

Priest was loved by all, but doubt remains

By Peter Maser
Citizen staff writer

ANGERS, Que. If you close your eyes, you can almost see Father Roger Rinfret making his way down the snowy streets of this tiny village east of Gatineau.

Roger Rinfret, spiritual leader of hundreds, a friend to hundreds more; a man of faith, patience and charity; a trusting soul who would open his door to anyone in need.

Some will always remember him that way. They will talk about how he was stabbed to death in a Gatineau motel room in March, 1980.

But not for a moment will they accept the testimony of a man who told a Hull court last week that Rinfret was slain after asking him for a kiss.

For others, the memory of their parish priest will be no less consoling. But as one parishioner said Friday, there will always be a painful and nagging doubt.

One thing is certain. During his two years at Angers, Rinfret never aroused the slightest suspicion about the behavior alluded to in court.

Said Gilles Brazeau, owner of a main street grocery store: "We never

LOCAL

heard anything about it when he was alive. That's why no one believes it."

From Richard Demers, 22, came a similar assessment. "No one in this town was ever approached or we'd have known about it."

But another young man, who didn't want to be named, said it is understandable that Rinfret would have been smart enough to not raise suspicions in his parish, going out-of-town instead to pursue any sexual preferences

he might have had.

Another villager, who asked that her name not be used, explained that Rinfret worked as a youth counsellor and often shared a room with young adult men during weekend retreats.

"Nothing ever happened there," she said.

Still, the question lingers, and just how much it is talked about and how much it is believed are not easily determined.

Some villagers, like Arther Gratton, 64, said that he, like others, prefers to keep his thoughts to himself.

"Maybe if it wasn't a

priest, maybe if it had been someone else, then there'd be more talk.

"And on top of that, there is this problem that we may never have the answer to.

"I have to ask myself why this guy said what he did (in court) if it wasn't true. When the charge is first-degree murder, you haven't got a lot to lose."

A woman who sat through the last week's trial of Alain McMurtie, the 20-year-old Hull man who pleaded guilty to Rinfret's murder, said she was angered by the way the proceedings ended.

"They should have given

us more proof or not mentioned this kiss business at all. All we heard was what this man said. Maybe there was more. Maybe it isn't true. All we're left with now is this doubt.

"It may well be that the father knew these guys (his assailants) and wanted to help them. He was always helping people. Maybe that's why they were in the motel room with him."

The woman also said that many of Angers's 1,700 hundreds residents were upset by McMurtie's sentence.

Although he was con-

demned to life in prison Friday, he will be eligible for parole in 10 years.

Said the woman: "Ten years? That's not much for someone who killed an innocent person."

Michel Madore, the man who testified at McMurtie's trial and claimed that Rinfret asked him for a kiss, has also been charged with murder.

He is to appear in provincial court Feb. 6 for a preliminary hearing.

As for Angers, it must live with its doubt.

"Let me put it this way," said the woman.

"We may never know what happened, but the people in this village loved him and no one thinks he got the death he deserved."

Outaouais sewage plant closer to reality

By Christina Spencer
Citizen staff writer

Quebec Environment Minister Marcel Léger said Friday the province has agreed to pitch in another \$32.5 million to meet the ever-soaring costs of an Outaouais sewage treatment plant.

And, he added, West

won't be stuck with any more than the original sum their regional government agreed to pay - \$20 million.

The sewage plant, to be built in the Gatineau suburb of Templeton, is intended to process raw waste that now flows into the Ottawa River.

Although it was con-

ceived in 1971 as a three-way agreement between the regional government, the province and the federal government, inter-governmental bickering has resulted in numerous delays.

The project is now slated for completion at the end of 1981.

The delays caused the

original \$45-million price tag to soar to a total of \$168 million this year.

The federal and provincial governments have been squabbling about who should pay which part of the latest \$48 million increase.

"We did agree that the Outaouais Regional Com-

munity shouldn't have to branch of the environment ministry, Léger said the \$32.5 million Quebec will contribute is conditional on the federal government paying the rest of the increase - just under \$15 million.

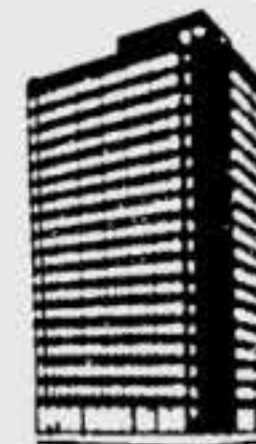
"They've already agreed to this in principle," he said. "We're just waiting to get something official

million, to \$73 million - 53 per cent of the total bill.

Léger said the province is still negotiating a cost-sharing arrangement with the federal government for \$12 million worth of improvements in the sewage network from Aylmer to Gatineau.

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