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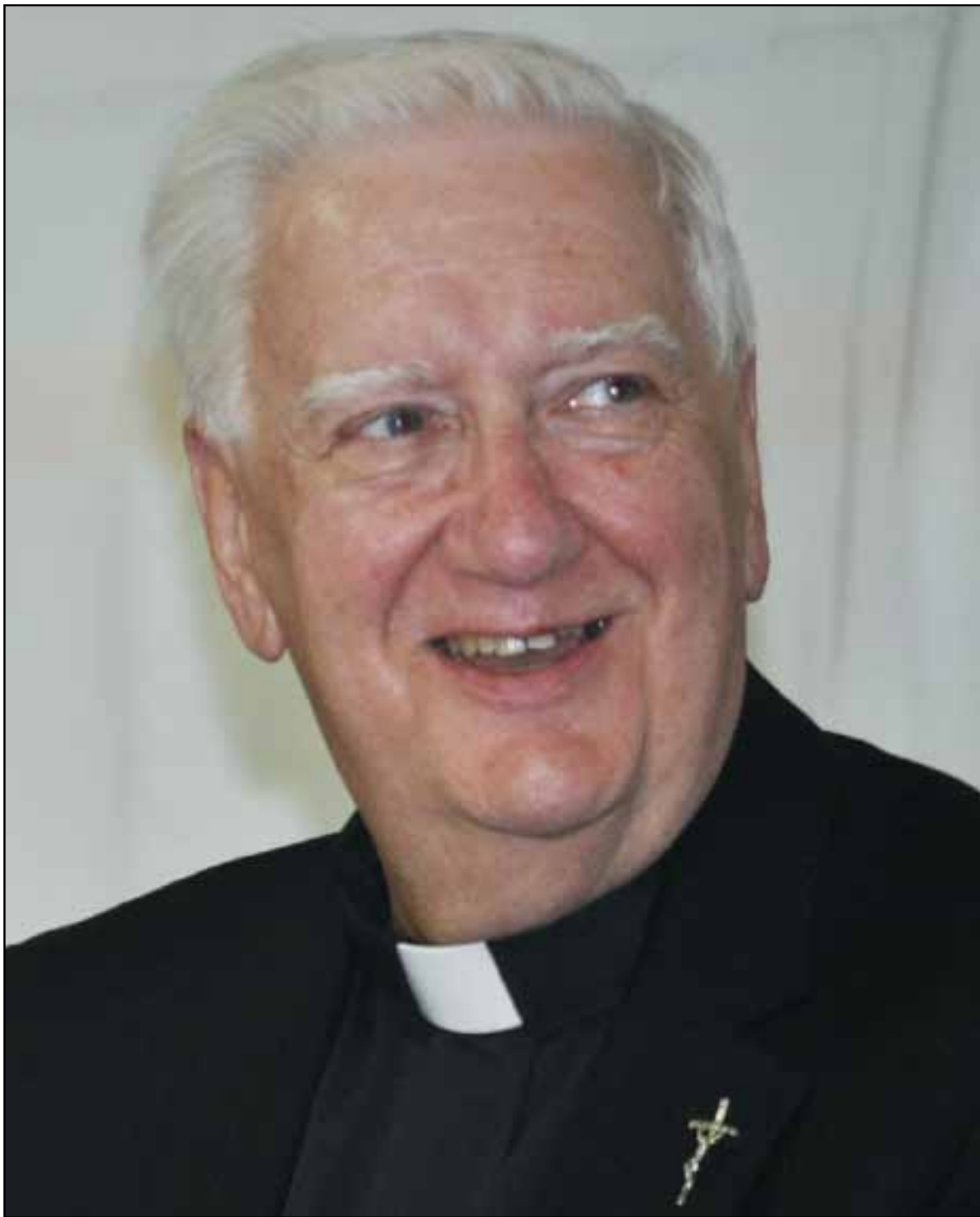


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Charges are withdrawn against Father Chabot

Retired Diocese of Pembroke Priest Father Howard Chabot was in court Tuesday morning when charges against him of historical sexual assault were withdrawn. The Arnprior native had been accused of molesting a young man in 1985 while he was serving as priest at Holy Name Parish in Pembroke.

