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Two Plead Guilty To Running Sex Ring An Ex-officer And His Wife Ran Escort Services As A Front For Prostitution. They Got Probation And A Scolding.

February 15, 1994

Vineland Pair Accused Of Running Prostitution Ring The Prosecutor Called This The First Such Internet Case In The N.j. County. A Dispute Had Drawn Notice.

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Ex-cop, Wife Get Probation For Prostitution Made Over 300g A Year, Da Says

February 15, 1994 | by Dave Racher, Daily News Staff Writer

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Despite a prosecutor's plea for a jail term, an ex-police lieutenant who was accused with his wife of operating a prostitution ring was given a probationary sentence yesterday.

Both Joseph Kelly, 39, and his wife, Jayne, 30, were placed on five years' probation by Common Pleas Judge Samuel M. Lehrer after they pleaded guilty to a charge of running a corrupt organization.

Assistant District Attorney Janet Houser said Joseph Kelly should have been jailed because "he was a police lieutenant who was using his position to operate and protect a prostitution organization. And it's just - bottom line - police corruption."

"He would try to find out information from other police officers as to whether his organization was being looked at and being investigated," said Houser.

She said the escort service was making more than \$300,000 a year, a figure compiled only from credit card receipts, and not the cash most customers probably used.

"I am sorry I am before you," Joseph Kelly told the judge. "I lost my job and disgraced my family."

Kelly's father and grandfather were cops.

"I feel humiliated," he said.

Lehrer said he was sure the ex-cop's family also felt "humiliated and ashamed."

The judge said he decided that Kelly had been punished enough after his lawyer, Joseph J. McGill, told of his client's 15-year police service, which included 20 commendations, and pointed out his loss of fringe benefits because he made the "mistake" of joining his wife's operation.

Kelly now runs a rug-cleaning business and his wife is learning to make stained-glass windows, their lawyers said. The couple are now separated.

The couple were arrested in August 1992, along with four other members of the ring and 11 female workers.

Judge Lehrer said he had been "inclined" to sentence both Kellys to jail, but felt they should get credit for pleading guilty. He warned them if they

went back into the prostitution business, they would wind up behind bars.

Jayne Kelly's lawyer, A. Charles Peruto Sr., said "she is a decent individual. She really thought she was not violating the law because of the mores of people today. She ran an escort service, which the Commonwealth rightly felt was a thin disguise."

Peruto said the operation probably would have been ignored by authorities if her husband hadn't been a cop.

Lawyer Barnaby Wittels, who represented one of the managers of the ring, agreed.

"This just proves that very often it's not what you've done, but who you are that gets you in trouble," Wittels said.

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