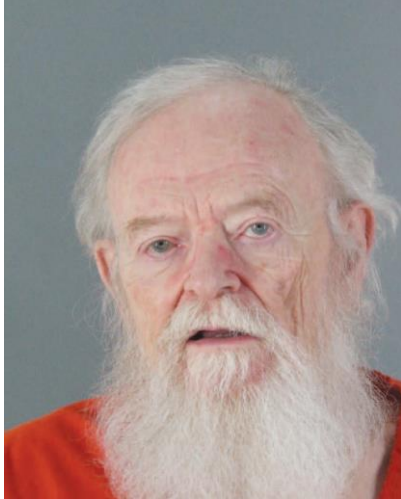


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Ex-psychiatrist William Ayres gets 8 years in prison for child molestations



COURTESY PHOTO
Ex-child psychiatrist
William Ayres pleaded no
contest to molestation.

Aging former child psychiatrist William Ayres was sentenced to 8 years in prison Monday after spending years fighting charges that he molested young male patients.

The long-awaited sentence came after the wheelchair-using 81-year-old from San Mateo pleaded no contest May 16 to eight felony molestation counts related to accusations brought by five of his patients in the 1980s and 1990s.

Prosecutors believe Ayres molested dozens of others on occasions that are now beyond the statute of limitations.

For the first time Monday, victims and the families of victims were able to face Ayres and describe the impact of his crimes on their lives. "You look like a wolf spider — you don't even know how many children you caught in your web," said victim Thomas C., who is now a psychiatrist himself.

Carl F., who was 9 when he was abused, cited excerpts from one of Ayres' medical papers in which he wrote about the lasting effects of sexual abuse on children.

A former president of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Ayres was arrested April 6, 2007, on suspicion of molesting youths between the ages of 9 and 13 during sessions.

However, he has for the most part avoided incarceration.

In 2009, prosecutors nearly secured a guilty verdict against the doctor, with all but one juror in favor of conviction on four of nine counts. The retrial process dragged on, and in 2011 attorneys on both sides agreed Ayres had been experiencing the onset of Alzheimer's-related dementia and was not competent to stand trial.

After spending the next nine months at Napa State Hospital, a forensic psychiatrist at the facility claimed Ayres had used his medical training to fake his mental illness.

With the prospect of a retrial looming, Ayres finally accepted a plea bargain. But he wasn't quite ready to accept responsibility for the crimes. In a last-ditch effort, his attorney Jonathan McDougall filed a motion to withdraw the plea, again on the grounds that his client is mentally unfit for trial.

On Monday, however, Judge Beth Freeman denied the motion. Ayres has been in custody since Aug. 7.

Bay City News contributed to this report.