Ex-Scout aide insane, defense says

By Jerry Shnay

A former southwest suburban Boy Scout leader, accused of numerous sexual attacks upon his youthful charges, heard his attorney label him Tuesday as a man so "totally out of control that he couldn't keep his hands off young children."

Although the prosecution sought to prove that Thomas Hacker, 51, of Burbank, molested Boy Scouts "in an organized and predictable" manner, defense attorney Elliot Price told a Cook County Circuit Court jury that his client should be found insane, that he was a "classic pedophile and sick even beyond that."

During opening statements in Hacker's trial, prosecutor McCarter told the jury that Hacker, who was once married and is the father of three children, was aware of what he was doing.

But Price said his client had been sexually molested by his maternal grandmother when he was 11 years old "and never got beyond that age. He is a boy in a man's body."

Hacker, a Scout leader for nearly eight years and at one time the director of the Burbank Park District, is on trial in the Bridgeview courtroom of Judge Lester McCurrie, charged with two counts of aggravated criminal sexual assault involving one boy.

That youth, now a 14-year-old high school sophomore, said Tuesday that Hacker performed oral sex on him during camping trips in December, 1986, and again seven months later. The boy was 11 at the time.

But while Assistant State's Atty. Bob Peachem, who is prosecuting the case with James McCarter, focused in on those two specific incidents, the defense asked about other incidents, including the time Hacker declared his love for the youth.

That, the youth said, took place in Hacker's home where the defendant was tutoring him in math and also molesting him.

"He said he was in love with me," said the youth, adding that he was in Hacker's home nearly 20 times during 1987.

Four other boys followed the first teen to the stand.

All described specific times that Hacker had assaulted them on camping trips from 1981 through 1987. They also said that they saw Hacker molest others and that he

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