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## Ex-sheriff Edward Bullock would draw in young boys, former county probation worker says

bullock 1.JPG

Former Warren County Sheriff Edward Bullock is brought into Superior Court in a wheelchair March 12 for a hearing. (*Express-Times Photo* | *BILL ADAMS*)

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on August 14, 2014 at 6:25 AM, updated August 14, 2014 at 6:26 AM

*Third of three parts*

When news reports surfaced in 2012 that former Warren County Sheriff **Edward Bullock** was being targeted in a civil lawsuit with claims of sexual abuse, a retired probation department employee was brought back to a night in December 1986.

"Pretty sure" she had performed the victim's intake at Warren Acres -- the county's old youth shelter and detention facility -- the employee said she recalled the boy who she believed to be the plaintiff in the lawsuit.

Physically and otherwise, she said, the 10-year-old fit the type Bullock typically took an "interest" in, she said. Blond-haired and blue-eyed, he was from a troubled home and had landed on the wrong side of the law, she remembered.

"He would have been that kind of kid that ah, would have ... been attractive to Bullock," she recently told a private investigator, according to transcripts of the conversation obtained by The Express-Times.

Now, nearly 20 years later, the boy is at the center of the **civil litigation** and **criminal charges** pending against the 86-year-old Bullock.

According to court records, the former sheriff sexually abused him on several occasions, including

once while he was being transferred from the Hackettstown Police Department to Warren Acres for intake.

## Renewed focus

Bullock has pleaded not guilty to the criminal charges: three counts each of first-degree aggravated sexual assault and second-degree sexual assault.

The charges have brought renewed focus on Bullock's tenure as sheriff and county officials' handling of a scandal involving him then.

**In a three-part series published this week in The Express-Times**, former Warren County officials told the newspaper they had suspicions about Bullock dating to the 1980s, and a former freeholder said he privately raised concerns then that Bullock might expose the county to liability.

In the transcript, the investigator asks the former probation worker about several boys by name, and zeroes in on a specific child who had made allegations.

The retiree said she does not believe the boy fabricated the story.

"I think something happened," she said, according to the transcript. "I'm not sure of what they're saying happened on the night they say happened or not, but ah, my heart it, I cannot, I can't, I can't see them, somebody making that up -- an allegation like that."

"It's especially, especially a kid that came up the way he did to admit ... really difficult for him to do," she added later.

The Express-Times has withheld the name of the retired employee because the statement was given to the private investigator with the understanding it would not become public. She declined a reporter's request for an interview.

A secretary for Bullock's attorney, Brian White, has declined comment on the lawyer's behalf and Jerald Howarth, the attorney representing **Warren County** in the civil litigation, did not return a phone message.

The interview was conducted by an investigator hired by the plaintiff's attorney.

## **Taking an interest**

A longtime member of the probation department, the woman said she began to notice oddities in Bullock's behavior, particularly toward young boys. He would show a special interest in them, in a way he never showed to young girls or adults, she said.

The boys would often be transported by Bullock, alone, to and from the shelter, taken on special outings with the sheriff, she said; he also would rub their shoulders in front of others. In similar statements, a former sheriff's officer echoed the probation worker's sentiments. The sheriff's officer said she overheard Bullock asking boys sexual questions and witnessed him rubbing their shoulders and buttocks, according to separate transcripts also obtained by the newspaper.

The probation employee said that after some time, she began to have suspicions.

"At first I didn't think too much about it when he volunteered to take somebody back to the shelter, but after a while I started to question," she said.

At one point, while she was looking for one of the boys at the courthouse in Belvidere, the woman said a high-ranking employee in the sheriff's office casually told her the child was not available at the moment because "he's blond-hair(ed) and blue-eyed and the sheriff's in conference with him," she said.

## **'He would draw these kids in'**

The probation employee said her concerns grew to the point where she had a conversation with one boy's mother, questioning the interest the sheriff had taken in the woman's son.

But the mother was appreciative of the "male figure" in her son's life, she said. Apparently unsuspecting of any inappropriate behavior, the mother made the things her son did with the sheriff sound innocuous, the probation worker said.

The worker hinted the mother was unlikely the only adult who trusted Bullock with the child they were raising.

"Bullock was, was good with old people," the employee said. "He would draw these, these kids in."

Bullock ultimately left the sheriff's office in disgrace. He resigned in 1991 amid charges he tried to curry sexual favors from an undercover New Jersey State Police trooper at the Phillipsburg Mall.

Bullock pleaded guilty to a charge of official misconduct and served nine months in the Hunterdon County Jail.

He faded from the public eye until 2012, when allegations of **sexual abuse were made in a tort claim**, a legal notice generally filed leading up to a civil lawsuit.

The lawsuit was filed in April 2013.

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