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# Courthouse News Service

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## Teen Says Predatory Cops Get a Pass

By JOE HARRIS

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. (CN) - A teenage girl says a Jackson County police officer forced her to give him oral sex in his squad car after he found her and some friends in a park after curfew. And she says that assault is just the tip of the iceberg of a pattern of sexual deviancy by Jackson County police officers.

Officer Steven Burgess admitted that he knew the girl, C.B., was just 15 when he sexually assaulted her in July 2007 according to the federal complaint.

Burgess pleaded guilty to felony statutory sodomy and deviate sexual assault in Jackson County Court in 2008, the complaint states.

On the night he assaulted her, C.B. says, Burgess told C.B.'s friends to leave, then he handcuffed C.B., fondled her breasts, vaginal area and buttocks, forced her to give him oral sex and ejaculated.

C.B. claims Burgess' superiors turned a blind eye to his predations upon girls and women long before he assaulted her.

"Prior to July 24, 2007, defendant deputy Burgess had numerous situations where he came into sexual or improper contact with female citizens while on duty as a deputy sheriff for Jackson County, Missouri and where he saw and knew about similar activities by other deputies," the complaint states. "Deputy Burgess has admitted these prior incidents in writing ..."

The complaint paints a picture of lax oversight by the Jackson County Sheriff's Department's superior officers - defendants former Sheriff Thomas Phillips, Col. Bobby Kreidler and Sheriff Mike Sharp.

Some of the allegations include: a sergeant receiving just a 3-day suspension for sending 95 sexually explicit jokes and cartoons from department computers; another sergeant receiving just a 5-day suspension for sending and receiving sexually explicit emails on department computers; and reassigning an officer, accused of making an inappropriate joke to a female officer, to work as a school resource officer at a local high school. That officer has since had several complaints from parents of girls at that high school about his conduct.

"The defendants other than defendant Burgess were delinquent in addressing problems of sexual misconduct by staff members and the resultant substantial risk of harm to females," the complaint states. "Furthermore, those defendants failed to enforce discipline against offending employees in an effort to break the culture of sexual misconduct. This conscious disregard of the substantial risk of serious harm allowed the culture, tradition, custom, practice, essential policy, and/or essential procedure of sexual misconduct to continue and thrive."

C.B. wants the Sheriff's Department ordered to shape up, and she wants damages for violations of her constitutional rights, negligence, battery, outrageous conduct and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

She is represented by John Kurtz of Hubbard & Kurtz. 

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