

ORIGINS OF THE CASE

The Carnevale Claim

After an early morning Mass on June 15, 1983, Father Gordon MacRae packed his belongings into his small Chevy station wagon in Hampton, NH and drove 100 miles to his new parish assignment at St. Bernard Church on Main Street in Keene. Route 101 took him the entire distance across the state's southern tier. MacRae resigned from his previous assignment in Hampton. So did his pastor, Father Gerard Boucher. Both priests had been embroiled in a protracted high profile lawsuit against the Diocese of Manchester brought on by the Bishop's unprecedented firing of four nuns who taught for many years at the Hampton parish school. When the legal case was finally resolved in May of 1983, both Boucher and MacRae announced their decisions to leave.

Six months later, in December 1983, Father Gordon MacRae was summoned to the office of a Diocesan official and informed of an allegation of sexual misconduct against him from his former parish. It seemed that Lawrence Carnevale told a therapist working for the Church that he sat on the priest's lap months earlier, and claimed MacRae kissed him. The Diocesan official informed the priest that state law mandated reporting the claim to authorities. MacRae was admonished to remain silent about the claim and to allow the investigation to take its course. There had been not a single suspicion of improper behavior anywhere prior in the young priest's life. He openly admitted that 14-year-old Lawrence Carnevale, upon learning of MacRae's resignation from the Hampton parish, threw himself into the priest's lap and cried. The priest was told to say nothing further. He says today that he asked if he should consult legal counsel, and was told that it was probably not necessary. Gordon MacRae never learned of any outcome in the investigation, and was never interviewed.

Throughout the preceding months in 1983, MacRae says, Larry Carnevale would call him collect first weekly, and then almost daily. It was MacRae himself who referred the troubled teen to Ms. Judy Patterson, a caseworker and counselor at a local Catholic Social Services office in Salem. In September of 1983, Ms. Patterson called MacRae to discuss her treatment of Carnevale. MacRae told her of the frequent collect telephone calls, and Ms. Patterson allegedly asked the priest if Carnevale ever discussed homosexual impulses with him. She told the priest that Carnevale was obsessed with him, and advised him to cease accepting Carnevale's calls.

Documentation that surfaced years later would tell another tale. Ms. Susan Lajoie, a Hampton parish educator and youth minister, documented a 1983 encounter with Carnevale when MacRae stopped accepting his calls. Her statement revealed that "Larry said he had a hit list, and Father Gordon is number one on it." Ms. Patterson's treatment notes also revealed Carnevale's repeated requests to resume contact with MacRae. At one point she wrote that Carnevale's emotional reactions seemed far too extreme to be connected to such a relatively minor claim of abuse. Her notes reveal that she considered whether it might be best, in this case, for the claimant to be able to talk with or write to MacRae, but this never materialized. In the months to follow, Ms. Patterson's employment at Catholic Social Services came to an end for unknown reasons.

In 1985, after nearly two years with no contact with MacRae, Larry Carnevale enhanced his claim. He had been expelled from St. Thomas Aquinas High School after the principal, Mr. Jeff Quinn, caught Carnevale carrying a weapon, a knife, with which he threatened another student who, he claimed, was stalking him. His mother had also

filed a police report seeking a protective order claiming that a local teenage girl was harassing her son. After his expulsion from the school, Carnevale met with a new therapist to whom he made two new complaints. He claimed that a male teacher at St. Thomas High School made sexual advances to him and wrote him sexually suggestive letters, and he claimed that Father MacRae visited his home after his prior allegations and fondled him in what he described as "a spider game." The priest was informed by the Diocese of the newest Carnevale claim which he vehemently denied. He was told that a new DCYF investigation would follow, but the priest had no knowledge that the previous one ever ended. He was never told that the new investigation was closed *in* 1985 with a signed DCYF Protection Investigation Report Form indicating that the Carnevale claim was determined to be "unfounded" and closed. The file contained a reprimand from the Division Director to the social worker who re-opened the inflammatory investigation and pursued even after Carnevale's multiple claims had been revealed.

By the time claims against Gordon MacRae reached headlines and a criminal trial years later in 1994, much attention was given to a claim that the original Carnevale accusation was determined by officials to be a "founded" complaint. That is by no means certain *in* the written record. The DCYF file contained two conflicting reports, the 1985 report above, in which the determination was clearly checked as "unfounded", and another DCYF Protection Investigation Form which indicated the case was "Founded/Problem Resolved." That report gives the date on which the original Carnevale claim ended as being on January 30, 1984. The date the form was completed, however, was April 18, 1986, over two years later. The two conflicting reports bear the same signed name, "Jeanette Gagnon," however the two signatures are clearly not in the same handwriting and the name was spelled differently on the two forms. It seems that at some point in the second Carnevale investigation, someone realized there was no form documenting a finding in the original case, so one appears to have been created with a forged signature two years after the case closed. It was that form alone that declared the case to be "founded."

