offered to the Tribune in an early 2010 interview.

Chapman’s statement became more than a platitude the following year, when a pair of agents with the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation came calling on a much more serious matter.

Had he used his position as a police officer to get a Powell woman to submit to sexual touching, early one morning in mid-September? the DCI agents asked.

It never happened, Chapman told them.

“Chapman continued to tell the agents that he ‘didn’t do anything (wrong)’ that night. He simply took (the woman) to her residence and dropped her off,” DCI Special Agent Andrew Hanson later recounted in an affidavit.

The woman, however, told DCI a drastically different story. Chapman gave her a ride home from the bar — dropping her off with a back rub and his personal cell phone number — but he came back later under the auspices of wanting to check on her safety, Hanson recounted.

Amid some conversation, he began massaging and touching her — proceeding to her genitals and her breasts, the woman told Hanson; she told DCI that Chapman showed her a knife in his boot during the encounter and felt it was meant to intimidate her.

When she stood up and, for a second time, told the officer he should get back to work, he bent her over her futon and began rubbing against her, agent Hanson wrote of the woman’s account.

That move may have proved to be Chapman’s undoing: the woman told DCI that while he moved his groin, Chapman accidentally bumped the transmit button on his portable radio; the static prompted a dispatcher to check on the officer’s status, the woman said. He didn’t respond to dispatch’s first inquiry, but the second time, Chapman said he was OK and explained he’d just bumped the microphone with his knee, the woman recalled to DCI.

The police department’s recording of the night’s radio traffic corroborated that account, Hanson wrote.

Chapman, who was immediately suspended after the woman’s report, resigned his position from the police department and moved to Wisconsin.

About nine months later, the Park County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office charged him with third-degree sexual assault, alleging he’d used his position of authority to get the woman to submit to sexual contact.

“That is hard to un-explain from the defense’s perspective, how this person would know the mic was keyed during that period of time during the earlier morning hours,” deputy prosecutor Sam Krone said during a preliminary hearing.

Chapman’s lawyers repeatedly pushed back a trial as they prepared a defense.

In May 2014, however, just about a month before the Wyoming case was to finally go before a jury, Chapman was arrested on new allegations. A woman in Appleton, Wisconsin, heard about the pending case in Wyoming and came forward to report that Chapman had sex with her in 2003

— when she was 13 years old.

Appleton police caught Chapman admitting to the crimes on tape, and prosecutors charged him with repeated sexual assault of a minor.

Chapman pleaded guilty and asked for probation while the prosecution had argued for 10-12 years in prison.

Before imposing the three-and-a-half- to seven-year sentence, Outagamie, Wisconsin, County Circuit Court Judge Greg Gill Jr. asked Chapman if he would be recommending probation if it was a case where someone had victimized the former officer's own child.

Chapman said he hypothetically would, if he knew the adult was a nice person.

Although there'd be multiple variables, "I guess I'd want to know if the intent of that person was to continue seeking out 13-year-olds and know ... if it was a one-time thing or it was really that they were predators," Chapman said at the February hearing.

His Wisconsin defense attorney, David Rashid, urged the judge to disregard the then-pending allegations in Wyoming. Rashid questioned the credibility and motives of the Powell victim and noted that "Kirk (Chapman) from the get-go denied it, said it didn't happen, she's making it up, she's lying about this."

On Monday, however, Chapman effectively conceded he was the one lying about what happened that night.

Judge Cranfill checked to make sure that Chapman had read Hanson's affidavit, which was used as the factual basis for Chapman's guilty plea.

"You do not dispute what's contained in that (document)?" Cranfill asked.

"No, sir," said Chapman.

Cranfill later said he was accepting the plea deal "first and foremost" because the Powell victim supported it.

In her statement to the court, the woman wrote that after Chapman's assault, she had to move from Powell because she "couldn't distance myself from the reoccurring memory." She said she had to seek costly psychiatric help and became depressed, traumatized and anxious to where she's now "nearly incapable of building relationships."

"The debilitating effects of even still seeing a uniformed officer makes me doubt my ability to trust and call on one in the future if any type of emergency were to arise," she added.

The woman said the public nature of the case made it even harder; she said the city of Powell

and the police department — who she's suing for monetary damages — added to her pain by not properly supervising Chapman.

The city and police department have denied the woman's allegations of negligence. Chapman had also denied the allegations in the civil case, but the guilty plea in the criminal case can now be used against him.

Wisconsin Department of Correction records indicate Chapman may become eligible for release from prison in October 2017.