

# Former chief deputy sentenced in GSI case

By Matt Lucas News Watchman Staff Writer | Posted: Monday, July 22, 2013 2:31 pm

A former chief deputy at the Pike County Sheriff's Office was sentenced on Monday after pleading no contest in April to one count of gross sexual imposition, a third-degree felony.

Clyde Franklin (Frank) Sanders, Jr., 50, of Lucasville, was sentenced in the Pike County Court of Common Pleas by visiting Judge William J. (Jhan) Corzine to five years of community control sanctions and ordered to register in person with the Pike County Sheriff's Office as a Tier 2 sex offender. In 2011, Sanders was arrested by the Pike County Sheriff's Office and charged with one count of gross sexual imposition, two counts of kidnapping, one count of rape, and one count of endangering children. The rape and kidnapping charges were first-degree felonies.

In 2011, a term of the Pike County Grand Jury returned a five-count indictment against Sanders, alleging that between October 2008 and January 2009, he engaged in sexual activity with a child who was under the age of 10.

In a plea agreement on April 29, Sanders pleaded no contest to the charge of gross sexual imposition and was found guilty, according to the Ohio Attorney General's Office, which handled the prosecution of the case. This prevented the case from going to a jury trial.

At Monday's sentencing, Prosecuting Attorney Marianne Hemmeter said that the state's position is very simple. She said that Sanders committed the crime of GSI and also mentioned his former high position as a law enforcement officer.

Prior to sentencing on Monday, the now eight-year-old victim, who is Sanders' daughter, and her mother were given the opportunity to address the judge. They both asked the judge to sentence Sanders to prison.

"I pray that he spends every day behind bars, and he should, so that my child can grow up without fear," the mother said.

Sanders was represented by attorneys from Yavitch and Palmer Co., LPA, and Bowen and Keck, both Columbus firms. Sanders' attorney Stephen Palmer said that it was a difficult decision not to let the case go to trial so that Sanders' innocence could be proven.

"This gentleman is 50 years old, and he's never been in trouble," Palmer said of his client. "He's been in law enforcement most of his adult life."

Palmer added that Sanders has raised another daughter and has been around other children during his life without any allegations of misconduct. Sanders also addressed the judge prior to sentencing and said that when he accepted the plea agreement he was only thinking of his family and what everyone had been

through.

When handing down the sentence, Corzine said that during his years as a judge, he has seen other cases involving charges of child rape but that he has never seen a case like this one.

“In those (previous) cases, the path to do what needed to be done was always pretty clear,” he said. “This is not one of those cases.”

He said that as a judge he obviously does not know what happened but that there are some things about the case that have given him cause for concern and that make it different from any child sex case he has ever had. Corzine said there were allegations that a sex toy was used and that DNA found on the toy did not match Sanders or the victim but belonged to another adult who claimed they had never touched the toy.

“We wonder sometimes why people plead no contest or guilty for offenses they claim they didn’t commit,” Corzine said. “Well, in this case, the defendant was looking at the possibility of life without parole upon conviction. The plea took that off the table.”

He added that he understands the seriousness of the decision that has to be made by a defendant in deciding whether to enter a plea or “roll the dice” at a trial.

Sanders is expected to comply with all the requirements of a Tier 2 sex offender for 25 years, with in-person verification every 180 days. Sanders also has to perform 300 hours of community service, and he may not have contact, directly or indirectly with his daughter. In addition, he cannot own firearms and may not engage in any activities that bring him into contact with minor children.

The judge said the prohibition against engaging in activities that bring Sanders into contact with minor children is not meant to keep him from going to the grocery store or church or being a spectator at sporting events. However, he may not coach or advise youth groups or be involved in any way with youth activities other than as a spectator.

“Mr. Sanders, as I said, I don’t know what happened,” Corzine said after handing down the sentence. “I hope that I’m correct in my assessment of this. God help you if you’re ever in this situation again because I don’t think the legal system will.”