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Party crasher goes to prison for naked foray

William Kaempffer, Register staff

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NEW HAVEN — A former East Haven man apologized in court Friday for his naked foray at a children's Halloween party in 1998 and then was sentenced to 3½ years in jail.

As part of a plea agreement, Claude Burcz, 40, must register with the state's sex offender registry and, upon his release, spend 15 years on probation.

During that span, he will be banned from more than half of East Haven and forbidden from traveling south of Route 1 to keep him away from the vic-tims.

Before Judge Roland D. Fa-sano imposed the sentence Fri-day, Burcz maintained he was not a violent person and wanted to pursue "the help I need."

"I never intended to hurt anybody," he told the judge. "I never intended to cause anyone any harm." But parents of some of the 30 children at that party were un-forgiving and urged the judge to impose stiff sanctions.

"I believe Mr. Burcz is a direct threat to my family," said Elisa Andrade. And with his sordid past, she said, "he is a direct threat to all children."

Andrade, who has lived in the same neighborhood as Burcz for much of her life, detailed decades of bizarre behavior dating back to the 1970s when bathing suits and undergar-ments disappeared from her family's backyard clothesline.

She is now raising her own children in the same house where she was raised.

Ron Andrade, Elisa's husband, said Burcz made the family's backyard unsafe.

"He's a predator of the worst kind — of children," he told the judge. "My hands are tied. I can't take care of this the way I want to."

The Andrades hosted the 1998 Halloween party for their daughters in a tent in the back yard of the house they live in at 457 Silver Sands Road. Burcz had lived at nearby 23 Jillson Drive.

About 30 children were at the party, ranging in age from 7 to 14.

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Burcz unexpectedly appeared at the party naked and, at one point, reached through a portal in the tent, prosecutors say.

Witnesses also told authorities that Burcz inappropriately touched a youngster through the tent.

Chaperones rounded up the children and called police.

Burcz fled into the woods when he was discovered.

On July 20, Burcz pleaded guilty to risk of injury to a minor, possession of cocaine and violation of probation. The drug charges stem from a separate arrest.

He pleaded under the Alford doctrine to the risk of injury charge because he claimed he couldn't remember the Halloween night's events. Under the Alford doctrine, a defendant does not admit guilt but acknowledges the prosecution probably has enough evidence to gain a conviction.

Burcz's attorney, Tara Knight, said Burcz suffered from alcohol and drug abuse.

"He has to take responsibility for his actions," Knight said, calling the sentence a "fair balance."

"He's clearly mentally ill," she said. "But he's not a violent offender. This should satisfy the community's cry for vengeance."

After the sentencing, Burcz's elderly mother said there "was a lot of exaggeration" in the sordid stories about her son.

Burcz's brother said, "We just want to get on with our lives."

The Andrades called the sentencing fair and expressed relief that their lives might return to normal.

"My children can start living as children again," said Elisa Andrade.


Burcz has a criminal record with convictions for breach of peace, indecent exposure and possession of marijuana.

In 1978, Burcz was convicted of risk of injury and unlawful restraint for molesting a child.

At the crime scene in that case, Elisa Andrade said, police found some of the undergarments taken from her clothes-line.

Upon his release, Burcz will be required to undergo sex offender treatment, as well as alcohol and drug counseling.

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