

old girl and an 11-year-old boy all testified this fall that they had been molested by one or both of the Buckeys while they attended the nursery school.

A mistrial was averted in October after a jail house informant was granted immunity from prosecution for past perjuries. The informant, George Freeman, testified that while he and Ray Buckey were cellmates at Men's Central Jail, Buckey admitted to having molested children and to incest with his sister.

Freeman disappeared after allegedly receiving a threatening telephone call as his cross-examination was about to begin. He was arrested and compelled to complete his testimony. Last month he was again arrested for investigation of robbing a woman at gunpoint.

Former defense investigator Paul Bynum, 39, a retired Hermosa Beach police officer, was found dead in his Glendale home earlier this month of an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. He was to testify that he found animal remains buried in a vacant lot next to the McMartin School.

(Last December, Judy Johnson, the mother whose report triggered the massive molestation investigation that eventually involved nine South Bay nursery schools, was found dead of liver disease in her Manhattan Beach home. And in 1985, an uncharged suspect in the McMartin case, Robert H. Winkler, 35, was found dead in his Long Beach apartment of an accidental drug overdose).

Family matriarch Virginia McMartin, in five days on the witness stand in October, vehemently denied that she had ever molested a child or seen her daughter or grandson do anything that might even be misconstrued as molestation, adding that she had "never heard" of molestation before being caught up in the case that bears her name.

She acknowledged, however, that one of her own granddaughters believes that her two children were molested at the nursery school. She said Ray Buckey had had a drinking problem and had received counseling from a pastor at the Church of Religious Science in Redondo Beach.