

CATHOLIC PRIEST FALLS FROM GRACE

Pembroke Diocese vs Local Abuse Victim

by Barry Hendry

Father Henry Maloney was recognized by the Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church parishioners and most others in the Bancroft community as a caring and community minded person. He often stepped out of his role as a priest to advocate for his community in his 29 years in Bancroft.

He is credited with helping bring telephone service to the town. He and his brother James, then Ontario Minister of Mines, helped reopen the Faraday/Madawaska Mine after personally lobbying Prime Minister John Diefenbaker which secured a federal contract for uranium.

Father Maloney died in 1986, but his legacy lived on.

Unfortunately, for one 17-year old parishioner (in 1973) the above legacy belies Father Maloney's true nature.

For this young man the local priest was a sexual predator who ruined his life, changing it from one of exceptional success in music, academics, hockey, track and home life. It led him into a life of emotional distress, depression and suicidal ideation that tainted his relationships to the point of divorce, separation from his children, a checkered employment history and issues with his chosen church and with authority.

That man will be 60 years old this month and in May of this year he finally received some degree of jus-

tice after the settlement of his civil case against The Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of The Diocese of Pembroke in Ontario. He is now free to tell his story and it is his hope that others this same priest may have victimized will know they will be believed, that counselling can

help them and speaking up can bring closure, but not complete healing.

The preparation of his Statement of Claim (filed on July 3, 2012) took two years beginning with his second round of counselling and a lengthy and stressful deposition. The matter was ultimately resolved

in April of this year to the satisfaction of all parties with any financial component deemed confidential.

That statement of claim asked for \$1.5 million in compensation. Since Maloney had died the case centred on the diocese. The allegations against it included "vicarious liability" as the employer of the priest, with eight items as evidence of that allegation. It alleged the diocese was significantly negligent for not protecting the plaintiff, for failing to act on information of Maloney's treatment of the plaintiff after he informed a church official in 2005. There were a total of 18 items as evidence of the alleged negligence. It also alleged multiple instances of sexual abuse by the priest.

This is Mike Fitzgerald's story that came to the attention of The Bancroft Times this past July through his lawyer Robert Talach of Beckett Injury Lawyers of London, Ontario.

Fitzgerald was raised in a large Roman Catholic family in Hastings Highlands. He describes his childhood years on the family farm as "magical" but his life began to change at the age of 17.

Asked why he wanted to tell his story, he said, "I'll use an analogy. I have been carrying a refrigerator on my back for 43 years and telling you this story is like tossing that fridge in the dump.

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Father Henry Maloney