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Suspect Claims Youths Molested At Center

By BYRON C. WELLS

One of two men charged with sodomy in connection with alleged perverted acts on almost 50 young boys said yesterday that while he was an employe of the Marion County Juvenile Center, boys came to him with complaints of molestings by center supervisors.

Meanwhile, police said the other man in the sodomy case attempted to take his own life in his home by swallowing photographic chemicals containing potassium cyanide.

THE ACCUSATIONS concerning the Juvenile Center were made by Donald L. Strange, 30 years old, owner of the Strange Sign Shop, 4619 East 10th Street, where he allegedly photographed boys in the nude and had them participate in sex acts.

He said that while working as a night shift supervisor at the Juvenile Center in 1967, about a dozen boys complained they were forced to commit unnatural acts.

Police said Robert E. Schmidt, 46, 1349 North LaSalle Street, was reported in fair condition in Marion County General Hospital following the attempted suicide shortly after noon.

VIRGIL I. BRAND, superintendent of the Juvenile Center, denied Strange's accusations.

He said he does not remember any reports Strange claims to have made about the complaints, and said the molestings "couldn't happen" because of the unscheduled checks he makes on shift supervisors.

He accused Strange of seeking court leniency. Brand said similar charges concerning perversion at the center have been made in the past, but that "this is the closest we have come to it being authentic" because the charges were being made by a former employe.

MARION COUNTY Sheriff's Capt. Donald D. Roush said he would look into the accusations by Strange.

Strange, in an interview at the Marion County Jail, said he quit the Juvenile Center to take a high-paying job at a sign shop, which he did not identify.

Strange said that while he worked at the center, "Two or three kids came into my office crying and shaking because they were scared and pleading for help, even to the point of asking to be put into solitary confinement to get away from it."

He said he did not perform any acts of perversion with youngsters at the center.

He said he reported the boys' complaints to his superiors, but that "the only action taken was against me. I was branded as a troublemaker."

He said he was threatened with loss of his job, and that the threats stopped when he discontinued reporting the complaints.

He said he will co-operate with any official investigation into his charges.

Strange said he was a former Indianapolis Transit System Inc. driver and once planned to be a minister, but that "I couldn't combine" that with his tendencies to perversion.

MARION COUNTY Sheriff Lee R. Eads noted that Strange is in a one-man cell and remarked, "This is a perfect example of why we need more of these instead of dormitories in the jail."

Preliminary charges of sodomy against Strange and Schmidt were continued Thursday in Municipal Court, Room 6, by Judge Frank L. Harlor, to March 28.

Schmidt, free on $2,500 bond, also was scheduled to appear today on a charge of being a disorderly person, in connection with his attempted suicide, police said.

Police said Schmidt, paroled from an Illinois prison where he had been serving a sentence for child molesting, was freed on bond because it is practice to revoke parole only after a conviction, rather than just for an arrest.