

Man convicted of failing to register as sex offender loses appeal

A former Canoga Park resident sentenced to life in prison for failing to register as a sex offender lost an appeal of his sentence today.

Wynford Eugene Murray sexually abused two young girls in New York more than a decade ago and failed to register as a sex offender when he moved to California.

Last April, Torrance Superior Court Judge Mark Arnold sentenced Murray to the "third strike" term of 25 years to life in prison after a non-jury trial in which he was convicted of failing to register as a sex offender.

Murray claimed that Arnold abused his discretion in denying his request to vacate at least one of his prior "strikes" from the New York case, but a three-justice panel from the 2nd District Court of Appeal turned down his appeal.

Murray — a transient who had lived first in Canoga Park and then Redondo Beach — contended that he did not know until after his arrest that California law required him to register as a sex offender, the justices noted in their eight-page ruling.

He was convicted in New York in October 1997 of two counts of first-degree sexual abuse of a 3-year-old girl and a 5-year-old girl. He was later convicted in Virginia following his December 2006 arrest for failing to register as a sex offender and resisting arrest.

Murray, then 35, was arrested in Long Beach in August 2008 after a former girlfriend found stories he had downloaded at a public library in Redondo Beach about sex with infants.

At the defendant's sentencing, Arnold said there were 20 to 25 pages of "graphic, explicit descriptions of sex with infants" found in Murray's backpack, and that he didn't get past the first page of the first story which involved "incredibly explicit sex with a 1-year-old."

"The defendant clearly fantasizes about abnormal sex with young girls and babies," the judge said. "These stories that he had in his possession are — to say that they're perverted is an understatement."

In denying the defense's motion to dismiss either of his two prior strikes, the judge said Murray was "one of the reasons why the Three Strikes law was created so that he can be insulated from victimizing other people, especially those people that are unable to defend themselves."