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Former officer found guilty of aggravated sexual battery

by [Patrick Pebley](#)
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After two days of trial a jury found former Campbell County Sheriff's Deputy Daniel Ward guilty of ten counts of aggravated sexual battery. Ward was originally charged with 16 counts. Five of the counts were dismissed and the jury found him not guilty on another. Each count carries a sentence of 8-10 years and the sentence will be doled out at a hearing on August 15.

The victim was Ward's niece by way of marriage. The victim's aunt suffered from Lupus and was bedridden. The now 18-year-old victim told the jury that the abuse started in October 2003 and continued until her aunt passed away in March 2009. During her lengthy testimony the victim claimed that virtually every time she visited her aunt that Ward would touch her in an intimate manner, through her clothing.

During the cross examination of the victim defense attorney Wes Hatmaker

did his best to defend his client by attempting to impeach the testimony of the victim. He pointed out discrepancies in her testimony and pointed out that she had started out mentioning only two incidents of abuse in five different early statements. The victim countered his argument claiming she had forgotten about some incidents due to the lengthy period of time that she was abused.

Don Farmer also took the stand for the prosecution. Farmer called Ward to the sheriff's department for an interview after he had signed a confession in the case. During this interview Ward told Farmer, "Well Don everybody makes mistakes."

Steve Vinsant, of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, presented Ward's signed confession when he was called to testify. Ward initially told Vinsant that he accidentally touched the victim when he came in one night and laid down next to her, thinking that she was actually his wife. Hatmaker noted that this statement was not part of the signed confession. Vinsant explained that that was part of a casual conversation and not part of the actual interview. Vinsant also pointed out that Ward read over the statement of confession before he signed it.

Near the end of the first day of the trial Ward took the stand to defend himself from the allegations. He testified that even though he said in the statement that he touched the victim 12 times that it all occurred on the night in which he claimed to mistake her for his wife. Ward was very firm that he did not touch the victim for his own sexual pleasure.

When the trial moved to the closing arguments District attorney Scarlet Ellis told the jury that there was no way that Ward could have mistaken the victim, an 11 year old girl, for his wife, a grown woman. She urged the jury to find him guilty on all counts.

During the closing argument for the defense Hatmaker pointed out that the touching was a case of mistaken identity. He also urged the jurors to disregard the confession because he felt that Agent Vinsant picked and chose what information to include in it.

After over three hours of deliberation the jury returned the guilty verdict on ten of the charges.

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