

McKibbin testifies for teacher

Editor's note: The defendant's name has been omitted from this story to protect the identity of the alleged victim.

By PAM BRINKLEY
The Columbian

A Vancouver elementary-school teacher charged with molesting his daughter got a character reference Monday from Clark County Commissioner John McKibbin, who testified on his friend's behalf.

McKibbin said he had known the teacher for years and that his friend had often brought his daughter along when McKibbin and the teacher played basketball or tennis on the weekends.

Did the daughter ever appear to be afraid of her father? asked defense attorney Steve Thayer.

"No. I would say it was quite the contrary," replied McKibbin. He described the relationship between the teacher and the man's daughter as close but normal.

McKibbin said he had seen the child and her father together at social gatherings a number of times in recent years. The child, he said, often called her father out of a basketball game to ask for help in routine disputes with other children playing near the basketball court.

Closing arguments in the case were to be made today. The defendant has been assigned to a non-teaching post until the case is decided.

Deputy prosecutor Michael Kinney said the girl's mother became concerned last January when she found some sketches in the girl's school notebook. The sketches were sexual in nature, he said. One of them appeared to depict two people engaged in oral sex.

The girl's mother and the defendant have been divorced since 1982. After discovering the drawings, the mother was able to cut the defendant's visitation rights off temporarily.

The child denied being a victim of anything for several months. It was not until a spring vacation trip to California that the 7-year-old exhibited any sign that something was wrong. Kinnie said she "rolled up into a fetal position in the back of the van and started crying" when her mother told her her visits with her father would resume.

Kinnie said detectives were later able to extract a description of sexual abuse from the girl. Last July, she was examined by Vancouver pediatrician John Stirling, an expert in child sex abuse cases. Stirling found scar tissue in the area of the girl's vagina and also found her hymen to be either gone or severely damaged, Kinnie said.

However, during testimony Monday, defense witness Dr. David Miller, a specialist in obstetrics and gynecology, disputed Stirling's findings.

After reviewing a photograph taken by Stirling, Miller, who teaches at the University of California at Irvine, said the child's vaginal area appeared normal.