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Abuse and cover-ups

Attorney general's church report details disturbing pattern

By SEAN MURPHY
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Democrat Staff Writers

CONCORD — The 154-page summary of the New Hampshire attorney general's 9,000-page collection of documents relating to sexual abuse by New Hampshire priests shows a disturbing pattern of abuse, misconduct, and in some cases blatant cover-ups by church officials.

In most cases, the church either ignored, mildly addressed, or otherwise failed to stop priests from engaging in repeated acts of molestation in locations throughout the Granite State.

The "Report on the Investigation of the Diocese of Manchester," noted the AG's office conducted "a thorough investigation of the diocese's handling of eight priests who were the subject of allegations of child sexual abuse." Paul Aube, Albert Boulanger, Gerald Chalifour, Robert Densmore, Roger Fortier, Raymond Leferriere, Leo Landry and Gordon MacRae. The report also listed more than 50 other priests as subjects of inquiry.

The release of the collection of documents is a condition of a settlement reached between the diocese and then-Attorney General Philip McLaughlin in December of last year. The settlement, which stopped McLaughlin from seeking a



AP photos
LEO LANDRY, ROBERT DENSMORE AND RAYMOND LAFERRIERE, from left, are three of eight New Hampshire priests named in an investigation by the state attorney general for allegations of child sexual abuse.

grand jury indictment against the diocese for endangering the welfare of a minor, also established an auditing system allowing authorities to monitor the diocese's compliance with mandatory reporting laws.

The attorney general's task force, consisting of more than 20 investigators, clerks, attorneys and other experts, still did not include enough resources, the summary indicated, to fully investigate all the allegations it had discovered.

"While resource shortages prevented the state



Jim Cole/AP photo

FORMER PRIEST GORDON MACRAE is escorted out of the Cheshire County Superior Courthouse in Keene after being convicted of molesting an altar boy in this Sept. 30, 1994, file photo. MacRae is one of eight priests cited in the attorney general's report on how the church handled reports of sexual abuse by the clergy.

from conducting similar investigations of the allegations raised against nearly 40 other priests affiliated with the diocese, it is confident, based on its

review of the investigative materials and grand jury documents, that the eight cases detailed below fairly portray the diocese's response over time."

The report said cases involving a number of the priests "could have formed the basis for criminal charges against the diocese for endangering the welfare of a child. The state determined it could not pursue criminal charges in the remaining cases, either because there was insufficient evidence to establish a criminal violation or the statute of limitations had expired."

Some of the priests actually admitted to abuses in exchange for immunity from prosecution. In other cases, the report's findings are backed by testimony from victims and victims' relatives, psychological evaluations, police reports, internal church documents, and other sources. The victims and their families are not named, rather the report gives each person a Roman numeral and the appellation "John Doe" or "Jane Doe."

Several people on the list have connections to the Lakes Region, including Robert Towner, a former priest who is now a real estate agent in Laconia, and Conrad LaForest, who lives in

☆ Abuse

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Winnisquam. In addition, former priest Leo Landry, after leaving the priesthood, worked as a teacher at two different schools in Rochester.

What follows are more detailed looks from the report on three of the eight priests named most prominently in the documents. Summaries on other priests will run in subsequent editions of Foster's Daily Democrat.

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Leo Landry's history of abuse began before he even came to New Hampshire as a priest. He graduated from St. John's High School in Concord in 1948, and got a football scholarship to New England College. He left school a year later, then joined seminary under the Stigmatine Fathers in Waltham, Mass.

Ordained in 1958, Landry worked at a parish in Massachusetts for a short time, but was transferred to a parish in Saint Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada in the summer of 1959. The report indicated he was transferred due to his "background in French."

He was removed from his first assignment in Canada. The report indicated Landry had a complaint issued against him by a 13- or 14-year-old boy.

In addition, Landry revealed, he had sexual contact with two boys in Agawam, Mass. two in South Porcupine, Ontario and

one boy in Virginia. In all cases, the victims were in their early- to mid-teens, and the contact largely involved Landry masturbating them.

The Provincial for the Stigmatine Fathers, a man the report refers to as "Father Egan," spoke to Landry on a few occasions about "rumors" and "allegations" and asked if they were true. At some point between 1960 and 1962, Egan sent Landry for counseling with a psychiatrist at Boston University, but Landry only went to a few sessions, and soon afterward returned to work without restriction or monitoring.

After being sent to West Springfield, Landry wrote to the Diocese of Manchester to ask to work in the Granite State. Landry told McLaughlin's task force that he was transferred to New Hampshire in 1965 without being asked about his background. He worked in Lincoln, Laconia, and in Somersworth at Holy Trinity Parish from 1966-67.

During that time, Landry confessed to being involved in masturbation activity with three different boys, again all in their early- to mid-teens. Then-Bishop Ernest J. Primeau, who hired Landry to work in New Hampshire, figured prominently in the descriptions of allegations against Landry regarding these boys. The report indicated Primeau did little or nothing to

remove, restrict, or monitor Landry.

The diocese did transfer Landry to Berlin in "the fall of 1969 or the summer of 1970," where he served for less than a year. During that time, testimony from Landry and at least three victims indicated various incidents of fondling and similar sexual contact, including several trips to a camping trailer near Camp Kieran in Jefferson.

In 1970, Landry's career as a practicing priest ended, when he took a leave of absence and did some teaching in Lebanon. He worked briefly with the Stigmatine Fathers again, and, at his request, was laicized — removed from the priesthood — in 1972.

Since then, Landry has taught at three schools: New Hampton School in New Hampton, Spaulding High School in Rochester from 1974-1994, and then at St. Elizabeth Seton School in Rochester. The summary did not indicate any complaints during his time at those schools.

