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Page 20

## Father, teacher: Tangled life of child pornographer

By Michael Sneed

FOR ALL ANYONE knew, he was a schoolteacher devoted to his family and community in Port Huron, Mich.

An average guy with aspirations. The fellow next door, who liked kids and went to church on Sundays. The father of a young son. A man who held college degrees in youth services and electronics.

The son of a policeman turned elected official. An amateur photographer who learned to use a camera by taking mugshots at the police department.

WHAT THEY DIDN'T know was that he was one of the Midwest's leading child pornographers and the worst kind of pimp. A flesh profiteer who fed off the young, who filmed, processed and sold child pornography film, who sold the sexual services of his young male models.

From his cell in a Michigan prison, where he is serving a 2-to-19-year sentence for molesting a 10-year-old boy, Gerald S. Richards, 36, talked about the child pornography business, a business he likens to a nationwide spiderweb.

While going to college and supporting his family in 1968, Richards started working in one of the first porno shops to open in Port Huron.

"I HAD NO reason to get into the business," he said. "I was curious and I needed the money."

He planned to get out when his son was a year old, but was hooked. "I was making good money on the side reselling porno prints I got at the store," he explained.

So, armed with shop contacts with pornography publishers, distributors and customers, Richards left the store and set up his own mail order business.

HIS LIFE BECAME a maze of forwarding addresses for his mail order pornographic picture operation; his home and downtown office became his pornography mills; and his contacts grew nationwide. His young "porno" brigade included 20 boy models.

"I had two lives," he said. "My family thought I was teaching physical education in a parochial school. I was but it took very little of my time. My Cadillac was my only sign of wealth. I put a lot of money into better photo equipment. I was careful. They never



Gerald S. Richards

knew."

Richards was married, but he also became homosexually involved with one of his male models—a 12-year-old boy who was his babysitter, next-door neighbor, assistant in his professional magic act, and his solicitor for other young boy models.

"He took care of things and nobody ever squealed. It was procedure to keep a blackmail photo file of each boy to avoid any squealing—but I eventually threw his away. He was a genius."

RECRUITING CHILDREN was not difficult. "It's the easiest thing in the world to get a kid," Richards said.

"What you want is a kid with no moral, religious background, and you have got it made. A kid whose father is absent or doesn't care about him. They don't have a chance. They are brainwashed and left sexually confused. They can end up like the men who estice them."

Behind it all, Richards said, is the BL movement, which stands for "boy love." Promoters of the BL syndrome publish magazines and newsletters which contain their philosophy and carefully coded classified ads.

"IT IS THROUGH these ads that subscribers make their contacts, contacts for films, pictures, and sex with others who feel the same way about the sexual use of children," he related.

Richards subscribed to the BL ma-

gazines and advertised in them to build up his "boy hungry" clientele. His magic act was also coded in the BL ads.

He found his business partner through an ad in a California magazine called the Better Life Monthly, America's No. 1 boy love journal.

"I screened his mail for four months. Subscribers are screened through an intricate process. You check the grade of paper, typewriter keys, numbers of letters—weighing sincerity and insistence. Of course, you keep the letters as a security measure."

WITH THE HELP of his partner, he incorporated as a tax exempt-front known as Brother Paul's Children's Mission. Richards was Brother Paul. His partner is being sought on a fugitive warrant by the Michigan State Police.

Several times, Richards made trips to Chicago with his partner, where contacts for boys were made with porno shop proprietors.

"The names would be furnished either by a porno shop guy or through a hotel clerk," he explained.

He eventually was arrested for molesting one of his models—a model who was in demand because he was very young. He was only 8 years old when he was "tested" on a camping trip to see if he'd fit into the operation.

"It was a bad scene," Richards said. "I was teetering between wrong and right. But the money was too good. I couldn't stop. I just couldn't put that rubber stamp down when I'd see all that mail coming in and thought of the money."

HE REFUSES, however, to estimate just how much money he made from his pornographic career.

"Sometimes I would even use self-hypnosis to figure out ways to make money," he recalled.

Richards was arrested on July 23, 1975, and pleaded guilty.

"I was guilty. I felt like I had murdered my own son." He has also voluntarily turned over his files and is scheduled to appear before the Michigan State Assembly "to prevent other kids being trapped in this business."

Summing up the results of his porno business career, Richards sighed:

"My wife is now divorcing me, my son is being deprived of a father, my father's public career is ruined, and my assistant probably will be a homosexual."

Gerald Richards