

## Former San Mateo County deputy sheriff found guilty of molesting girl for 6 years

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### 2013 Cop Pedophile Galen Underwood

SAN JOSE -- Ignoring his virtually spotless record as a former San Mateo County sheriff's deputy, a Santa Clara County Superior Court jury Friday found Galen Underwood guilty of secretly molesting a female relative over a six-year period, starting when she was 11.

"What this case shows is that who you are in public doesn't necessarily reflect who you are in private," prosecutor Chuck Gillingham said after the verdict. "This is a glaring example of an individual who is just a disgusting human being and deserves every minute he gets in state prison."

Underwood, 42, now faces being sentenced to at least 40 years to life behind bars. Because of the nature of the offenses and the young age of the victim, he will have to serve all 40 years before he could apply for parole.

But in a reflection of jurors' disdain after two weeks of graphic testimony, one juror suggested an even harsher punishment.

"Castration is a great thing," the juror, who did not want to be identified, said in the hallway of the Hall of Justice.

Underwood's secret life surfaced in the fall of 2013, when the victim ended her years-long ordeal by reporting the abuse to her guidance counselor.

Three days later, Underwood, who lived in Gilroy, was arrested. He has been in custody ever since. Last year, he was fired by the San Mateo County Sheriff's Department.

The Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office charged him with 21 counts of child molestation. Some of the counts were for specific events that the victim could remember, including the first and last time he molested her.

After deliberating for slightly more than three days this week, the jury found him guilty of seven offenses, including aggravated sexual assault and assaulting her with the intent of committing sodomy and rape. But the panel rejected the 14 more general counts that spanned longer time periods, and approved lesser offenses on two of those counts.

"The group was pretty split, so we went on the ones we had specifics on," said one female juror,

who also did not want to be identified.

The verdict drew praise from Underwood's defense attorney, Charles J. Smith, who called it "a triumph of intellect and fairness over emotion."

"It was an unbelievable performance by a jury that found him to be a child molester, yet still followed our constitution and found reasonable doubt as to two-thirds of the charges," Smith said.

Gillingham credited the two sheriff's departments in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, which investigated the case. "Everybody (on the San Mateo force) experienced shame and regret and just devastation that someone they worked with could do something like this," he said.

Dressed in a charcoal gray suit as the clerk read the verdict, Underwood looked hopeful at first. The jury had found him guilty of the first count -- lewd acts on a child by force -- but found him not guilty of the next five offenses.

But by the end of the reading, his face fell, as it became clear the jury had found him guilty of nine serious sexual molestation offenses.

During the 10-day trial, Gillingham presented evidence that DNA from Underwood's sperm was found on the crotch of the girl's underpants. Smith argued that the sperm had been transferred to the panties in the laundry, noting that another family member's sperm also was found on the garment. But a prosecution expert said the former deputy's DNA sample also included a particular protein that would have rinsed off had it been transferred there in the wash, and a defense expert agreed.

Gillingham also presented evidence that Underwood had signed up for an online forum that caters to people who are sexually interested in children. He also put the victim on the stand.

Underwood testified on his own behalf, claiming that the victim and her teenage female lover made up the story to have him removed from the house so they could pursue their romance without his disapproval. But the prosecutor showed the jury text messages showing that the girl was extremely reluctant to get Underwood in trouble.

Her guidance counselor also gave strong testimony about her frame of mind, saying that when she reported the situation to him, it looked like "she was trying to melt into the chair" and was "just a puddle of tears."

Judge Vanessa A. Zecher, who presided over the trial, is set to sentence Underwood on Nov. 6.

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