

Department of Justice



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ALABAMA PHOTOGRAPHER PLEADS GUILTY TO CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – Jeff Pierson, 44, of Brookwood, Ala., has pleaded guilty today in U.S. District Court to charges of conspiracy and mailing, transporting or shipping child pornography. Pierson was charged in October 2005 in a two-count criminal information.

Pierson promoted himself as a child modeling photographer. When parents would leave their child with Pierson for a photography session, he would dress the children in adult lingerie, and in sexually explicit poses, photograph them, and subsequently sell those images to a "child modeling" website in Florida for Internet posting. Many of the parents were unaware of the images being taken of their children, and some had signed over temporary legal custody of their child to Pierson during the modeling session.

“As a supplier of these images to a commercial website, Pierson exploited these young Alabama females to line his pockets with money,” stated U.S. Attorney Martin. “Pierson is now cooperating with our investigation. We will use every available resource fostered by Project Safe Childhood to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.”

Along with the information filed against Pierson in September 2006, Marc Evan Greenberg, 42, and Jeffrey Robert Libman, 39, and Webe Web Corporation, all of the Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., area were indicted on charges of conspiring to use minors to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing visual depictions and knowingly transporting visual depictions of minors engaging in sexually explicit conduct. The Florida "Child Modeling" website, and their photographers, represented itself to be a promoter of models ages seven through 16. Webe Web also promoted subscriptions to these model sites through free subscription advertisements and hosted discussion boards or groups which were devoted to each child model. Most of the members of discussion boards or groups were adult men who were not affiliated with the modeling industry.

“Parents should be diligent to ensure they know the individuals with whom they conduct business when the safety of their children is at risk,” stated Carmen S. Adams, FBI Special Agent in Charge, Birmingham Field Division.

The indictment of Greenberg and Libman states that Pierson is a photographer who spoke with Libman about this business venture in 2002, and in 2003 produced visual depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct, and transmitted those images to Greenberg, Libman and Webe Web Corporation for a profit. Pierson, in fact, was a photographer of children and operated a business in the Birmingham area known as BSM or Beautiful Super Models.

Pierson admitted to the charges of conspiracy and mailing or transporting child pornography. According to the plea agreement, in early 2003, the FBI's Birmingham Field Office received several complaints from the public and other law enforcement agencies about child modeling websites. Callers stated that the websites were child pornography and featured at least one child from the Birmingham area. An investigation into the complaints revealed that photos featuring a lascivious (clothed) exhibition of genitals or pubic area of young girls were taken by Pierson and submitted to Webe Web for Internet viewing. Some of the props and clothing outfits worn by the young girls had logos or messages which showed the girls as sex objects. Pierson was a major supplier of images of child models and grossed about \$270,000 from his photos on the website.

Conspiracy and mailing, transporting or shipping child pornography carries a minimum sentence of five years in prison and a maximum of 20 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000, along with a possible lifetime period of supervised release. A sentencing date will be set by the court for a future date and time. Pierson will remain on bond in accordance with bond restrictions imposed by the court. Greenburg and Libman are currently awaiting trial, and remain free under bond conditions also imposed by the court.

“The U.S. Postal Inspection Service continues to be the lead agency in investigating anyone suspected of using the U.S. Mail to sexually exploit our children, the most vulnerable members of our society. We will not stop until we bring these criminals to justice,” stated Martin D. Phanco, Inspector-in-Charge, U.S. Postal Inspection Service. “The mission of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service is to protect the U.S. Postal Service, its employees and its customers from criminal attack, and to protect the nation's mail system from criminal misuse. We will continue to remain steadfast in our fight against the exploitation of children.”

The investigation of this case was conducted by the FBI and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney James Phillips of the Northern District of Alabama, and trial attorney Jennifer Toritto Leonardo of the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation Obscenity Section.

In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorney's Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

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