Expert tells obsession of Scout aide

By Jerry Shnay

A psychologist, testifying Thursday for the defense in the trial of a former Boy Scout leader accused of molesting an 11-year-old boy, described the defendant as "a person obsessed and infatuated with young boys."

"He was relating to those children essentially as lovers, and said he was teaching them things no other adult would tell them," said Dr. Lawrence Heinrich, who conducted a two-day examination of Thomas Hacker, 53, of Burbank.

Hacker, accused of sexually attacking at least 11 youths between the ages of 10 and 14, is being tried on two counts of aggravated criminal sexual assault involving one boy.

If convicted by the 10-man, 2-woman jury in the Bridgeview branch of Cook County Circuit Court, Hacker could face 60 years in prison.

Attorney Elliot Price began his defense Thursday by trying to prove the contention he made during opening arguments that his client was insane and "totally out of control."

In recalling some of the interviews he conducted with the defendant, Heinrich called Hacker's behavior "bizarre" and "deviant."

"Being around these boys made him feel special," Heinrich said. "He said that people kept telling him it was wrong, to stop these things, and he said he's tried to stop a million times but didn't know how.

"In his own mind, molestation was something else. He had a sense that he was helping boys develop healthy attitudes about themselves."

Hacker was married at one time and was the father of three children, but the psychologist said he could not escape his obessions.

Heinrich said Hacker told him that he thought marriage "would solve things," but he added that "he had to fantasize about kids to have sex with his wife."

Earlier in the week, six youths, including the victim in the case on trial, testified for the prosecution.

Hacker, who was once the director of the Burbank Park District and had been active in various youth activities, is accused of attacking the youths on numerous Boy Scout overnight camping trips, when he was an assistant Scoutmaster of a troop that served the Burbank and Oak Lawn area.

He was arrested on Feb. 10, 1988, after authorities received complaints from the parents of one of the victims, who said they suspected their son had been molested.

After he was taken into custody, an investigation revealed that he had been convicted for sex offenses in Indianapolis in 1970 and Mt. Prospect in 1971. Hacker avoided discovery for years, although his name was supposed to be on a national "not-for-hire" list circulated by the Boy Scouts.

Heinrich, who returns to the stand Friday, said Hacker told him he was "frequently reported" for his activities. "They would know something was wrong, but no charges were filed. They'd tell him to resign or we'll report you."

The case is expected to go to the jury early next week.