

Ex-deputy gets 30 years for sex crimes

Kevin Robinson , krobinson4@pnj.com

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2016 Cop Pedophile Walter Michael Thomas

A former Escambia County deputy convicted of performing sex acts with a juvenile was sentenced Monday to 30 years in state prison and 15 years of sex offender probation.

Walter Michael Thomas, 44, was convicted of three counts of unlawful sexual activity with a minor after witnesses testified he engaged in group sex with two adults and a 17-year-old girl. Thomas was employed with the Escambia County Sheriff's Office at the time of the offense, and Circuit Judge John L. Miller said at sentencing that Thomas had "violated" someone he was sworn to protect.

"When you wear the badge it should stand for something," Miller admonished Thomas. "You stood for nothing except satisfying your own personal desires."



(Photo: Tony Giberson/tgiberson@pnj.com)

Walter Michael Thomas fights back tears as family members speak in his favor before Circuit Judge John Miller sentences former deputy Walter Michael Thomas, a guilty of participating in a foursome with a juvenile and two adult co-defendants to 30-years in state prison Monday afternoon.

At Thomas' trial in August, spouses Douglas and Leah Manning testified they had an open relationship, where — among other people — Leah Manning slept with Thomas, and Douglas Manning slept with the juvenile. The Mannings said to diffuse jealousy between them, they

decided all four of them should have sex together. The juvenile testified she had performed three sex acts with Thomas in one evening with both Mannings present, and all three adults were charged with sex offenses after the juvenile reported the abuse.

Thomas has maintained his innocence since the beginning, and at the sentencing his wife, parents, children and a procession of family members and friends stood before the judge to say Thomas was not the sort of man to commit the crimes he was convicted of. They highlighted that Thomas has served his country for 10 years as a U.S. Navy search and rescue diver, served his community for six years as an Escambia County Sheriff's deputy, and served his family all his life as a loving son, father and grandfather.

"All the good comments are made because they are true ... my son is a good person, he always

has been and always will be," Thomas' father, Walter Michael Thomas Sr., told the judge.

A psychologist testified that Thomas was a low risk to re-offend, and that there were no indications he suffered from anger or substance abuse issues.

Thomas' attorney, Patrece Cashwell asked for a downward departure, a sentence less than the recommended minimum sentence of approximately 15 years. Cashwell said Thomas and his family were already being punished, and that Thomas' designation as a sex offender and the damage to his reputation would follow him for life.



(Photo: Tony

Giberson/tgiberson@pnj.com)

Walter Michael Thomas fights back tears as family members speak in his favor before Circuit Judge John Miller. Thomas, a former deputy was found guilty of participating in a foursome with a juvenile and two adult co-defendants. He was sentenced to 30-years in state prison.

Thomas was fairly quiet and stoic throughout the sentencing, though he did take a moment to thank his family and his attorney before the sentence was issued.

Assistant State Attorney Anne Patterson asked Miller to stay within the sentencing guidelines, noting that in all the talk of Thomas' accomplishments and accolades, no one mentioned how he had harmed the young victim. Patterson said Thomas had mistakenly believed he was above the law, and his decision to involve a child in his sex life had caused suffering for him, his family and the victim.

"He should have known better," Patterson said. "He should have turned away. He should have said no. He didn't."

Miller said the most disturbing thing to him about the case was the fact Thomas knew about the abuse the Mannings were inflicting on the juvenile, and Thomas participated in it instead of stopping it.

"When your'e a teen, what you need to be worried about is how am I'm going to pass this calculus test...she shouldn't have to worry about, 'When I get home, am I going to be sexually abused by a law enforcement officer?'" Miller said.

Thomas was one of two deputies charged with sex crimes involving juveniles and the Mannings. Earlier this month, another ECSO deputy, Mark Gene Smith, was acquitted of charges of battery and sexual battery involving minors. The Mannings are both still awaiting trial..