

# Judge could provide ex-priest with opportunity for rehabilitation

**PRIEST**, from Page 1A

bishop said. He worked at a west side Detroit factory while studying for his law degree at the University of Detroit. Vesnaugh became a lawyer and was known for providing free legal work to needy people.

But, according to court and police files, Vesnaugh's compulsion to sexually molest boys continued.

In 1977, Vesnaugh was arrested for sexually molesting two young boys in Oakland County. He was convicted and in 1979 given probation by an apparently reluctant former Circuit judge, William J. Beer, who told Vesnaugh: "I don't trust you."

"If he stays on the line and keeps his hands in his pocket and acts like a man should, he may then get probation," Beer said then. "But one slightest slip, and I repeat it again, the slightest slip of any kind, you're going to state prison."

Vesnaugh slipped — and violated his probation — in Hillsdale County in August 1980 when he was arrested for sexually molesting three young boys during a beach picnic, according to court records.

Vesnaugh was acquitted of the Hillsdale charges after a brilliant closing statement that he delivered himself.

"He was eloquent; I felt hamstrung in the case," said former Hillsdale assistant prosecutor David Dinkelman, now a magistrate in Second District Court in Hillsdale.

Dinkelman said there were some discrepancies between what the three boys earlier told police in taped interviews and what they testified to in court. Vesnaugh did not testify in the case, but managed to give his version of events during the closing argument, Dinkelman said.

"He quoted Lincoln and I think he alluded to God. It was nauseating but the jury believed it," Dinkelman said.

"This is the last person in the world who deserves another chance."

**VESNAUGH WAS CONVICTED** in Recorder's Court of molesting three other boys at the Patton Park swimming pool. In December 1981, he was sentenced to five to 15 years in state prison by Judge John Patrick O'Brien despite the appeals of priests and other friends of Vesnaugh that he be given psychiatric treatment, not a prison sentence.

According to state records, Vesnaugh attended some psychological therapy sessions at Southern Michigan Prison in Jackson while he was incarcerated there from December 1981 to July 1984. But his friends said the therapy was too limited to be effective.

"He was afraid when he got out that it was going to happen again. He was afraid of himself," said his friend and former seminary classmate, the Rev. Paul Chateau.

"He needs treatment, but I don't think you'd want him running about unsupervised," said Mr. Chateau of Our Lady of Fatima Parish. "For society to simply dump people into jail is first of all a waste of any human gift. . . . Some meaningful treatment could make it possible for a person like himself to make a meaningful contribution and be a productive citizen."

**LAW ENFORCEMENT** and church officials said getting Vesnaugh to admit he had a problem and was a pedophile — someone who is sexually attracted to children — often failed.

"We had confronted him with the fact that there had been some problem in the hospital," Bishop Schoenherr said. "We had pretty much the proof on it. He was either to get treatment or stop functioning" as a priest.

But, the bishop said, Vesnaugh "refused to admit it, even. It was very hard to pin him down."

But in the views of priests who are Vesnaugh's former seminary classmates, Vesnaugh never had much of a chance to get treatment.

"Gerry's a genuine, compassionate human being," said the Rev. Robert Blondell of St. Ephrem's Church in Sterling Heights. "It's just a shame there's this problem of pedophilia."

Mr. Blondell said he remembers taking Vesnaugh to a psychiatric unit of Mercywood Hospital near Ann Arbor in 1981 only to have prosecutors in Oakland County "take him out of the program and put him back in prison." Vesnaugh had been arrested for violation of his probation in the Oakland County case.

"IT'S LIKE SENDING an alcoholic to prison," said the Rev. John Nowlan of St. Rita's Parish in Detroit. "Locking him up doesn't do any good. It keeps them from doing the damage and it's important in this situation to protect the kids. But it doesn't really deal with the problem."

"The hope is that there is a treatment program in Windsor, Brentwood, and that the judge will send him there," Mr. Nowlan said.

According to court records, Vesnaugh often sought out children in pools or at beaches.

