

Judge rejects civil lawsuit against ex-Kearney teacher

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — State Supreme Court Judge Harold L. Galloway has dismissed a \$7 million civil lawsuit involving sexual abuse charges against Brother John Laurence Heathwood, CFC, who taught at Bishop Kearney High School from 1964 to 1974.

The Diocese of Rochester, Bishop Kearney High School and the Congregation of Christian Brothers of Ireland had also been named in the suit, filed July 1, 1993, by Nancy Maher and her husband, Martin. Nancy Maher is a former student at Bishop Kearney High School, 125 King's Hwy. S.

All charges against the diocese, the high school and the congregation were also dismissed in the decision issued Dec. 2.

In dismissing the suit, Judge Galloway ruled that the statute of limitations had run out on all but one alleged instance of abuse — an incident in which there was alleged inappropriate touching during a visit to Rochester by Brother Heathwood in July, 1992.

Nancy Maher claims the abuse began in 1965, continued through her four years at Bishop Kearney from 1966-70, and during periodic visits by Brother Heathwood to the Rochester area after he left the high school in 1974.

In her suit, Maher claimed she suf-

fered physical and psychological harm — including the inability to conceive children.

In his decision, however, Judge Galloway ruled that except for the alleged incident in 1992, "all occurred at times beyond the time periods specified in the applicable statutes of limitations; and plaintiffs have failed to sustain their burden of establishing any applicable exceptions which would extend or toll those statutes."

Further, Judge Galloway ruled that the "facts alleged as to the 1992 incident would not adequately establish causes of action." He left open the option for Maher and her attorneys to re-draft the complaint "based solely on the alleged 1992 incident," on charges of "battery (and possibly assault and intentional infliction of emotional distress if sufficient facts can be alleged)."

In dismissing the charges against the other defendants, Judge Galloway ruled that diocese had submitted evidence to show it "did not play any part in the operation of Bishop Kearney High School."

Elizabeth Brown, the diocese's director of constituent relations, said, "We're satisfied that the court accepted our motion to dismiss the charges against the diocese because we do not operate Bishop Kearney High School."

Brown added, however, "We are deeply concerned with these issues, and we hope solutions that are just for all concerned can be found."

Father Howard W. Geck, dead at 97

Father Howard W. Geck, pastor emeritus of St. Paul of the Cross Parish in Honeoye Falls and an instructor at the former St. Andrew's Seminary for 19 years, died on Tuesday, Nov. 30, 1993, at St. Ann's Home in Rochester. He was 97 years old.

A native of Rochester, Father Geck attended St. Peter and Paul School, St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries. He was ordained June 9, 1923, by Bishop John G. Murray at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Rochester.

Father Geck served as assistant pastor at St. Michael's Parish, Rochester, from 1923-28. He taught Latin, German and beginning Greek at St. Andrew's Seminary from 1929-48, and earned a master's degree in Latin from St. Bonaventure University in 1931. He also served as chaplain at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse from 1929-39.

In 1948, he was appointed pastor of St. Paul of the Cross Parish and St. Catherine Parish in Mendon.

Father Geck suffered throughout his life from a rare eye condition in which light caused severe headaches, noted his niece, Sister Mary Paul Geck, SSJ. The condition grew worse, forcing him to resign his pastorate on Sept. 14, 1962. Father Geck then took up residence in St. Ann's Home, where he remained until his death.

While residing at St. Ann's, Father Geck regularly provided weekend assistance at Rochester-area parishes and frequently substituted for St. Ann's chaplain during vacations and days off. Father Geck kept up with the latest theological developments by listening to books on audiotape, Sister Geck said.

In a recent letter to and phone conversation with the *Catholic Courier*, Father Raymond Heisel recounted a story Father Geck told in 1983 at the celebration marking the 60th anniversary of his ordination. Father Geck talked about the days when he was a

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student at St. Peter and Paul's School.

According to Father Heisel, St. Peter and Paul School had a tradition of having a shrine to Mary in each classroom during the month of May. Each day, one student was responsible for bringing flowers for the shrine.

When his day came, Father Geck said, he had no flowers to bring. But while walking on Madison Street he spotted a house with flowers in its garden. He went to the house and told the woman who lived there about his problem. She gave him a bouquet to take with him. That woman was Susan B. Anthony, the women's suffrage leader from Rochester.

In addition to Sister Geck, Father Geck is survived by several other nieces and nephews.

A Mass of Christ the High Priest was celebrated for Father Geck at St. Ann's Home on Dec. 2. Interment was in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Contributions in Father Geck's memory may be made to the Sisters of St. Joseph Mission Fund, 4095 East Avenue, Pittsford, 14618.

Sponsors sought by VOA program to help needy

ROCHESTER — Sponsors are needed this holiday season for the Adopt-A-Family Program, offered through Volunteers of America, 175 Ward St.

This program matches needy families in the area with individuals and groups. The sponsor provides groceries for a full Christmas dinner, as well as a holiday gift for each family member. The sponsor also meets the family upon delivering its groceries and gifts.

Those people interested in sponsoring a family should call 716/454-1150 by Dec. 10.

Presenting medallion



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

SBI's president sworn in

Bishop Matthew H. Clark (right) presented Dr. Patricia A. Schoelles, SSJ, (center) with a Presidential Medallion during the Dec. 1 ceremony inaugurating Sister Schoelles as the second president of St. Bernard's Institute, 1100 S. Goodman St., Rochester. Sister Rosemary St. Peter, SSJ, superior general of the Sisters of St. Joseph, looked on.

The inauguration featured addresses by Bishop Clark; Dr. G. Dennis O'Brien, president of the University of Rochester; and Sister Schoelles.

Bishop Clark said he was "excited about St. Bernard's and its future," specifically citing its role in the diocese's recently concluded

General Synod and its extension relationship with the Albany diocese.

Sister Schoelles in her speech called on St. Bernard's to "challenge those who are unwilling to help churches and societies move toward genuine inclusion and true multiculturalism."

The inauguration, which was held in the Strong Auditorium on the Divinity School's campus, drew academic and religious leaders throughout Rochester and the surrounding area.

Sister Schoelles succeeds Dr. Charles J. Meder, who served as SBI's interim president after the resignation of Father Sebastian A. Falcone last December.

Christmas items to help raise funds

ROCHESTER — Two local organizations are selling Christmas-related items for fundraising purposes.

Greeting cards are available through the American Cancer Society of Monroe County. To receive an informational brochure, or for other details, call 716/288-1950.

Ceramic and paper doves, created by students from School of the Holy Childhood, are currently on sale at the Strong Memorial Hospital gift shop as well as the Friends of Strong office located at the hospital. These holiday ornaments may also be purchased from booths at Eastview Mall in Victor, Irondequoit Mall, and Marketplace Mall in Henrietta from Dec. 2-5 and Dec. 9-12.

Proceeds will benefit Friends of Strong. Call 716/275-2420 for details.

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