

LINCOLN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

## Ex-trooper gets 21 months for sex crimes

Gregory Vrooman: "My life has been ripped to shreds"

By SUSAN JOHNS, Staff Reporter | Posted: Tuesday, June 26, 2012 - 1:15pm

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Gregory Vrooman, right, with his attorney Steven Peterson at his sentencing June 25.

A former Maine State Trooper, fired after he was convicted of sex crimes against a young girl, will serve 21 months in prison.

Gregory Vrooman received a five-year prison sentence in Lincoln County Superior Court June 25. Justice Jeffrey Hjelm suspended all but 21 months, and gave the 46-year-old Nobleboro man four years of probation.

Vrooman remains free on bail pending appeal.

Vrooman was convicted in April of four counts each of unlawful sexual contact, unlawful sexual touching and assault, all against a girl when she was 12 and 13 years old. Vrooman will serve, at the same time, three more suspended five-year sentences and eight 364-day sentences.

The 24-year veteran of the Maine State Police will also have to pay fines of \$300 each for the four assault convictions.

His lawyer, Steven Peterson said he will be appealing Vrooman's convictions. He does not plan to appeal the sentences. They were "in the range" of what his client could have received, he said outside the courthouse.

There are several grounds for the appeal to the Maine Supreme Judicial Court, possibly including an assault on Vrooman in the courtroom in April the day the verdict was to be read, Peterson said.

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DINE

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**Make dinner tonight extraordinary!**  
Maine Chefs  
Fri, Sep 21 - 11:15 am  
**Hello fall, we changed our hours...**  
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Tue, Sep 18 - 12:00 pm  
**Center Cut Pork Chops, Seedless...**  
French and Brawn Market Place  
Tue, Sep 18 - 11:15 am  
**It's all about lunch!**  
The Good Kettle  
Sat, Sep 15 - 8:30 am  
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**What's for dinner?**  
Maine Chefs  
Thu, Sep 13 - 11:00 am

**Looking for Lobster fabric?**  
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Wed, Sep 26 - 1:15 pm  
**\$200 off - check it out!**  
Pro Paint  
Mon, Sep 24 - 11:30 am  
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Hawke Motors, Inc.  
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Thu, Sep 13 - 4:15 pm  
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Wed, Sep 12 - 12:15 pm  
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Gary Dow - Jerry Douglass Realty  
Sat, Sep 8 - 6:45 am

MAIN STREET BUZZ

**YARTS Premier of Music Man Jr.**  
Boothbay Region Y  
Wed, Sep 26 - 4:30 pm  
**YMCA 6th-8th Grade Dance**  
Boothbay Region Y  
Tue, Sep 25 - 4:15 pm  
**September is Life Insurance Awareness month**  
Thomas Porter - Insphere Insurance Solutions  
Thu, Sep 13 - 4:45 pm

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Vrooman in the courtroom in April the day the verdict had to be read, Peterson said.

William Harrison, 39, of Massachusetts, a relative of the victim, was tackled by deputies after striking Vrooman several times in the face and charged with assault.

Justice Hjelm said Vrooman would have gotten a stiffer sentence if he had not been attacked. Hjelm called the assault on Vrooman "a mitigating factor that will measurably reduce the sentence."

"Mr. Vrooman is the victim of someone who chose to exact their own version of justice, and who thought that he was bigger than the justice system," Hjelm said.

Vrooman mentioned the assault when he addressed the court. The way it happened, he was unable to defend himself – like a pumpkin being knocked off a fence, he said. "He got me good," Vrooman said, adding that he has "permanent damage" from his injuries.

The case against him has cost him his career and his house and has caused him "anxiety and deep depression," Vrooman said. "My life has been ripped to shreds."

Vrooman said he "made some very poor decisions" but did not commit the crimes for which he was convicted.

"I didn't do this, your honor," he said. "I don't know how to prove that I'm innocent, so all I can say is please take it into consideration."