Trial of Dr. Natsis resumes after a brief interruption

Ottawa -- The trial of Dr. Christy Natsis continued last week with the defence questioning the credibility of an Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) collision investigator and later voicing concerns about the lack of disclosure of the notes the officer took pertaining to the case.

After a few days in court, the case took a brief pause again on Thursday as the defence team went over "two dozen" references the officer had not disclosed to the defence previously. It followed a pattern in the now year-long trial of proceedings beginning and halting periodically.

Today, November 13, is the first-year anniversary of the date the trial began.

The Pembroke based dentist is on trial in Ottawa charged with impaired driving in the March 2011 accident which claimed the life of Bryan Casey on a busy stretch of Highway 17 near Arnprior. The trial, which commenced last November and has taken two long breaks, heard the evidence last Tuesday of a Ford engineer,

James Engle, who retrieved data from the power train control module of Dr. Natsis' Ford Expedition. The engineer was on the defensive as defence attorney Vince Clifford questioned him on the missing data in the module. The lawyer maintained the missing data made it impossible for the engineer to know at what point the crash occurred. The engineer testified he might have erased about 30 per cent of the data while downloading it, however he maintained the data of the actual crash impact was available.

Last Wednesday Defence Lawyer Michael Edelson questioned OPP Const. Jeff Hewitt about the lack of detail in some of his notes relating to the case. In one instance, he wrote only two lines about a 45-minute meeting on the case. The examination was part of a process to determine if the officer could be declared an expert witness. As an expert witness, he would be allowed to give his opinion on the case as well as testimony on evidence. The Crown maintains the officer can be called as an expert

witness in his role as a collision investigator.

However, the trial was put on hold last Thursday after it was revealed Const. Hewitt failed to disclose to the defence team two lines from his notes that indicated he had submitted calculations about the change in velocity of the two vehicles before the impact to fellow collision investigator Luc Poirier to review. The officer told the court he realized he had failed to disclose the material, which had been redacted from his notes, after he finished his testimony the previous day. Dr. Natsis' defence team then asked the Crown to examine the rest of the officer's notes. Mr. Edelson said there were another two dozen references to the case the defence team had not seen before. The defence team took the time to examine the new evidence before the trial could resume.

Lawyers say the case could take another two weeks to finish. The trial has taken more than twice as much time as originally anticipated. The trial resumed this week.

Charges withdrawn against Pembroke priest Tuesday

Gross indecency and sexual assault charges dropped after Crown finds no reasonable prospect of conviction

By Debbi Christinck
 Staff Writer

Pembroke -- The Crown has withdrawn the charges of gross indecency and sexual assault against retired Diocese of Pembroke priest Father Howard Chabot and the case will not proceed against him.

The charges were withdrawn on Tuesday morning during a scheduled court appearance by Father Chabot who was accused of molesting a young man in the 1980s. Crown Attorney Jason Nicol said the Crown decided to withdraw the charge because of the poor chance of obtaining a conviction.

"I determined there was no reasonable prospect of conviction," he said. "That is the threshold we use to determine whether a prosecution should proceed. It was my assessment we did not reach that threshold, so we chose not to proceed."

At the same time as the charges were withdrawn by the Crown, the publication ban was lifted on the name of the complainant. Mr. Nicol said the publication ban was lifted at the request of the complainant who has been identified as Gerald Sonier.

Usually, court imposed publication bans are always in place in sexual abuse trials to protect the identity of the alleged victims.

"It is unusual," Mr. Nicol said. "Most of the times the publication bans are to protect the identity of the complainant, but this was his very clear stated desire."

As far as this complainant is concerned the investigation by police against Father Chabot is not continuing, Mr. Nicol said.

"These things are never over, but in regards to this complainant that is the end," he said. "If further information comes forward in the future things are always open, but for now this is it."

There was only one complainant in this case. Father Chabot was charged in July with gross indecency and sexual assault. The police investigation began in British Columbia in March 2013 and was turned over to Ontario Provincial Police in June.

Father Chabot was a priest at Holy Name in Pembroke when the incident allegedly took place almost 30 years ago. The alleged victim, now identified as Mr. Sonier, came forward

about an incident which occurred in 1985.

