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October 28, 2010

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## Ex-SPD Officer Sentenced

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By Patti Weaver

Journal Correspondent

Former Stillwater Police Officer Louis Alvie "Buck" Morris, 49, was sentenced Tuesday to 365 days in the Payne County Jail followed by nine years of probation for committing five sex acts with a 15-year-old female student in May 2009.

Morris was originally scheduled to have a jury trial Tuesday morning, but instead he pleaded guilty to three counts of lewd acts with a child under 16 and two counts of rape by instrumentation, which carry a maximum penalty of 90 years in prison.

Morris was sentenced by Associate District Judge Stephen Kistler in accordance with a plea bargain negotiated by District Attorney Rob Hudson, who said in court "a lot of our recommendation has been to attempt Ex-SPD Officer Sentenced to avoid re-traumatization, re-victimization," of the now 17-year-old girl.

On his release from jail -- where he must serve a full year "day for day, 365 days flat time" according to the DA -- Morris must register as a sex offender and pay \$720 for his incarceration costs, along with a \$500 fine and \$250 to the victims' compensation fund.

"I'll surrender my client to the Payne County Jail," Morris's lawyer, Joe White Jr. of Oklahoma City told the judge at the conclusion of a 30-minute hearing Tuesday.

Morris, who was an officer with the Stillwater Police Department for 17 years including six years as a School Resource Officer, resigned from the department in June 2009, Stillwater Police Chief Norman McNickle said.

His victim said that she knew Morris for the two years she attended Stillwater Junior High School, Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation agent Richard Brown wrote in an affidavit.

She said that she talked with Morris every morning at school, the affidavit said.

"She and Morris exchanged phone numbers and would text each other. She felt Morris knew she liked him and that he liked her," the affidavit said.

The girl said that the sexual acts occurred in his home, at her residence, and in his vehicle in May 2009, the affidavit said.

In court Tuesday, Morris said "Guilty, sir," to each of the five felony counts.

When he was asked specifically by the judge what he had done, Morris said formally, "I committed these acts as charged," using the language of each count.

After the judge accepted Morris's guilty pleas, he asked, "Is this agreement one that has been discussed with the victim?"

The district attorney replied, "This has been discussed with the victim and her parents. They are in agreement with the recommendation" for sentencing.

Morris was asked by the judge if he wanted to make a statement in court, but Morris did not do so other than to say that he agreed it was a "fair and just" sentence.

The judge then emphasized, "The only thing I'd want to say is this young lady has done nothing wrong. She is the victim in this case. She has done nothing wrong."

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After court recessed, the victim's father told the Journal, "We're grateful to the DA." Asked how his daughter was, he said, "She's doing better. We're glad it's over."

The victim's father later emphasized, "We want people in this town to understand she did not lie. We feel vindication," by Morris's guilty pleas to all of the charges.

The victim, who no longer lives in Stillwater, then sat down and talked with the Journal Tuesday about what has happened in her life.

"A lot has changed. It's the healing process that's going to start now. I want to tell victims not to give up. Don't be afraid to live your life."

Regarding her future, she said, "I want to be a detective to get them (sex offenders) off the street."

She repeatedly expressed concern about other sexual abuse victims.

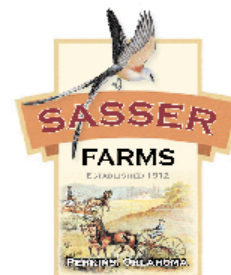
"For those that have been in a similar situation, always report it -- don't be afraid of the defendant.

"It is going to be scary. But if you get it over with, you can hold your head up and be able to sleep at night. You should get counseling," she emphasized.

Her father said, "I'm very proud of her."

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