

Ex-teacher Gets 6 Years In Child-pornography Case

Edelman Accused Of Taking Nude Photos

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In sentencing a 45-year-old former special education teacher from Hoffman Estates to six years in prison for taking lewd photos of a minor, Lake County Judge George Bridges on Thursday said the father of four used his esteemed position in the community to gain, then violate, the victim's trust.

"Your actions beg the question, what makes a model teacher go wrong?" Bridges said to Gary Edelman, whom he convicted in April on child pornography charges. "To spray-paint cardboard to place in the windows of your (Chevrolet) Suburban so as to enable you to take nude photos of a person under the age of 18--was it stupidity (that compelled you)? Or lust? Either way, you knew better."

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On Thursday, before Edelman's sentencing, defense attorney Bob Stringini called witnesses, including the rabbi of Edelman's synagogue, to testify about his character.

Annie Pimentel, a former colleague at Lake Park High School in Roselle, where Edelman taught for 18 years, said he was a "model" teacher and wonderful father who always "put his children first." Harold Toberman, the father of a former student, testified how Edelman changed his son's life, motivating the learning-disabled young man to excel academically and attend college.

But Assistant State's Atty. Christen Bishop argued that the testimony of Edelman's victim showed the defendant had a dark side.

Earlier in the hearing, the woman, now 18, testified she had known Edelman for almost a decade, first as a neighbor, then as a surrogate father before they became sexually involved.

The victim had moved in with Edelman, his wife and four sons when she was 12, as her parents were going through a divorce.

At Edelman's trial, the victim testified he would drive her to some isolated spot (beginning in April 1998), place cardboard in the truck windows, and on one occasion, took nude photos of her. That incident, in Highland Park, led to the Lake County charges.

Edelman still faces charges of aggravated criminal sexual abuse involving the victim in DuPage County.

Edelman, in addressing Bridges before sentencing, said he took full responsibility for his actions and apologized to the victim, who was not in the courtroom, her family in the gallery, and to the community.

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