

Carpinteria Man Sentenced to Three Years for Molesting Granddaughter

By Lyz Hoffman

Michael Norris Will Also Have to Register as a Sex Offender

Friday, February 28, 2014

Michael Norris, a 69-year-old man who pleaded guilty last month to molesting his granddaughter in Carpinteria, was sentenced Thursday to three years in state prison per a plea agreement that will require him to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life. Deputy District Attorney Benjamin Ladinig, who handled the case, said the deal stemmed from the fact that Norris could have received only probation, given his age, his poor health — he wore a neck brace in court on Thursday — and his lack of a criminal history.

SBSO

Michael Norris

The District Attorney's Office, with input from the victim's parents, also wished to spare her from a trial, Ladinig said. The girl, who was between 6 and 8 years old at the time of the incidents and is now 15, is a "straight-A student" who is doing well "with her studies and her life right now," Ladinig added.

Ladinig said that the girl told her father in 2012 about what Norris had done years prior. The Sheriff's Office investigated the allegations and issued an arrest warrant in late 2012 for Norris, who had moved to Costa Rica many years earlier. According to the Sheriff's Office, Norris agreed to surrender once he learned of the warrant. He was arrested when his flight from Costa Rica landed in Los Angeles in February 2013.

Norris initially faced charges of child molestation, continuous sexual abuse of a child, exhibiting pornographic material to a child, and attempted aggravated sexual assault of a child, the last of which Ladinig said presented some accuracy issues. Norris initially pleaded not guilty to the charges but agreed to the deal in January. Once he is released from prison — he will be required to serve 85 percent of his sentence — he will be subject to "strict monitoring" as part of his sex offender registration, Ladinig said.



Robert Landheer, Norris's attorney, issued a statement after the sentencing, saying that a year's worth of investigations led to a "very fair" outcome. "Mr. Norris is an elderly man suffering from numerous health problems, who voluntarily surrendered himself and returned from Costa Rica to deal with the charges he was facing," Landheer said. "Considering his age and his cooperation, we feel that the sentencing Mr. Norris received was the best all around for himself and for his family."