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MUNDELEIN MAN SENTENCED TO 14 YEARS IN PRISON FOR POSSESSING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

CHICAGO — A Mundelein man was taken into federal custody today to begin serving a sentence of 14 years in prison after he was ordered to pay \$1,000 in restitution for possessing child pornography. The defendant, **Edward Bernas**, 63, pleaded guilty last October, admitting that he used his personal computer in 2007 and 2008 to store child pornography. In February 2008, Bernas possessed at least 500 still images and 15 videos of child pornography on his computer, including images of children engaged in explicit sexual conduct. The children depicted in these images and videos were actual children who were being exploited and/or molested.

Bernas, formerly of Naperville and who coached children in competitive ice skating in Downers Grove in the 1980s, was convicted in DuPage County Circuit Court in 1985 of criminal sexual abuse and indecent liberties with a child and sentenced to two years' probation. A victim in that case testified at Bernas' federal sentencing that Bernas earned her trust and lured her into his home and molested her.

Bernas' sexual interest in "young girls has been part of your life for decades," U.S. District Judge Rebecca Pallmeyer said in ordering him to serve 168 months in federal prison, followed by five years of supervised release. The prison term was imposed last Tuesday and Judge Pallmeyer ordered Bernas to return to court today where she ordered restitution paid to an identified victim

whose images were stored on his computer. Bernas faced a mandatory minimum of 10 years in prison and a maximum of 20 years. He must serve at least 85 percent of his sentence before he is eligible for release and there is no parole in the federal prison system. The sentence was announced today by Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and Gary Hartwig, Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Chicago.

The government was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Marny M. Zimmer.

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