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## Parker regrets drug past

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A small portion of Katherine Parker's private life is actually public record, which can be found on the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission's official Web site.

In January 1986, Parker plead guilty to conspiracy to distribute marijuana before the Federal District Court for the Southern District of Illinois. The court, noting the drugs had mainly been for Parker's personal use, and that she had shown remorse for her actions, sentenced her to five years probation.

Documents found on the Web site also reveal that in 1977, Parker lived with a man who was involved in the illegal selling of drugs. They later married in 1980.

During this relationship, Parker was regularly using marijuana, and was using cocaine on a daily basis. In 1980, Parker and her husband were also able to purchase a home using proceeds from drug sales.

Parker said she makes no excuses for her actions, and doesn't attempt to hide from the truth.

"Every place I've worked, I've eventually told my staff," she said.

Parker noted that the culture, and society's views on recreational drugs were slightly different at that point, which may have prompted her involvement with them.

"It was a very common thing back then," Parker said. "I'm not saying that makes it right, but it was."

Parker and her husband separated in 1983, at which point they had two young daughters. Parker said it was the birth of her first child in 1981 that prompted her to stop using.

"It wasn't healthy," Parker said. "I didn't like the lifestyle and I wanted to get away from it."

In the various jobs she has performed since her sentencing, information about the marijuana charge inevitably comes out, casting her in an uncomfortable light. At one point, she was even turned down for a job based solely on her past.

At this point in her life, Parker's past effects not only her, but her children as well.

"She is a fascinating woman," Parker's now 29-year-old daughter, Charlotte, said. "Yet, every few years, her one mistake is brought out, printed in the papers and made a fuss for a day or two."

After her sentencing, Parker voluntarily surrendered her license to practice law. It was reinstated in 1990 by the Illinois Supreme Court.

Roma Larson, assistant to the state's attorney in Sangamon County, worked with Parker during her time on the Illinois Human Rights Commission as its chief judge. Larson said Parker's license being reinstated speaks volumes toward her character.

"They would not do that lightly," Larson said.