The first Carnevale claim was not the sole allegation reported by the Diocese to the state on November 23, 1983. There were two reports sent to the Office of the Attorney General with a single cover letter revealing that the cases of "Carnevale and Nichols" were attached and forwarded at the same time. The cases had no connection. The accused priest in the Nichols case was Father Mark Fleming who was investigated for allegations that he molested three brothers in a church rectory in Hudson, NH. The pastor of that parish, Father Stephen Scruton, was alleged to have walked in on and witnessed the abuse in progress, and then reported it to Diocesan officials who in turn reported it to the State. DCYF investigated both priests. Father Scruton remained in Hudson while Father Mark Fleming was removed from ministry and sent to a treatment center in Missouri. Fleming never returned to ministry. The case received no publicity and did not become public until 2003 when the Nichols brothers filed a lawsuit against the Diocese twenty years after first reporting the abuse. Only the Diocese, the family of the boys, and DCYF officials were aware of the case.

A decade later, elements of the two unrelated cases began to merge. In 1993, Carnevale, after reading news reports of the Grover brothers' accusations and lawsuits against MacRae, brought his own lawsuit against the Diocese in which he claimed that Father Gerard Boucher in Hampton walked in on and witnessed abuse by MacRae, discussed it with Carnevale, and urged him not to reveal it to anyone else. Father Boucher's 1994 statement revealed that not only was the newest claim entirely untrue, but that no one ever even asked Father Boucher if it was true.

Ultimately, Lawrence Carnevale's lawsuit against the Church was dismissed by the courts, but not before

Carnevale's wildly evolving claims inflicted grievous damage to Gordon MacRae's defense on the eve of trial in the Grover claims. Carnevale and his contingency lawyer held press conferences to dominate the trial-by-media that was to precede MacRae's day in court. What began with a claim of being kissed in 1983 had, by 1994, evolved into lurid headlines claiming that MacRae forced Carnevale to masturbate while holding the teen at gunpoint. Carnevale's newest therapist attributed the long, slow progression of Carnevale's accusations to a previously unheard of diagnosis: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Delay.

In 2002, the New Hampshire Union Leader newspaper, in a report on the claims against MacRae, printed the names of some of the accusers in various lawsuits including Lawrence Carnevale's name. Across the country in Las Vegas, Nevada, the article was spotted on-line by Matt McGrath who, as a youth growing up in Hampton, remembered Father Gordon MacRae and Lawrence Carnevale quite well. From Matt McGrath's 2002 statement:

"I spent a lot of time with Father Gordon in Hampton in 1982/3, including a lot of time alone, and he never did anything wrong. It was not until I read that Union Leader article that I learned that the person who accused him was Larry Carnevale. How could anyone have ever believed Larry Carnevale? I knew Larry very well back then. I even spent a night at his house once when we were in the eighth grade together. He was delusional and paranoid. He accused many people of the most bizarre things, but I never heard him accuse Father Gordon. If this case was brought on the word of Larry Carnevale, I no longer believe Father Gordon did anything. Larry Carnevale was certifiable."

Rev. Stephen Scruton

By 1988, the people of Keene had to steel themselves against more than one Catholic scandal. In 1985, Rev. Gabriel Houle was removed from the parish after his second D.U.I. offense. In June of that year, the Diocese assigned the Rev. Stephen Scruton to replace Father Houle as pastor in Keene. As described above, Father Scruton was investigated by the state, along with Father Mark Fleming, after the latter somehow evaded criminal charges for the sexual abuse of three young parishioners in Hudson in 1982 and 1983. On the heels of that investigation, Scruton was arrested and charged with lewd conduct and homosexual activity at a highway rest area. It was a high profile case that placed Scruton on administrative leave for a year or more, followed by his reassignment to Keene. There were other issues in Scruton's past. In 1979, while away from his parish in Littleton, NH, a young man looking for Scruton murdered a priest filling in for Scruton, and then killed himself. Scruton had also been arrested for lewd-conduct in Massachusetts.

