

Jackson Calls Sexual Abuse Charges 'Totally False'

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Special to The New York Times

WOOD, Dec. 22 — Michael Jackson emerged from seclusion today wiping back tears, told a television audience that accusations that he sexually abused a 12-year-old boy were "disturbing" and "totally false." Jackson also said that the law enforcement authorities had examined and photographed his body this week as part of their investigation. The boy accused Mr. Jackson of sexual abuse. He gave the police a detailed description of the entertainer's body, according to various reports. The description, if accurate, could be significant in verifying the accusations. "Don't treat me like a criminal, because I am innocent!" pleaded the 35-year-old pop superstar, whose career has been placed in jeopardy because of the accusations. Mr. Jackson faces a criminal investigation as well as a criminal investi-

gation. Before has an entertainer like Jackson, whose career was in such jeopardy, taken to television to plead his case. The extraordinary four-minute television statement was an effort by Mr. Jackson and his associates to take the offensive out of months of silence. It was delivered from the star's huge, secluded Neverland Valley Ranch in the Santa Monica Mountains near Santa Barbara. Reporters were allowed on the

premises. Jackson's comments were carried on the Cable News Network. CBS and NBC did not carry the broadcast, but the satellite feed nationally.

'Humiliating Examination'

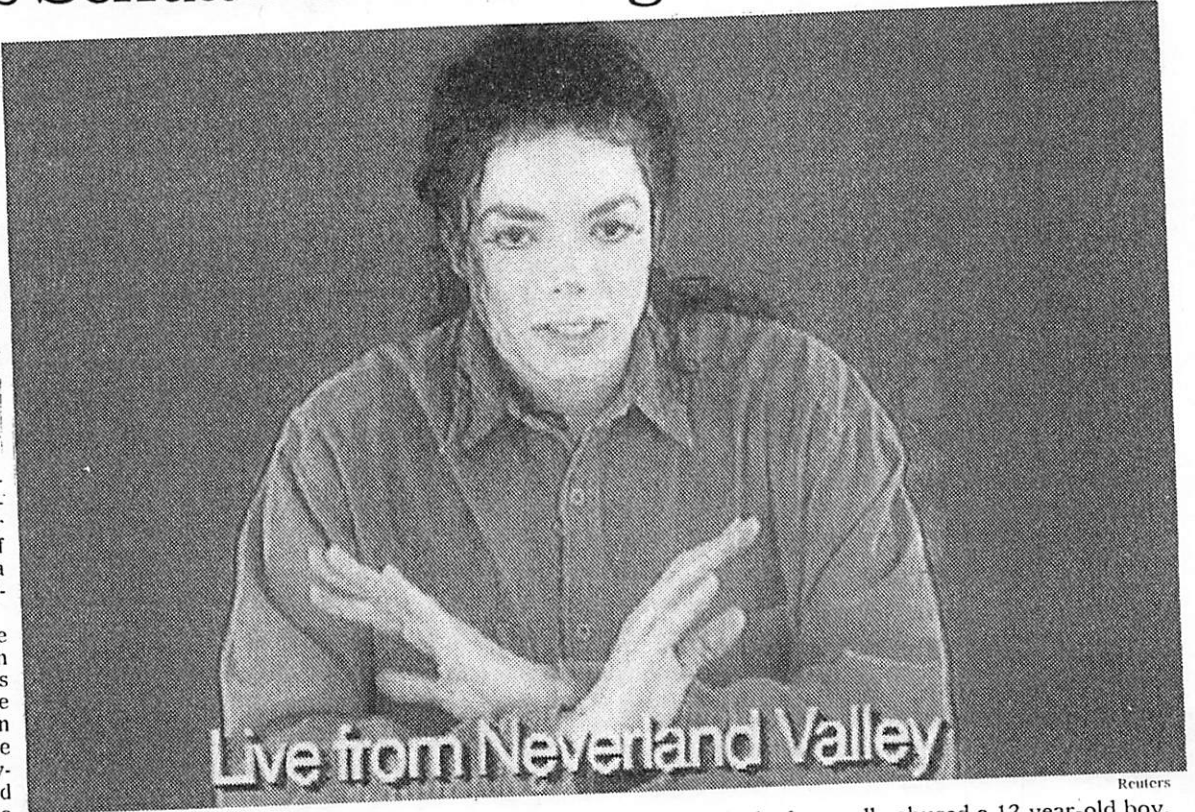
Mr. Jackson has been forced to submit to a medical and humiliating examination by the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Department and the Los Angeles Police Department earlier this week, said Mr. Jackson, who seemed to be on the verge of tears throughout his statement. He apparently read from a prepared script.

Investigators served a search warrant on Mr. Jackson which allowed them to view and photograph his body, including his penis, buttocks, my lower torso, and any other areas they wanted to examine, he said.

They were supposedly looking for signs of discoloration, spotting, blotches or evidence of a skin color disorder called vitiligo, which I have previously mentioned about," Mr. Jackson said.

Mr. Jackson said the warrant stated that he "had no right to refuse the examination or photographs, and if I refused to cooperate with them, they would introduce that refusal at any time as an indication of my guilt."

Speaking softly, Mr. Jackson said: "This is the most humiliating ordeal of my life, one that no person should have to suffer. And even after experiencing



Michael Jackson, speaking in a television statement, denied that he had sexually abused a 12-year-old boy.

An extraordinary TV message: 'I am innocent!'

the indignity of this search, the parties were still not satisfied and wanted to take even more pictures.

'A Horrifying Nightmare'

"It was a nightmare, a horrifying nightmare, but if this is what I have to endure to prove my innocence, my complete innocence, so be it."

Minutes earlier, Mr. Jackson insisted: "There have been many disgusting statements made recently concerning allegations of improper conduct on my part. These statements about me are totally false."

Mr. Jackson has not made a public appearance since Nov. 12, when he

suddenly canceled his world concert tour in Mexico City, with about a month to go. The cancellation resulted in the loss of millions of dollars to the entertainer. "I remained out of the country undergoing treatment for a dependency on pain medication," Mr. Jackson said. "This medication was initially prescribed to soothe excruciating pain that I was suffering after recent reconstructive surgery in my scalp."

Trial Set for March

Mr. Jackson returned to his ranch in Santa Barbara County on Dec. 10. The trial in the civil molestation suit brought by a lawyer representing the boy is scheduled to start on March 21. Mr. Jackson is expected to give a deposition on Jan. 18.

The law enforcement authorities in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles have been investigating the sex abuse accusations against Mr. Jackson for about four months. The criminal investiga-

tion is expected to continue through February.

Meanwhile, Mr. Jackson's legal defense team is in turmoil. In recent days, Bertram Fields, a well-known Hollywood lawyer, as well as the star's personal investigator, Anthony Pellicano, have disclosed that they resigned from the Jackson team. Both men denied that they were dismissed, although several members of the Jackson family have expressed unhappiness with their judgment and performance defending the entertainer.

Today, Mr. Jackson was especially caustic about news organizations. "I will say I'm particularly upset by the handling of this matter by the incredible, terrible mass media," he said. "At every opportunity, the media has dissected and manipulated these allegations to reach their own conclusions."

He added tensely, "I ask all of you to wait and hear the truth before you label or condemn me."