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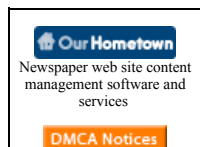
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Woodbridge cop's bail revoked after conviction

BY JAY BODAS Staff Writer**BY JAY BODAS
Staff Writer**

WOODBIDGE - A former veteran township police officer faces up to 20 years in prison, after a Middlesex County jury found him guilty of official misconduct and three counts of endangering the welfare of a 15-year-old girl.

Douglas Karlson, 46, was charged for taking suggestive photographs of a 15-year-old girl in Woodbridge between Oct. 1, 2004, and May 10, 2005, according to Middlesex County Assistant Prosecutor Christie Bevacqua.

Karlson faces up to 10 years in prison on the endangering charges and another 10 years on the official misconduct charge, Bevacqua said.

Karlson, an 18-year member of the police department, took inappropriate photos of her, in some of which the girl was partially nude.

Jurors were unable to come to a decision on sexual abuse charges relating to his stepson. The charges were merged into a single trial before state Superior Court Judge Frederick DeVesa.

Karlson was charged with aggravated sexual assault and sexual assault of the boy, who was between 14 and 17 at the time, between June 26, 1994, and June 25, 1996, according to Bevacqua.

The prosecution and defense presented their closing arguments in the case on July 18.

The jury deliberated for approximately 12 hours, reaching its verdict last Thursday, Bevacqua said.

Judge DeVesa revoked Karlson's \$250,000 bail, and he is currently at the Middlesex County Adult Correction Center in North Brunswick.

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Karlson is scheduled to be sentenced on Oct. 27, Bevacqua said.

Thomas Buck, Karlson's attorney, said during his closing argument that there were four factors jurors had to consider.

"No. 1, Douglas Karlson took the photos under the direction and knowledge of Ann Marie Dobbs," he said.

Dobbs, a Woodbridge resident, is the mother of the girl Karlson is accused of taking photographs of. Karlson

met Dobbs while responding to a police call. The two went on to have an affair, Karlson admitting on the stand.

No. 2, the photos were not pornographic or illegal, Buck said.



"Third, he had no sexual purpose in his dealings with [the girl]. Fourth, his position as a Woodbridge police officer is irrelevant to the case," he said.

Buck said that there was no connection between the two cases involving the boy and girl, and that the boy's accusations against Karlson are false.

"The state wants you to believe that the cases are connected when they are obviously not connected," Buck said. "One involved actual sex, one does not. The only connection is that the boy would never have come forward unless he found out about the Woodbridge case. On this issue, I agree with the state."

Bevacqua said after the trial that she merged the two cases to prove "sexual intent" on Karlson's part.

"The defense is claiming there was no sexual intent behind the girl's photographs, and so I needed the other case to prove this," Bevacqua said. "Under the rules of evidence, there are other crimes that are generally excluded unless there is a reason to admit them, and in this case the reason to try both cases together is to prove the sexual intent in the photographing of the girl."

Buck said that the reason the boy, now 26 years old, came forward was to exact "revenge" against Karlson.

"He is making this up," Buck said during his closing arguments. "Now, why do I say that? Why do I say he is lying? First, he doesn't come forward for nine years. He reported it when he was 26. The fact is, he was an adult, and he came back to the house numerous times. Would you go back to the house of the man who sexually molested you? That makes no sense."

Karlson's wife, Donna, a Middlesex County sheriff's officer, testified that the boy was not beaten, Buck said.

"[The boy] testified that Donna knew about the beatings inflicted on him," Buck said. "Donna testified that this never happened. Do you honestly believe that this sheriff's officer would allow any of her sons to be beaten? Don't you think she would have taken her kids and gotten out of there? He tailored a story to fit the facts he heard about the Woodbridge case."

Donna Karlson testified during the trial that her husband was a "fantastic" father who treated her children as if they were his own.

During the trial, Karlson denied ever molesting the boy and described his stepson as "incorrigible and out of control" in his youth.

"He has a deep-seated hatred of me," Karlson had said on the stand. "He would never accept me as a father figure or as the father of the house."

While on the stand, Karlson had also admitted to taking partially nude photographs of the girl, but he said that he did so with the girl's and her mother's permission.

Buck concluded his remarks by saying that Karlson is a "giving and loving man," a comment that Bevacqua immediately mocked.

"A giving and loving man?" Bevacqua asked the jury in her final arguments. "A man who ... sexually abused his stepson, kicked out his stepson who had no place to live, who lied to and cheated on his wife. Doug Karlson is guilty of the charges he is facing. This man single-handedly took the innocence of two teenage children."

The pictures of the girl are sexual, she said.

"These pictures are sexual," she said. "No. 2, they were for Officer Karlson's own sexual gratification. Who's posing her? He is, in every single photograph. She is pulling her jacket aside to expose her breast."

Bevacqua flipped through a PowerPoint presentation as she spoke, showing some of the several hundred photos Karlson admitted taking of Dobbs' daughter.

The pictures spoke 1,000 words, Bevacqua said.

"Look at these photos - they are sexual in nature," she said. "Why else would you have private parts exposed?"

He is telling her to get undressed. By him telling her to get undressed, he is effectively directing a child pornography session, and that is why he is guilty."

Bevacqua said that Karlson's role as a police officer had "everything to do with this case."

"What I am alleging and what he did do, is he used his position as a police officer to gain a benefit for himself," she said.

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minsen, she said.

Woodbridge police Lt. Thomas Genarelli said Monday that Karlson is technically still suspended without pay due to further procedures that must be followed.

"We have to file for his dismissal, and there is some paperwork that needs to be concluded," Gennarelli said. "At present we are in contact with our law department and in the process of moving forward with that."

Deputy Police Chief Phil Dinicola said there was no reason to believe Karlson had engaged in any kind of illegal or inappropriate behavior before the allegations came to light.

"His performance was satisfactory," Dinicola said. "There were no indications of any illegal activity by the officer."