



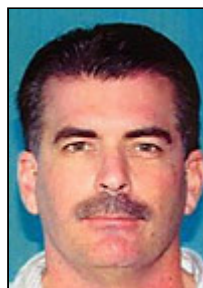
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Father pleads guilty to rape charges

By Nicholas K. Geranios
The Associated Press

SPOKANE — A man who raped his daughter and posted videos of the abuse online before fleeing the country pleaded guilty Wednesday in federal court and likely faces the rest of his life in prison.



Kenneth John Freeman

Kenneth John Freeman, 46 — described by law-enforcement officers as "one of the most heinous" pedophiles — pleaded guilty to production of child pornography and interstate transportation of a minor for the purpose of unlawful sexual activity.

His agreement with federal prosecutors calls for a sentence of 50 years in prison, plus three years of probation, when Freeman is sentenced March 25.

"A 50-year sentence is going to be a life sentence," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephanie Lister, who prosecuted the case. Freeman would serve some 42 years before he could be considered for parole.

He also pleaded guilty to three Benton County charges of child rape during an appearance in Spokane County Superior Court, in exchange for an expected sentence of 20 years, to run concurrently with the federal time. He will be held in a federal prison.

Freeman's capture involved law-enforcement officers in China, Hong Kong, Canada and a host of federal and local agencies, officials said.

Freeman was loathsome even by the standards of pedophiles, said Leigh Winchell, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent in Seattle.

"Kenneth Freeman distinguishes himself as one of the most heinous and despicable pedophiles ICE has ever encountered," Winchell said.

Authorities praised the willingness of his daughter, 19-year-old Kylie Freeman, to testify, saying that helped prompt Freeman to plead guilty.

"I don't think he wanted to be in a courtroom and hear Kylie testify," said Benton County Prosecutor Andy Miller, who secured the guilty pleas on the child rape counts. "It was easier for him to plead guilty."

Chris Peale, Kylie's stepfather, called it a day of healing for the family.

"He is being held accountable for his horrible, perverted actions," Peale said.

Spokane County Superior Court Judge Kathleen O'Connor insisted that Freeman hear details of the charges against him, and say exactly what he was pleading guilty to, an ordeal he waived in federal court earlier in the day.

Freeman, a computer adviser, bodybuilder and former reserve sheriff's deputy in Benton County in southeast Washington, fled the U.S. in 2006 and lived in China. He was arrested in May 2007 in Hong Kong.

His case was featured twice on "America's Most Wanted."

The abuse began in 2000, when Kylie was 10, officials said. The girl, now a college student, did not disclose the abuse until she told her mother in November 2005.

In federal court, Freeman pleaded guilty to producing child pornography in Washington, and to producing child pornography and having unlawful sexual activity with a minor in Oregon.

The Oregon charges stem from incidents in which Freeman took his daughter to the Portland area.

Prosecutors said Freeman videotaped the sexual abuse of his daughter and distributed the images via the Internet to pedophiles around the world.

U.S. Attorney Jim McDevitt, of Spokane, said a police detective in Toronto saw an episode of "America's Most Wanted" that featured Kylie Freeman, and recognized her from some child pornography that he had been investigating.

That information got Freeman placed on most-wanted lists of the U.S. Marshals Service and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and eventually led to Freeman being tracked to China.

Chinese law-enforcement officers kept him under surveillance and notified U.S. officials when he made arrangements to visit Hong Kong for a vacation. Freeman was arrested in Hong Kong in May 2007.

He agreed to be extradited to the United States.

Before his extradition, Freeman issued a statement indicating he had written an autobiography while in custody.

Authorities seized the 400-page document, which contained confessions to much of the criminal conduct for which he was charged, court documents said.

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