

Child Recants Testimony in Molestation Case

United Press International

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 24—The first of 41 children to testify against seven former teachers accused of more than 200 counts of child molestation backed down under gentle cross-examination today, recanting his sometimes graphic testimony.

The boy, 7, relaxed and grinning at times as defense attorneys joked with him, said his earlier tales of "naked games" and "touching" had only been "stories."

The boy had told prosecutors that he and other students at the Virginia McMartin Pre-School, which was closed by the state last

year, had been coaxed into stripping off their clothes and playing touching games with teachers who took pictures of them.

But today, the youth, showing no signs of the anxiety that psychiatrists had feared he might experience from sitting in the courtroom with people who allegedly abused him, was responsive to the subdued insistence of defense attorneys.

No, the boy told attorney Brad Brunon, he hadn't been coaxed into taking his clothes off—only when changing to go swimming.

Brunon, asking whether his earlier testimony had been "stories" that his mother, therapists and

prosecutors wanted him to tell, the boy said "Yes."

Outside the courtroom, Brunon said he was convinced that the boy was not molested by the teachers. "His testimony suggests that events never occurred . . .," Brunon said.

However, prosecutor Glenn Stevens said the questions "were confusing to the child," and said, "In order to judge the value of the child's testimony, you have to wait until all the testimony has been heard."

The youth has been questioned thus far by only two of seven defense attorneys in the preliminary hearing, which could last a year.