He has helped with the Maine Special Olympics and school basketball events for charities, has travelled with youth groups out of state to work on homes for the elderly and coached Little League, Vrooman said. "I've been around kids and I've never had an issue like this before," he said.

Hjelm also heard from the victim and her mother, as well as two of Vrooman's friends, who described him as honest.

The victim told the judge she has trouble sleeping at night. When she does sleep, she dreams that Vrooman is at her bedside, watching her sleep. She now gets uncomfortable around men who somehow remind her of Vrooman. "It's just something about them that triggers me to remember Greg," she said.

"I think he feels sorry that he got caught, and sorry for himself," she said.

"I thought (Vrooman was) a good guy... a good male role model for the kids. But he turned out to be a wolf in sheep's clothing," the girl's mother wrote in a letter to the court.

Vrooman's career in law enforcement was "a two-edged sword" regarding sentencing, Hjelm said. He served with some distinction, but that line of work also holds people to a higher standard of conduct, the justice said.

Prosecutor Deborah Cashman argued that Vrooman should have to start serving his sentence now. "I think it's time that (the victim) be able to have a good night's sleep."

Vrooman would have served all the prison time by the time the appeal is decided, Peterson said. "It would be a great prejudice to my client not to have his rights protected," he said.

Hjelm continued the \$25,000 unsecured bail, saying Vrooman has been "absolutely faithful" about showing up for court appearances; concerns the prosecution raised could be addressed through added conditions on the bail, he said. Vrooman will not be allowed to be in Bath or in towns adjacent to Bath. He has previously driven near a home where the family was staying, Cashman said.

The victim and her family were visibly upset after Monday's hearing. The teen wept into her hands after Vrooman walked out of the courtroom. The family was upset that Vrooman will remain out on bail, Cashman said later.

Vrooman will have to register as a sex offender, undergo sex offender treatment, and have a psychological evaluation to determine if other treatment is also needed.

Because Vrooman "has stubbornly maintained his innocence," the impediments to his rehabilitation will be significant, Hjelm said.

During the hearing, the victim said that what she has gone through has made her want to help other children.

Although Vrooman will qualify for state retirement when he turns 62, he missed his early retirement with full pension by one month, according to a lawyer for the Maine Public Employees Retirement System. He came up 30 days short of the 25 years needed to receive a pension under the state police's retirement plan. Under that plan, he would have been able to start receiving a pension now.

MOST POPULAR

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- Auction and Pie Party
- Monday, October 1, 2012 - 6:00pm
- 'Age of Innocence' Tour
- Thursday, October 4, 2012 - 10:00am to 11:30am
- Bead jewelry sale
- Friday, October 5, 2012 - 5:00pm to 7:30pm
- Sweet Treats and Cheese event
- Saturday, October 6, 2012 - 9:00am to 3:00pm
- Baked bean dinner
- Saturday, October 6, 2012 - 4:30pm to 6:30pm
- David Mallett in concert
- Saturday, October 6, 2012 - 8:00pm
- Women and the Woods workshop
- Wednesday, October 10, 2012 - 8:30am to 5:00pm
- The Great State Debate
- Wednesday, October 10, 2012 - 7:00pm
- Photo Walk
- Saturday, October 13, 2012 - 10:00am
- Walk for the Animals event
- Sunday, October 14, 2012 - 9:00am

### JUST ANNOUNCED

- Fall Fury at the Speedway
- Saturday, October 20, 2012 - 11:00am
- David Mallett in concert
- Saturday, October 6, 2012 - 8:00pm
- The Great State Debate
- Wednesday, October 10, 2012 - 7:00pm
- Public meeting on Statoil wind park
- Tuesday, October 23, 2012 - 5:00pm to 7:00pm
- YARTS Premier of Music Man Jr.
- Friday, November 9, 2012 (All day) to Saturday, November 10, 2012 (All day)

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