Father Chabot was ordained in 1968 and retired in 2005 when he was serving at Our Lady of Lourdes in Pembroke because of health problems. Father Chabot also served in Westmeath, Lapasse, Braeside and Sheenboro. He also served as a youth probation officer and chaplain for both the Pembroke Police Service and the Pembroke Jail.

Father Chabot was the fourth priest in the Diocese of Pembroke to be charged with historical sexual assault. Renfrew native Father Dan Miller pled guilty in June to five charges of sexual assault relating to five victims. He is due in court later this month for his sentencing. Wilno native Bernard Prince was found guilty on 13 counts of sexual assault on young boys. Pembroke native Msgr. Robert Bourne was found guilty on two charges relating to one victim.

The *Leader* contacted the Diocese of Pembroke but no statement was made available prior to publication deadline. Attempts to reach Father Chabot were unsuccessful.

Etmanskie mill destroyed in early Monday morning blaze

Third generation Wilno-area sawmill destroyed

By Terry Fleurie
 Staff Writer

Wilno -- A fire of unknown origin destroyed a long established family business early Monday morning and left 14 full-time employees temporarily out of work.

The fire at Etmanskie Lumber on Opeongo Road south of Wilno, in Madawaska Valley Township, was first discovered by Rita Etmanskie, who lives across the road from the operation. Mrs. Etmanskie awakened at 2:45 a.m. and saw a reflection through her living room window. Peering out the window, she discovered the sawmill building was engulfed in flames.

Mrs. Etmanskie immediately called 911 and then contacted Don Jr. and Daryl Etmanskie, sons of mill owner Donnie Etmanskie who are employed at the mill.

The quick response of the fire departments resulted in a portion of the debarker being saved as well as the wood chips and sawdust bins.

"Everything else was completely destroyed," Don Etmanskie said. "The cause of the fire is unknown at this time."

"The sawmill was so badly burned, it's very difficult to tell where the fire started," he added.

The mill included a variety of different machinery including a circular head rig with a hydraulic log carriage and log turner, a combination bull-edger, a runaround band re-saw system, trimmers, the

boardway, a series of conveyor systems for removing the by-products and the three diesel engines that powered the mill. Mr. Etmanskie said approximately two full loads of lumber stored under the boardway and on the lumber carts as well as the logs on the incoming decks and the cants on the re-saw decks were also destroyed.

The company tried to do some updates each year to stay competitive, Mr. Etmanskie said.

"In 2005, we did a major upgrade with our runaround band re-saw system and self-tailer on our edgers," he noted. "Every year we did upgrades to stay efficient and competitive."

The company did both their own and custom sawing, Mr. Etmanskie said, adding they focused primarily on hardwood sawing the past few years.

MV Deputy-Chief Stuart Hecht said 15 firefighters responded from the Barry's Bay and Combermere stations with two pumpers, two tankers and the rescue van. The sawmill was fully engulfed when they arrived.

"There was a lot of fuel load in there," the deputy-chief noted. "There were two diesel tanks in the building as well as some hydraulic pumps and stuff with a lot of hydraulic tanks."

D/C Hecht said their plan of attack was to save the debarker at the north end of the sawmill and the shaving bin at the south end. Firefighters

were on scene for approximately nine hours. There were no injuries during the fire.

Sixty Years in Business

The company was established in 1953 by brothers Emeric and Josie Etmanskie. The original mill was destroyed by fire in October 1981. The current mill was built in 1982 and is owned by Donnie Etmanskie and operated with assistance from sons, Don and Daryl.

The mill employed 14 full-time staff and supports several other indirect jobs and other companies in the local area. The value of the loss was not known at press time.

"When it comes to a third-generation company, no amount of money can replace what has been lost for this family and our employees," Don Etmanskie noted. "Decisions about the next steps for Etmanskie Lumber are unknown at this time, as this is very emotional for all of us."

Mr. Etmanskie equated the loss to someone having a serious heart transplant.

"All of our equipment is still here, and our garage and our office, but the heart of this business is lost in more ways than one," he said. "One thing we do know is that this logging and sawmill industry is all we've ever known."

The Etmanskie family expressed their sincere gratitude to everyone who has extended offers of support and help in this time of tragedy and they offered a special thank you to the firefighters who responded.

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