Gordon MacRae had already been associate pastor for two years at St. Bernard Parish in Keene when Stephen Scruton arrived in 1985. MacRae heard the buzzing rumors among parishioners about Scruton's history. Less than two years after his arrival in Keene, Stephen Scruton was arrested again, this time for lewd conduct and homosexual activity in a stretch of woods near Keene in May of 1987. Scruton was removed from the parish, but not before being accused of embezzling \$20,000 in church funds. The Keene parish reeled from the local news accounts. After Scruton's departure, Father Gordon MacRae was appointed administrator of the parish, a role he held for several months before requesting a leave of absence from ministry as a priest, a request precipitated by his twice being hospitalized for a recurrence of epileptic seizures that had not occurred since MacRae's childhood. The priest was denied a request for sick leave by Bishop Odore Gendron who wanted to transfer MacRae to another parish.

The Plankey Claim

Keene, New Hampshire, with a population of some 22,000 and a police force of about 30 in 1988, has a full time sex crimes investigator in the person of Detective James McLaughlin. In a 2003 article ("Hot Pursuit", The Boston Sunday Globe Magazine, Nov. 23, 2003) Carlene Hempel wrote that McLaughlin "focuses specifically on men interested in boys," and is "a rogue, so blinded by his mission that he'll do whatever it takes to make his case." In 1999, McLaughlin was paid from a federal grant to investigate online predators until he was reprimanded by a federal judge for crossing the line by sending child pornography to a suspect. He defended the practice in a local newspaper: "It's our job to ferret the criminal element out of society."

It is difficult to ascertain from the public record exactly what precipitated Detective McLaughlin's pursuit of Father Gordon MacRae in 1988. It was not a known crime, or even a criminal complaint. No one had come to him with a story of abuse by the priest. There was a police report describing the point at which he set his sites on MacRae, but the broader public record raises many unanswered questions. There has been much media play about Father Gordon MacRae being a "serial offender" while little attention has been given to those among his accusers who are serial victims.

Among those most repelled by the revelations of Father Scruton's history in 1987 were the Plankey family. Mary Plankey was a parking enforcement officer for the Keene Police. Her husband and her son Jon's stepfather, Doug Plankey, was the local truant officer and a guard at the county jail, a position from which he was suspended in 1988 after allegations he used excessive force against prisoners. The Plankeys left the Catholic parish in Keene in the wake of the Scruton scandal to attend the Keene Congregational Church in 1987 where 14-year-old Jon Plankey joined the youth programs.

In June of 1988, Jon Plankey began a summer job at the Cheshire County Fairgrounds under the auspices of "Earn-It" a youth job corps program. Within a week, Plankey accused Richard Smith, a county employee, of plying him with gifts, soliciting him for sex, and molesting him. Smith would later accept a plea bargain in the case, and serve a brief prison sentence. The charges were brought by Detective McLaughlin.

Also in 1988, Jon Plankey struck up a relationship with Timothy Smith (no relation to Richard), a choir director at the Keene Congregational Church. Plankey spent overnights at Smith's home. Timothy Smith would later accept a plea bargain in charges of solicitation of a minor, child endangerment, and creation of child pornography. Among those who claimed to fend off Smith's sexual advances, and solicitations to pose for pornographic photo sessions, was Jon Plankey. Detective McLaughlin investigated and prosecuted the case. Plankey, while visiting an aunt in Florida, also accused a man there of soliciting him for sex.

Early in the fall of 1988, Det. McLaughlin began a police file on Father Gordon MacRae. His 1988 report reveals that MacRae became a suspect because Jon Plankey, who now worked for McLaughlin in a "family owned business," mentioned MacRae as someone he would go to if he needed a ride, or food, or was in trouble. McLaughlin's report claimed that MacRae would show up at the place of business with lunch for Plankey, a claim that MacRae says never happened. But to McLaughlin, it was probable cause. "This pointed to possible pedophilic activity on the part of MacRae," he wrote in his 1988 report. The detective quickly found further justification when DCYF revealed that MacRae had five years earlier been accused by Lawrence Carnevale. By page five of what was to be a seventy- eight page report, McLaughlin wrote of having developed information that MacRae had also been a priest in Florida where he was a suspect in the molestation, murder, and mutilation of two boys.