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Paul Aube, 61, was ordained in 1970, and placed on administrative leave in 1994. During his 24-year career, he served in Claremont, Berlin, Nashua, Concord, and Manchester. He also worked at Holy Rosary Church in Rochester from 1976-1981.

Like other priests in the attorney general's report, Aube was reported to have psychological problems while evaluated in seminary. Evaluators warned that he would "crack under pressure," and that "his ideas are somewhat confused, his self-control not the best," but there was no concern stated about sexual misconduct.

The report indicates details of Aube assaulting four boys in Claremont, five or maybe more boys in Berlin, and one in Nashua, all before he was transferred to Rochester. The cases involved young men ranging in age from 12 to as old as 19 or 20, and included fondling, "mutual masturbation," and oral sex. On many occasions, Aube is reported to have bent back fingers or wrists of boys who refused to be molested until they gave in.

In Rochester, Aube confessed to being involved with seven different boys, including two brothers. In some cases, Aube's activities never went beyond hugging or kissing, but there were many accounts of fondling, lying in bed naked with his victims, masturbation, and oral sex.

One man reported that his teenage son "felt dirty" after visiting with Aube, and that his son later confessed Aube had oral sex with him. Another boy reported Aube held him down while Aube performed oral sex on him.

After allegations about Aube came to the diocese's attention in 1981, the diocese had Aube psychologically evaluated. The recommendation was that Aube be transferred to some sort of hospital ministry. The diocese transferred him to hospitals in Concord and Manchester for the remainder of his career.

Soon after starting work as Chaplain of Concord Hospital in October of 1981, however, the diocese received a letter from Catholic Charities of Portsmouth, mentioning "contact" between Aube and a 17-

he and another boy had traveled to see Aube, even after Aube had moved to Manchester or Concord, and visited with him. In many instances, the attorney general's report indicated, "inappropriate touching" took place. Several other boys, all former parishioners in Rochester, also said they visited with Aube, and were assaulted.

In many of these cases, not only did the diocese receive allegations of abuse, but the report mentions then-Bishop Odore Geodron even asked a Nashua Police Chief in 1975 to cover up documents about the night two police officers discovered Aube molesting a teenager in his car.

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Gordon MacRae joined the monastic Capuchin Order, "a religious order affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church" in 1972. Six years later, he left to become a priest. A psychological evaluation of him at the time revealed, among other things, "maladjustment."

Nevertheless, he was ordained in 1982 and worked in Hampton at Our Lady of Miraculous Medal parish. In the following year he was transferred to St. Bernard's parish in Keene.

The report spoke to allegations of sexual misconduct with more than five boys, grouping the information by victim.

One boy, age 13 when he met MacRae as an altar boy at a parish in Hampton, alleged ongoing sexual abuse from at least 1981-1982. The contact largely involved kissing, fondling, and what the victim said MacRae called the "spider game," in which MacRae pretended his hand was a spider and used it to "get" the unnamed victim's genitals.

The summary also mentions three boys who met MacRae in 1979, at Sacred Heart Parish in Marlborough, where he was

reports MacRae allowed other adult companions to participate.

Another boy reported meeting MacRae in 1985 in Keene when he was 15 years old, and nearly being molested as part of a "road map game" where MacRae started to unbutton his shirt and pants. The boy left before anything else happened.

MacRae used another game, which he called the "Robot Game," where he pretended his hand was like a robot when he fondled another 15-year-old boy in 1987. This happened on several occasions, along with one incident of oral sex, in the upstairs portion of the rectory at St. Bernard's in Keene.

MacRae took a leave of absence in 1987 to work as a drug and alcohol abuse rehabilitation counselor, but the abuse still did not end. A 17-year-old boy reported to New Hampshire State Police in 1988 that MacRae attempted to fondle him at Spofford Hall, a rehab facility in Chesterfield.

The boy refused to be interviewed by the police, but MacRae told the detectives at the time that the boy, after getting MacRae alone in an office, "grabbed MacRae from behind and then began to masturbate himself."

Two months later, a 14-year-old boy reported to police that MacRae had taken pictures of the boy masturbating for money, and proposed the boy become a homosexual male prostitute. MacRae later admitted soliciting sex, and pled guilty to a charge of endangering the welfare of a minor.

In all of these cases, the church did not, other than granting the leave of absence he requested, remove MacRae from active ministry, despite his abuses being reported to the state Department of Children, Youth and Families. There are indications, however, of some form of monitoring of MacRae's activities.

Outpatient Center Services	Seacoast Cancer Center
Rehabilitation	The Heart Care Center
Endoscopy	Sleep Disorders Center
Same Day Surgery	Pain Management Center
ER & Express Care	Diabetes Services
Birth Center	Wound Healing Institute

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Soon after starting work as Chaplain of Concord Hospital in October of 1981, however, the diocese received a letter from Catholic Charities of Portsmouth, mentioning "contact" between Aube and a 17-year-old Barrington boy, a former parishioner from Rochester.

Aube denied any sexual activity took place, but interviews with the victim indicated both

place. Several other boys, all former parishioners in Rochester, also said they visited with Aube, and were assaulted.

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The summary also mentions three boys who met MacRae in 1979, at Sacred Heart Parish in Marlborough, where he was assigned while still in seminary. All three boys reported abuse lasting until at least 1983 ranging from fondling to anal rape, often including alcohol in various incidents. There are also

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MacRae is currently serving out a 33½- to 67-year sentence after pleading guilty to "sexual assault or attempted sexual assault of three other boys." He was convicted in 1994.

Outpatient Center Services Seacoast Cancer Center
Rehabilitation The Heart Care Center
Endoscopy Sleep Disorders Center
Same Day Surgery Pain Management Center
ER & Express Care Diabetes Services
Birth Center Wound Healing Institute



Wentworth-Douglass
Hospital