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COURT REJECTS BREAK BID BY SULLIVAN CO. DEPUTY IN SCOUT PORN CASE

By JAMIE SATTERFIELD
The Knoxville News-Sentinel

An appellate court has shot down a bid for a sentencing break by a former Sullivan County Sheriff's Office jailer and Explorer Scoutmaster who took bondage photos of the Scouts under his watch.

The Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals in a decision issued last week left intact a five-year prison term ordered up for Randy Carl Hass, a veteran who spent 16 years as a deputy and a decade as a Scoutmaster.

Sullivan County Circuit Judge Rob Montgomery had turned aside Hass' attempt at probation and a diversionary program that would have left the dozens of convictions for sexual

exploitation of minors and official misconduct off his record if he completed probation.

Hass appealed.

The opinion stated Hass' agency began receiving complaints from parents of the Scouts in the Explorer program in April 2011 after Hass took the boys on an overnight trip to participate in a Civil War re-enactment.

A search of Hass' computer and phone revealed not only a cache of bondage-style child pornography but images of Scouts "depicted in bondage scenarios," the opinion stated.

"(Hass) agreed that one of the photos showed a boy with bare buttocks changing clothes after swimming in a creek and that others showed boys with simulated blood and lash marks on their bodies," the opinion stated.

The ruling does not explain how Hass convinced the boys to pose for the photos. Hass at one point denied even taking the photographs as he tried to convince Montgomery to grant him diversion, the ruling stated.

Hass contended he had suffered enough by losing his job and his reputation. He said he stopped going to church "for fear his presence would discourage others from attending."

But the appellate panel ruled Montgomery fairly weighed the pros and cons of giving Hass a break and had sound reasons for sending him to prison.

"We hold that the trial court did not err in denying the appellant alternative sentencing or probation," the opinion stated. "We find no abuse of discretion and no basis for rebutting the presumption that the trial court's decision was reasonable."

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