McLaughlin wrote early in his report that "Sylvia Gale who handles sensitive cases out of the Concord office of DCYF is also working the suspect." Sylvia Gale, who MacRae says he has never met, started - or at least escalated - the investigation with a letter to McLaughlin and the NH State Police. The bizarre letter, which MacRae did not see or even know about until six years later, was dated early September of 1988:

"I have information relative to your subject. Father Gordon MacRae left the Church and is now director of an outpatient drug abuse clinic in Keene. The Catholic Church transferred MacRae from Florida to Berlen (sic) NH in 1983 after he molested two boys in Florida, one of whom was murdered and his body mutilated. The case is supposed to be still unsolved. This information was told to me by a Catholic charities employee in the Seacoast region. She was told this by her supervisor, Father [John] Quinn who threatened to fire her if she divulged it further."

MacRae has never been a priest in Florida. He adds, today, that he has never even visited Florida, and has never molested, murdered or mutilated anyone. A simple phone call to the priest's diocese would have revealed that he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Manchester at age 29 in 1982, that he attended seminary and graduate school in Baltimore from 1978 to 1982, and college in New Hampshire from 1974 to 1978. He has never been assigned in any other jurisdiction, and has never been assigned in Berlin, NH.

Like the rest of this account, the Florida story was built on rumor and innuendo, and acted upon without evidence or even an attempt at corroboration. When the letter and McLaughlin's 1988 report surfaced in 1994, MacRae struck a roadblock at every attempt to learn the source of the information. Reverend John Quinn, a Diocesan official and (then) director of Catholic Charities of New Hampshire, denied that he was the source of this information, but acknowledged that it could not have been true. His responses, however, were limited to one-word answers without explanations.

Sylvia Gale also declined comment later, and refused to respond to inquiries. The Catholic Social Services "employee from the Seacoast region" appeared, strangely, to have been Judy Patterson, Lawrence Carnevale's therapist and the person who reported the Carnevale claim to the state. She, too, refused to be interviewed or respond to questions, but she also never denied being the source of the Florida claim.

In a 1994 report of an interview with Ms. Patterson, Detective McLaughlin wrote that she retracted her earlier information that MacRae had "multiple victims." She explained, eleven years after first making the claim, that the information was made up by Lawrence Carnevale and based on nothing more than his own premonition. However she also claimed, without further explanation, that "there was quit (sic) the cover-up in the Diocese." The report gives the impression that McLaughlin did not ask her to explain the "cover-up," and there is no indication that he asked her about being the source of the Florida claim.

The claim that MacRae had murdered and mutilated children in Florida was presented as established fact in McLaughlin's 1988 report. He wrote that he "developed" this information through his investigation in September of 1988. Armed with this disturbing claim, McLaughlin interviewed dozens of people in Keene about MacRae's interactions with their sons. According to his own report, it was not until six weeks later, on October 28, 1988, that he sought corroboration of the Florida claims by sending teletypes to state agencies in Florida about MacRae. McLaughlin then began to stake out MacRae's Keene apartment.

The above all developed by page twelve of what was to become an investigative report of some seventy-five pages in 1988. For the next fifty pages in the report, McLaughlin documented his approaches to twenty-six Keene area teenagers and their families who had associations with MacRae. In some cases he spent several pages detailing his suspicions that the young men were lying in their denials that MacRae had ever abused them. Others were badgered relentlessly, but did not accuse MacRae. In some cases McLaughlin opined that MacRae must have provided them with drugs so they were now protecting their source. In other cases he spoke of having information from unnamed "subjects" who claimed they knew of specific victims of MacRae, but when interviewed the named "victims" denied they ever even met MacRae. At one point, McLaughlin reported recruiting Paul Montgomery, a Keene Sentinel reporter, "to assist in this investigation as a private citizen."

Among those to whom McLaughlin brought his suspicions, and his disturbing Florida claims, was Mary Plankey, a Keene police employee and the mother of Jon Plankey, McLaughlin's employee in "a family business." He also collaborated repeatedly with Patricia Grover, a social worker for the Keene DCYF office whose sons' accusations would take another six years to evolve. Both women assured McLaughlin they would begin talking with their sons. Typical of the small town gossip that drove this case, Mary Plankey also told McLaughlin of a circulating rumor that Patricia Grover and MacRae once had marriage plans.

Patricia Grover had already been contacted by Sylvia Gale through the DCYF state network. Mrs. Grover and McLaughlin then elicited a single claim from 23-year-old David Grover. The claim was that David spent an overnight with MacRae in the Keene rectory at age 12, and received a massage from MacRae that made him "uncomfortable." The claim was not even chronologically possible. MacRae did not meet David Grover until he was 14, and had never been inside the Keene rectory until David was nearly 18 in June of 1983 just weeks before David joined the U.S. Army. Later in an interview with MacRae, McLaughlin claimed that the story of the 12-year-old who spent the night in the Keene rectory was told with a request for anonymity. McLaughlin refused to tell MacRae who had made this claim. It was not until MacRae read the 1988 report six years later that he discovered the story came from David Grover and could demonstrate its chronological impossibility. There were no other claims from the Grover family until several of them changed their minds five years later (See "*Case History Part II: The Trial*").

