

Marion County Sex Offender Receives 62-Year Prison Sentence

On December 19, 2023, Charles Thomas Dougherty was convicted of seven separate incidents of child sexual abuse, conduct he perpetrated on a child starting when the victim was under 12 and continuing until she was 16. Marion County Circuit Court Judge Courtland Geyer found Dougherty guilty of the offenses and sentenced Dougherty to just over 62 years in the Oregon Department of Corrections.

Dougherty proceeded to trial without a jury, instead electing to have a “bench trial.” In a bench trial, the judge decides both the facts of the case (as though it was the jury) in addition to the judge’s regular role of deciding what law applies to the case. In Oregon, a criminal defendant unilaterally determines whether to proceed with a bench or jury trial.

Trial began on December 18, 2023. The case was investigated by Detective Matthew Hagan at the Marion County Sheriff’s Office and prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Katharine Semple.

During the trial, two charges were dismissed by the State because the victim was no longer able to articulate discrete, specific instances of abuse as it related to a particular charge. Oregon law requires victims to testify in open court regarding specific instances of sexual assault. Unfortunately, that expectation can be both traumatic and difficult; especially so when abuse was ongoing and frequent. Therefore, it is not uncommon for victims to become confused, forget or unable to recall a specific act. (A much less traumatic and lower-stress example of this phenomenon is trying to recall what you had for dinner last Thursday.) When this happens, the prosecution cannot meet its burden in proving a specific charge beyond a reasonable doubt and a defendant is found not guilty of that behavior.

At sentencing, Deputy District Attorney Semple commended the bravery of the victim and emphasized the need to hold the defendant accountable, especially given that this case represented years of abuse against an extremely young child. Even after the verdict, Dougherty took no accountability, and instead asked the Court to “just give me the 25 years so I can move on with my life.” (Several of the counts for which he was convicted carried a mandatory-minimum 25 years in prison.)

Dougherty did not apologize for his actions.

Judge Geyer found that the convictions represented several discrete, independent acts and ran the sentences consecutively for a total of over 62 years, 37 years longer than the mandatory minimum. DDA Semple stated that “the sentence handed down by the Court

holds the defendant accountable for the years of torment he subjected the child to, both physical and psychological.”

At sentencing, Judge Geyer addressed the now-adult victim who was subjected to Dougherty’s sexual violence, telling her: “This can never be said enough: this was not your fault.”