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# Gutierrez on stand; denies molestation

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The Columbian

At least a dozen different times in less than an hour of testimony Thursday, Paul Gutierrez denied ever molesting his granddaughter.

Gutierrez, 68, a Vancouver School Board member, is on trial this week for molesting the girl over a five-year period from 1987 to 1992. The girl is now 15.

The youngster testified Wednesday her grandfather invited her into his bedroom to watch television then fondled her vagina as many as 100 times while she was between the ages of nine and 12.

The girl also told the six-man, six-woman jury her grandfather continued to abuse her on a less frequent basis — rubbing her breasts and vagina over her clothes — until 1992 when she was in the ninth grade.

But on the stand, Gutierrez adamantly denied any sort of abuse.

"Did you ever touch (the girl) for sexual reasons?" asked defense attorney Steve Thayer.

"No, I have not," he replied. "Definitely not."

Under cross examination, Gutierrez said the girl would occasionally crawl into bed with him to watch television, but only when she was very young. He testified it didn't happen often.

The girl said the abuse took place nearly every Tuesday night from fourth to six grades when she stayed at her grandparents' home in McLoughlin Heights.

Asked by Deputy Prosecutor Kim Farr whether he molested the girl, Gutierrez said, "Absolutely not."

Did he repeatedly molest her, Farr asked. "Definitely not," Gutierrez said.

Farr persisted, asking the defendant if even after the girl started spending the night less frequently,

"didn't you continue to molest her?"

"Absolutely not."

"In the den?"

"No."

"In her bedroom (at his home)."

"No."

"In your den?"

"No."

Defense attorney Thayer: "Did you ever molest (the girl)?"

"Absolutely not, Mr. Thayer."

Among other testimony for the defense Thursday:

- Pat Gutierrez, the wife of the defendant, said she never found the girl in bed with her husband.

- Two of the Gutierrez's daughters testified the girl had talked about leaving the area to live with her father in California at various times.

Attorney Thayer is expected to argue the girl fabricated the abuse stories so she could go to a Los Angeles suburb, live with her father and attend a high school that offered specialized classes in drama and music.

The case is expected to go the jury at about noon today after closing arguments.

Gutierrez is charged with seven different counts of child sexual abuse. If convicted he would be sentenced to a minimum of 17 1/2 years in prison.