

Hearing starts in girls' kidnapping case

By TINA MAY
Sun Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — A Grass Valley woman testified in Municipal Court here Friday that Lee Casner was the man she saw several months ago in her country store with two girls who were kid-

napped from their San Bernardino home three years ago.

And a man and his wife from Nampa, Idaho, said at Casner's preliminary hearing they had lied to police about how many times the children had been at their home there last summer because they

were afraid they'd be jailed.

Casner, 37, of Cedar Ridge, a rural area near Grass Valley, is charged with accessory to kidnapping and felony child concealment in connection with the March 30, 1977, abduction of Brandi Jondell Summers, then 5 years old, and Tiffani Wise, then 2. Their mother, Beverly Wise, was found murdered that day.

The children have never been found and were feared dead until the investigation was reopened last fall. Since then the girls have reportedly been seen in the Grass Valley area, which is about 50 miles northeast of Sacramento, in Nampa and in Elko, Nev. Casner is one of four people charged in the case.

Under questioning by Chief Deputy District Attorney Joseph Canty and Public Defender Gary Smeltzer, Janeen Lafreniere said she had seen a girl about 4 years old and one about 8 in her store with a man in December or January.

Lafreniere testified she heard the man say "Brandi and Tiffani, get over here," and the children complied. Canty showed her two photographs Friday and she identified a picture of Tiffani as the younger girl but couldn't identify Brandi as the older child she had seen.

She said she didn't know the

man's name until she was told it by investigators and was a bit hesitant about whether the picture Canty showed her was of the defendant because the man in the picture had darker hair.

But under questioning by Smeltzer, Lafreniere said she was positive the picture and the man sitting in court matched.

Another of Canty's witnesses, Ray Frazier of Nampa, testified he recognized Brandi and Tiffani and a man — Roy Summers — as having been at his house there last July.

(Summers is Brandi's father and has been charged with the actual kidnapping of the girls and the murder of Wise, his former wife. He is in custody in Oregon awaiting extradition to California.)

Frazier said the man and children were at his house only once and he doesn't remember why, but he has "a pretty bad memory" and has difficulty remembering events that far back.

He testified he told San Bernardino Police Detective Don Meyer he was using marijuana frequently last summer and had taken both LSD and speed then, too.

"My memory is better now some that I've stepped out of drugs," he told the court.

He said he initially told Meyer the girls and Summers had been at

his house several times because the detective told him witnesses had said that and that he could go to jail if he lied.

"He had me scared," Frazier

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Lake Elsinore

No sigh wanted,

While Lake Elsinore officials say they appreciate the gesture, they really wish that out-of-town individual volunteers would stay away from their flooded city this weekend.

Lake Elsinore officials have been fighting an ever-rising lake for several weeks. Their flood-fighting efforts are complicated when weekend sightseers and would-be volunteers flock to the community.

However, City Manager Ira Pace said it may be feasible for the city to accept offers of help from organized groups of volunteers.

He said Lake Elsinore workers, along with state and federal agencies, will spend this weekend evacuating mobile homes and personal

Some surprises hit at filing deadline

By HARVEY FEIT
Sun Political Editor

SAN BERNARDINO — The last day for filing nomination papers traditionally produces surprises, and Friday was no exception here. There were three.

First, Sharon D. Hodgdon, wife of millionaire San Bernardino businessman Warner Hodgdon, entered the race for the Fifth Supervisorial District seat held by Bob Hammock of San Bernardino.

At about the same time, Assemblyman Bill McVittie, D-Upland, received an appointment to the Los Angeles County Superior Court bench and announced he would give up his seat in the 65th District.

This was followed by District

Attorney Jim Cramer's announcement that he intends to run for McVittie's Assembly seat.

Besides Hodgdon and Hammock, also running in the June 3 primary in the Fifth Supervisorial District are Robert W. Grassell, a Lake Arrowhead businessman, and Don Hunt of San Bernardino, a Water Department supervisor.

Hodgdon listed her occupation as businesswoman.

The Hodgsons have been active on the political scene for some time. They have made sizable contributions to both Republican and Democratic candidates and sometimes turn up at big fund-raising events.

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