David Grover had reason to be disgruntled with MacRae. In 1987, the 22-year-old called MacRae from Colorado Springs where he settled after wrapping up three years in the U.S. Army. David became involved with a woman in Colorado Springs who conned him. He was stranded, homeless, and threatened by loan sharks. Grover was very motivated to leave Colorado Springs in a hurry, but his only options were to move in with his mother, who still had four children in her three bedroom home, or his father who had several years earlier left the family for another woman. David asked MacRae to stay with him for two weeks promising to find work and a place to live quickly.

The two weeks became a month during which time the 22-year-old failed to find work, or even look for work. The deciding factor in MacRae's decision to ask David to leave was damage done to a neighbor's car when David was driving under the influence after a party. After one month, David was ordered to vacate, and moved in with his father. MacRae's next contact with David was a year later when David related his impossible account to McLaughlin and, presumably, to his mother.

The Misdemeanor Plea

As the 1988 investigation continued, Detective McLaughlin collaborated repeatedly with his fellow Keene Police employee Mary Plankey. At one point he asked her to surreptitiously try to discover from MacRae "which diocese the subject served in in Florida." He reported later that Mary Plankey "did not sleep at all" after learning this disturbing information about the murderous priest in her midst.

Ultimately, Jon Plankey required little prodding - though prodded he was - to add the priest to his growing list of men who had seduced, solicited, or molested him. The narrative of McLaughlin's finally eliciting an actual complaint from Plankey would be comical if it did not also do grievous harm to an innocent man. The Detective called his now 15-year-old employee for a meeting. His report of this meeting is worth repeating:

"Jon Plankey came for his interview and was very nervous and apprehensive. Doug Plankey had told Jon that they were going to the police station and that he should just tell the truth. I introduced the subject by using the incident in which Richard Smith from Swanzey was arrested and later convicted of child abuse. I asked Jon to recall how nice the man was and what a surprise it was to learn what he was truly all about. I then told Jon that I wanted to speak with him about another person in his life who may also be different then (sic) what he appears. I then mentioned the name of Gordon MacRae. I then explained to Jon that I knew a lot about Gordon. I then told Jon that I suspected that Gordon has made him uncomfortable in the past and I wanted to discuss those incidents."

The most suspect aspect of the chronology of the Plankey case was that the allegedly solicitous conversation with Plankey - the conversation for which MacRae was charged in November, 1988 - was claimed to have taken place on October 20th, weeks after McLaughlin began questioning the Plankeys about this case. MacRae says today that there were actually two conversations, one initiated by Mary Plankey and the other by her son who repeatedly asked MacRae for money with statements that he "would do anything for it." MacRae says he refused on both occasions. It was only years later that MacRae realized that these conversations occurred long after McLaughlin began engaging the Plankeys about his suspicions regarding the priest.

At one point in his interview with Plankey, McLaughlin raised the subject of child pornography, a claim Plankey would

soon make - first against Timothy Smith, and then against Gordon MacRae. McLaughlin wrote, "I asked Jon about MacRae owning cameras or video equipment. No camera is known as owned by the suspect." Months later, Jon Plankey would change his mind about that as well.

Regardless of how the solicitation claim came into being, once it was made, the original probable cause for the investigation quickly disappeared. It was not until the end of October, 1988 that McLaughlin wrote of a telephone call from a "Sgt. Smith" in Florida who reported that the murder and mutilation claim rang no bells, but he indeed had arrested a priest in Florida for "molesting little boys." McLaughlin added in his report that the priest was indeed moved by the Church from Florida to New Hampshire, "but the name of the suspects doesn't match and MacRae's date of birth makes him too young to be the Florida suspect." McLaughlin's report gives the impression that he never even thought to ask "Sgt. Smith" - if he indeed exists - for the name of the priest who was the real suspect. Church officials in New Hampshire have denied that a priest had relocated from Florida under any such circumstances.

At some point in the late summer/early fall of 1988, Father MacRae consulted legal counsel. He knew nothing of the investigation conducted by McLaughlin, and had no reason to suspect that he could be the subject of an investigation. MacRae contacted a Keene lawyer to ask about his legal obligations in reporting to authorities Jon Plankey's claim that he had been molested by a county employee, and a subsequent claim by Plankey that he had been repeatedly beaten by his stepfather. In October, he called the lawyer a second time. MacRae had received telephone calls from two Keene teenagers and a parent who told him of McLaughlin's questions about their knowledge of MacRae.

