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Commune leader convicted of kidnaping, gets 10 years

WALTHAM, Minn. — John Hansen, director of an 80-acre commune called the Church of Satan, was fined under \$500 bond Thursday pending an appeal of his kidnaping conviction to the State Supreme Court.

Hansen was convicted late Wednesday of kidnaping Charles Hill, the mother of three children, in Minn. in January 1975 and holding her captive on a farm commune near Boyer, Minn.

Hill testified that she was living in Minn. with her three children when she was taken against her will and taken to the commune, where her husband had lived for three months. She said she was frequently tied to beds and chairs and beaten on the nose and others at the Church of Satan attempted to perform a type of exorcism on her.

Hansen contended that Mrs. Hill came to the commune voluntarily and "asked me if I'd read doctrine out of her." He said he and other members of the church had attempted to help her perform her duties as a wife and mother. "We tried to love her," he said.

Hansen also denied that Mrs. Hill was forced to stay at the commune, noting that she returned to the farm twice after she left with her father in February 1975.

William Hill also testified that his wife came voluntarily to and stayed at the commune and was not forced to leave. He acknowledged, however, that his wife was harmed by her and others at the commune. "I was not," he testified.

Hansen was sentenced to 10 years in the state penitentiary. The maximum possible sentence was 30 years.

In his closing argument, District Atty. Mike McNeil characterized the abduction as "a peculiar type of kidnaping" when the reason "is the individual's own need."

Defense attorney Charles Sullivan argued that the trial "is a prosecution of religious beliefs" and he wanted the jury "not to try these beliefs."

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