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PRESS RELEASE

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Husband of Chico Daycare Operator Found Guilty of Child Molest

Thomas Lee Lewis, 63, of Chico was found guilty of felony child molest by Butte County Superior Court Judge James Reilley this afternoon after a court trial. Lewis had previously waived a jury trial and allowed the judge to make the decision of his guilt or innocence.

Lewis's wife had been the proprietor of Grandma Linda's daycare, a licensed day care center in Chico. The victim, who was 3 ½ years of age at the time, reported to her mother in March of this year that "Papa Tom" had licked her privates in the back yard of the residence where day care services were provided. The victim's mother contacted the day care licensing agency and lodged a complaint.

The complaint was then forwarded to the Butte County Sheriff's Office for investigation. The child was interviewed by a county forensic interview specialist and repeated the statement she had made to her mother. Lewis was then contacted by a sheriff's detective and he confessed. Lewis was thereafter arrested and remains in the Butte County Jail pending sentencing on August 14, 2013. He faces up to eight years in prison.

Lewis's wife's daycare center was shut down after the complaint was lodged and her license was suspended.