

## Sex-abuse suspect got shock probation in earlier case

### Ride operator served two months of 10-year sentence

By MARK SCHAUER  
The Courier-Journal

Eight years ago, a judge released Samuel Lee Overbey Jr. from prison on shock probation. He had served just two months of a 10-year sentence for sexually abusing a 9-year-old girl at Bullitt Central High School.

Overbey was arrested again this

week on charges that he sexually abused two girls while working as a ride operator at Six Flags Kentucky Kingdom. It was his third arrest on sex charges involving children since his shock probation.

Bullitt County court records show that Overbey was convicted of first-degree sexual abuse and second-degree sodomy and ordered to serve 10 years in prison for a July 1989 incident in which he pulled down a 9-year-old's pants and sexually abused and sodomized her.

At the time, he was 19 and had a summer job at Bullitt Central in Shepherdsville.

He pleaded guilty in June 1990 and was granted shock probation the following August by Circuit Judge Athol Lee Taylor, who has since died. (Since then the law has changed; people convicted of second-degree sodomy are no longer eligible for shock probation.)

Two years later, Overbey was convicted of sexually abusing a 2-year-old boy in Bullitt County, and in 1996 he was acquitted by a jury of sexually abusing a 4-year-old boy in Jefferson County.

In the Kentucky Kingdom case, he has been charged with two counts of first-degree sexual abuse. He is ac-



Overbey

who convinced Taylor to release Overbey on shock probation in 1990,

cused of fondling two girls under age 12 while helping them get on and off a ride at the amusement park on Aug. 9. He has pleaded innocent and is being held in lieu of a \$250,000 full cash bond.

Rebecca Murrell, the lawyer

said the subsequent arrests haven't made her reconsider the wisdom of that decision. Murrell, who practices in Shepherdsville, Overbey's hometown, said he was granted shock probation because it was the best hope he had to get treatment for his problems.

"In my job as a lawyer, I don't have any regrets," she said. Shock probation operates on the theory that some criminals will be so "shocked" by being sent to prison that they will never again commit a crime if they are released early.

See SEXUAL-ABUSE  
Page 6, col. 5, this section

## Sexual-abuse suspect received shock probation in earlier case

Continued from Page B 1

Judges can release a criminal on shock probation any time between 30 and 180 days after he begins serving his sentence.

Roberta Harding, an associate professor of law at the University of Kentucky, said shock probation can be valuable because prisons often don't provide the treatment some offenders need. She said many prisoners have committed crimes as the result of an underlying problem, such as drug abuse, that goes untreated in prisons.

Murrell said she argued in 1990 that Overbey should be granted shock probation because he would have a better chance out of prison to get treatment tailored to his problems. She said the victim's family,

after getting to know Overbey better, agreed.

When he was released, Overbey was placed on probation for five years and ordered to get sex-abuse counseling. He was again ordered to get counseling after his 1992 conviction, for which he served a year in jail.

Court documents show that Overbey didn't always complete his counseling as ordered, even as he maintained it was helping him.

"I know that what I did was wrong and I need to pay," he wrote to a judge in 1995 after being jailed for not completing counseling ordered in the 1989 case, "but I also feel that I need help and that I can't get that help while I am confined in jail. . . . I don't feel I am a danger to the public."