

Teacher gets 5 years in sex case

County officer posed as girl, 13, lured by man to Palisades mall

INTERNET CRIMES

By Steve Lieberman

Journal News, The (Westchester County, NY) - December 4, 2003

A retired Westchester music teacher was sentenced to five years in federal prison yesterday for luring someone he thought was a 13-year-old girl to the Palisades Center mall in West Nyack for sex.

Seymour Kushner, 60, of Hartsdale, solicited the youngster in an AOL chat room and spoke to her in a sexual manner for six weeks before asking to meet her on May 21. The "girl" was a Rockland Sheriff's Office Computer Crimes Task Force officer and Kushner was arrested. Kushner, an accordion player, pleaded guilty in September to a federal grand jury charge of attempting to entice a minor to engage in sex.

Yesterday in White Plains' federal courthouse, U.S. District Court Judge Charles Briant sentenced Kushner to the mandatory minimum of five years in prison and fined him \$7,500. Kushner, who faced up to 30 years, will also receive prohibitions involving children when he is released from prison, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Manhattan said yesterday. He must surrender for prison assignment on Jan. 15, U.S. Attorney's Office spokesman Herbert Hadad said yesterday.

Kushner worked as a teacher for the Edgemont and Mamaroneck school districts, including 25 years as a vocal-music teacher at Seely Place School in Edgemont from 1973 to 1998.

On his Web site, Kushner claimed he was "considered one of the finest accordionists in the field of Jewish music," having performed across the United States, including Nyack's First Night in 1999, a World's Fair, and Manhattan's Town Hall and Carnegie Hall.

As part of an Internet investigation, police computers record Instant Messenger conversations. The Rockland task force's investigations have led to more than 60 arrests of people from across the country during the past several years.

In a federal complaint, Kushner was accused of soliciting a conversation from a girl in an America Online chat room on April 10.

Using the screen name Nurturingmaster, Kushner sought out a chat room user with a profile indicating she was a girl from Rockland County whose occupation was listed as "School Ugghhh."

The complaint says Kushner initiated an AOL Instant Messenger conversation with the "girl," who was a police officer trolling rooms for pedophiles. The officer responded that she was 13. Kushner also asked, "do you like older guys" and told her he was 49, according to the complaint.

When the "girl" asked him what he was a master of, according to the complaint, Kushner responded, "master of making a woman feel good."

The federal complaint says Kushner again used Instant Messaging to communicate with the "girl" on May 16, when she told him she was going to a mall.

He asked her if he "could pick you up at the mall ... drive you to my home ... and we could get to know each other.

"I know how to make girls feel real good," he was quoted as saying in the complaint. "I'll make you feel real good, teach you new things, touch you in new ways."

The "girl" agreed to meet him at the mall and, the complaint stated, he told her not to tell anyone about him because he could get in trouble.

The meeting never took place.

At Kushner's request for a photo, the officer sent him a computer-generated picture of a girl and had an extensive sexually explicit conversation with him, according to the complaint. "You will be my slut," Kushner wrote her.

In setting up a meeting with the girl, Kushner told her that he would be driving a blue Mercedes-Benz. The complaint stated that when arrested at the mall, Kushner had six condoms in his pocket and was carrying a briefcase containing various sexual implements.