

Former cop found guilty in child sex case in Lamesa

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2010 Cop Pedophile Domestic Violence Antonio De La Cruz

LAMESA — Antonio De La Cruz cried on the witness stand Wednesday morning as he denied sexually abusing his stepdaughter.

De La Cruz, 48, offered testimony in Dawson County's district courtroom claiming he did not commit the acts of which he's accused.

Despite his testimony, the former South Plains narcotics investigator and truck driver was found guilty Wednesday afternoon on a charge of continuous sexual abuse of a child and two counts of aggravated sexual assault.

De La Cruz displayed no emotion when Schildknecht read the verdicts.

His victim, now 15, told A-J Media the convictions were a relief.

"It was awesome," she said.

Her mother agreed, "God is good. We're grateful."

Sentencing is set for Thursday.

Earlier in the trial

Cruz has been on trial this week in Lamesa, accused of sexual acts with his stepdaughter between 2005 and 2010, beginning when she was 5.

"You've heard the accusation that you would take (the accuser) into your truck and molest her. Is that true?" defense attorney Artie Aguilar questioned his client earlier in the day.

De La Cruz responded, "That is not true."

Aguilar: "Did you molest her in any way at all, whatsoever?"

De La Cruz: "No, sir. I never molested (her)."

Aguilar repeated the question multiple times while his client was on the stand. De La Cruz continued to deny the accusation.

De La Cruz remained collected while answering questions about his work history, time in the U.S. Army Reserves and how he fell in love with the accuser's mother a few years ago in Brownfield and married her in Morton. He had a full beard and wore glasses, a dress shirt and tie with khakis and a light brown blazer.

He broke out in tears describing a previously-happy relationship with the accuser and his other children, and how devastated he felt about no longer being allowed contact with them.

"I miss my kids. I haven't seen her in five years, and now I get to see her and I'm being accused of this," he said, referring to when the accuser testified earlier in the week while he was at the defense table.

Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Bassett showed the defendant photos of his ex-wife — the accuser's mother — after he'd assaulted her in October 2010.

She asked, "Would you agree these offenses happened in your home where (children) lived?"

De La Cruz: "Yes."

Bassett: "Does that sound like a good dad?"

De La Cruz paused. "I'm still a good dad. I may not be the best husband."

Bassett asked De La Cruz if he remembered telling an investigator the children must have been lying about their claim that he assaulted their mother, then later pleading guilty to the offense. He responded affirmatively.

Bassett: "You pled guilty to beating your wife, but you said your kids are lying about seeing you beat their mom?"

De La Cruz: "Yes."

Bassett: "So when you called (the accuser) a liar, you're the liar. Isn't that true?"

De La Cruz paused, then said, "Yes," with noticeable reluctance.

Bassett asked the defendant if the accuser was lying in her claims of his sexual abuse.

He responded slowly, emphasizing his words, "I did not molest (her)."

Bassett: "That wasn't the question."

District Judge Carter Schildknecht sustained an objection by Aguilar that the response was sufficient.

"I think he has adequately answered the question," she said.

Continuous sexual abuse of a child is a first-degree felony with a minimum sentence of 25 years in prison.

A-J Media does not release the names of victims of sexual abuse.

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