In Windsor, Vesnaugh pleaded guilty to sexually molesting two boys he met at a pool in the Windsor suburb of Belle River on Aug. 8. Vesnaugh, however, claimed he was Frank Quinn, a teacher from San Diego, Calif., when

police arrested him and he offered several pieces of identification as proof.

Ontario Provincial Police intelligence officer Gary Clark said police learned that Vesnaugh could not be Frank Quinn just before Vesnaugh would have been released on bond. Vesnaugh has been held without bond since then because he lied to the court.

It wasn't until Sept. 30, after pleading guilty to perjury and sexual assault charges that Vesnaugh told the court his real name, admitted he had a long history of molesting children and said he was wanted for violating parole in Michigan.

**"HE'S OBVIOUSLY** an ill man. He's like an alcoholic that needs treatment," said Vesnaugh's Windsor attorney, Patrick Ducharme, who is recommending a four-month sentence to be served at the Brentwood Recovery Home in Windsor for alcoholics and child abusers.

"It requires intensive treatment and psychotherapy in order to somehow interrupt that" compulsion to fondle young children, Ducharme said.

Ducharme said that Vesnaugh eventually would return to Michigan and "I'm sure you'd rather have back a Gerry Vesnaugh who has had some treatment than one who was locked up in prison without treatment."

In Canada, there are three basic levels of punishment: terms of up to 122 days to be served at local county jails, terms of between 122 days and two years to be served at Ontario reformatories, and terms of two years or longer to be served at federal penitentiaries.

**DUCHARME SAID** that in his 11 years as a defense counsel, he never has disagreed more with the prosecutor on punishment requests for convicted criminals than he does in the Vesnaugh case.

"Usually, we're in the same ballpark," Ducharme said. "He's asking well above penitentiary term. I'm asking for a local county jail term."

The prosecutor, Crown Counsel Da-

vid Foulds, is recommending that Judge Donald Ebbs sentence Vesnaugh to three to five years in a provincial penitentiary in Kingston, Ontario, which has a program for sex offenders. "I can fairly say it's my impression of the evidence that treatment hasn't been available to Vesnaugh" in the United States, Foulds said.

But the view of Ducharme and Vesnaugh's friends is "that if a guy goes to jail for a long time, he won't be helped," Foulds said. "I take exception to that. I believe our corrections system can help him."

**SHARON WILLIAMS**, a psychologist and director of the sex offender program at the Kingston Penitentiary,

will testify Monday about the program.

In an interview last week, Williams said the program's intensive group and one-to-one therapy given to inmates for four to five months has been 90 percent successful in treating pedophiles.

Williams said her treatment includes "aversive conditioning," a technique using videotapes that links a pedophile's fantasies about children with an unpleasant smell.

"According to our follow-up studies," Williams said, "we were more successful with pedophiles than sexual aggressors. I found that remarkable myself. My gut feeling was we were doing better with sexual aggressors." Sam Devin, senior counselor at

Brentwood, said the program uses recovering pedophiles as "alumni" counselors much the same way recovering alcoholics help counsel other alcoholics.

"It's an intensive, three-month program, 'ey. They go from seven in the morning until 11 at night with numerous lectures and personal counseling with a priest," Devin said.

"We don't have any magical cures; we don't know everything," Devin said. "We have about 15 to 20 pedophiles on average coming back, trying to help" others.

"If they continue the association, it will work. The compulsions will be there, but they will have some control over it."

## Michigan's Most Experienced HMO

Michigan HMO, the most experienced IPA Model HMO in the state, has been providing quality, cost-effective health care for over 10 years. Health care that includes complete hospital services, complete emergency services, complete physician services and more. No unexpected bills and no claim forms.

Michigan HMO...high performance health care designed to keep you performing at your best. We've got you covered.

### MICHIGAN HMO

#### High Performance Health Care

For more information please ask your employer or call 873-2800.



### Rare rhino herd found

**NEW YORK — (UPI)** — A herd of at least five shy, woolly rhinoceroses has been discovered in a remote valley on the Malaysian island of Borneo, Julian Caldecott, a British biologist announced Saturday.

The herd appears to be healthy and breeding, said Caldecott, 30, hiked for four days into the valley in August after hearing a rumor of the rhinos' existence from Malaysians.