Ex-Scout leader charged with sex abuse

By Rob Karwath

A former Boy Scout leader and suburban park district director with a record for child sexual abuse in Indiana was charged Wednesday with sexually abusing three Scouts during campouts.

The suspect, Thomas E. Hacker, 51, of southwest suburban Burbank, was charged with five counts of aggravated criminal sexual assault against three Scouts ages 11 and 12 on campouts on the grounds of Burbank's Reavis High School, said Lisa Howard, spokeswoman for Cook County State's Atty. Richard Daley.

The alleged assaults occurred between 1983 and last November, Howard said. Hacker resigned in November as a member of a parents committee that helped lead the group of about 30 Scouts from Burbank and Oak Lawn, she said. The troop met at St. Louis de Montfort Catholic Church in Oak Lawn.

Hacker also resigned on Jan. 13 as director of the Burbank Park District, where he worked for several years, amid allegations that he had stolen park money, Howard said.

Officials of the park district and the Chicago office of the Boy Scouts of America said they were shocked to learn that Hacker pleaded guilty in 1970 to sexually abusing a 13-year-old student at the Indianapolis junior high school where he taught. The officials said they learned of the charge only after the current investigation began.

The state's attorney's office formed a "mass molestation task force" to investigate Hacker after parents of two Scouts told Burbank police Feb. 2 they suspected that Hacker had abused their sons, Howard said.

The task force, composed of Burbank police, Oak Lawn police, Illinois State Police and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, continues to investigate charges that Hacker abused other Scouts on campouts outside Cook County.

"We have information that several other offenses occurred when Hacker took the boys on campouts in Wisconsin, Michigan and Indiana, as well as other counties in Illinois," Howard said.

"State police will notify those jurisdictions, and they will proceed with charges because we can't charge for something that happened out of the county."

Hacker resigned from the park district after he was accused of

See Scout, pg. 16