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Thirteen past and present members of Synanon, the controversial...

By MICHAEL D. HARRIS

LOS ANGELES -- Thirteen past and present members of Synanon, the controversial drug and alcohol rehabilitation organization, surrendered in court Tuesday on two secret indictments charging them with obstructing justice in a 1978 rattlesnake attack on an attorney.

Synanon founder Charles Dederich, although not named in the Los Angeles County Grand Jury indictments returned late last month and unsealed Tuesday, also appeared in Superior Court in connection with allegations he violated terms of his probation for the attack on the lawyer.

In that assault, Dederich and two Synanon 'Imperial Marines' were charged with conspiring to murder attorney Paul Morantz by placing a rattlesnake in the mailbox of his Pacific Palisades home.

Morantz, who had represented two former Synanon members in lawsuits against the organization, survived the snake bite.

Dederich and the two 'Imperial Marines,' Lance Kenton, then 21, and Joseph Musico, then 29, later pleaded no contest to the charges.

The new charges involve a 'coverup' by the defendants to obstruct justice in the prosecution of the rattlesnake attack case, Deputy District Attorney John Watson said.

'I characterize the charges as a coverup stemming from the original rattlesnake case,' Watson, who presented the case to the grand jury, told reporters outside court.

Watson refused further comment on the case, citing the secrecy of grand jury proceedings.

But in court documents filed previously, prosecutors said 'the destruction included over 100 tapes, hundreds of computer entries, hundreds of computer cards, labels, transcripts and summaries of tape recordings concerning violence, rattlesnakes, Paul Morantz as well as many, many subjects thought to be incriminating.'

Indicted were Philip Bourdette, Synanon's chief legal counsel; Steve Simon, Synanon's director or archives; Dan Garret, Synanon's former chief counsel, and Dan Sorkin and Chris Haberman, two other Synanon officers.

Also indicted were Sybil Schiff, Miriam Bourdette, Matt Rand, Walter Lewbel, Rosa Gomez-Simon, Jady Dederich, Elizabeth Missakian and Jay Bloom-Becker. It was not immediately known the relationship of Ms. Dederich to Dederich.

Those indicted face charges that include conspiracy to obstruct justice, perjury and offering or preparing false evidence.

According to the indictments, some of the defendants, including Bourdette and Simon, prepared 'a false and ante-dated book, paper, record, and instrument in writing' and allowed it 'to be produced for a fraudulent and deceitful purpose as genuine and true' at the rattlesnake trial.

Simon and Bourdette also allegedly perjured themselves at the rattlesnake trial in March 1980 when they testified that a computer printout presented in court was accurate, up-to-date and complete, the indictment stated.

Ms. Missakian, Ms. Dederich and Bloom-Becker perjured themselves during the grand jury proceedings earlier this year, the indictment charged.

Lewbel and Rand allegedly used bulk erasers to erase tapes on Synanon property in Tulare County in 1978, the indictment charged.

The 13 defendants were arraigned on the charges before Superior Court Judge Ronald George, but did not enter pleas because defense attorneys wanted more time to study the indictments. They will enter pleas on Sept. 24.

Watson also declined comment on the nature of Dederich's alleged probation violations. Judge George ordered an affidavit containing the alleged violations sealed and scheduled a Sept. 24 hearing on the alleged probation violations.

The judge also set a July 23 hearing on a defense motion to keep sealed transcripts of the grand jury proceedings.

George ordered the defendants, many of whom sported Synanon's characteristic short haircuts, to be immediately booked, photographed and fingerprinted at the District Attorney's Office.

As he left court, the portly Dederich was mobbed by reporters and television crews, but made no comment on the indictments or his alleged probation violations.