What finally culminated in the priest's acceptance of a plea agreement in the Plankey case is described today in terms of psychological coercion. There was much going on parallel to McLaughlin's investigation of MacRae. During the summer and fall of 1988, MacRae was hospitalized twice in Keene for a recurrence of epileptic seizures that had been dormant since the age of 13. In July of 1988, MacRae was hospitalized for days following an early morning highway collision with an abandoned car that was precipitated by an epileptic seizure. Over the next eight weeks, MacRae's seizures were out of control. A year later, he was diagnosed at a New Mexico clinic with bilateral temporal lobe epilepsy, complex-partial seizures, and minimal right brain damage caused by untreated epilepsy. The seizure history and electro-encephalographic evidence is well documented in his medical file.

MacRae says today that he was already at a point of deep depression over his recurrence of seizures when summoned to McLaughlin's office on November 14, 1988. MacRae had been out of ministry with no contact from his Diocese for 18 months, was living alone, and was about to surrender his drivers' license due to the fact that his seizures had caused an accident. This would have also resulted in the loss of his employment, health insurance, and a means to support himself.

Before leaving for McLaughlin's office, MacRae called Attorney Donohue, and was told the lawyer was away for two weeks' vacation. What has become a familiar story in the study of false confessions and coerced pleas would find a textbook example in what took place at McLaughlin's office that evening. The meeting began with McLaughlin and another officer asking MacRae if he objected to recording the interview. MacRae agreed. Rights were read, and McLaughlin asked MacRae if he had legal counsel. MacRae explained that he has talked with counsel who currently is away on vacation. The meeting proceeded anyway. After an hour, the tape was shut

off by McLaughlin at MacRae's request. McLaughlin brought up the claim of a young man who told MacRae that his female probation officer had made sexual advances toward him. McLaughlin asked her name, and MacRae asked McLaughlin to turn off the recording for a moment.

The detective forgot to turn the recorder back on. What McLaughlin later claimed was a 45 minute meeting after the recorder was shut off is actually documented in his report as lasting two and a half hours. During that time, MacRae says, Detective McLaughlin told him repeatedly that this case would be a media event, that he did not see how MacRae could possibly put his family, the Catholic Church, the many people who counted on him, through such a public scandal if he, McLaughlin, sought an indictment. "You know what the media will do. Look at what they did to Father Scruton." The detective assured the priest that his only concern was to bring closure without publicity. He had a deal all worked out. He would hold a hearing during the Friday lunch hour when no one else was around. MacRae could plead to a simple misdemeanor and receive a year's probation. "No one will ever believe you're innocent. You're tainted already by Larry Carnevale", who McLaughlin described as "delusional." He told MacRae that he would spend years in prison if convicted. McLaughlin gave every indication that Jon Plankey had come forward entirely on his own with a complaint against the priest and is "just devastated - shattered" by whatever it was MacRae had said to him.

After two and a half hours of this off-tape, MacRae gave in without really even knowing exactly what he was confessing to.

The next day, MacRae called McLaughlin to try to revoke the "deal." He said he would like to talk with legal counsel first. He says that McLaughlin told him everything is in place, and "a lawyer now will just muddy the waters and send this up to superior court." On November 17, 1988, the priest stood alone in Keene District Court to plead guilty to endangering a minor without ever talking to legal counsel. McLaughlin personally invited the statewide media to cover the event, and issued a press release that day. The press release assured the public, "Though no sexual acts were committed by MacRae, there are often varied levels of victimization." Indeed.

Ten months later, in September 1989, Jon Plankey, with McLaughlin's help, brought a new claim that MacRae had also produced pornographic photographs of him. No photographs were ever found by McLaughlin, nor were they ever looked for. This new claim was brought in a report by McLaughlin with no reference to Plankey's earlier information documented by McLaughlin: "no camera is known as owned by the suspect." The new claim became the basis of Plankey's lawsuit against the Diocese of Manchester which was settled by the Diocese for an undisclosed sum. MacRae has never been able to learn the amount of this settlement.

In 1994, Reverend Francis Christian of the Diocese of Manchester produced documentation stating that Mary Plankey contacted the Diocese demanding settlement money in September of 1988, a month before the conversation between MacRae and her son took place. According to his notes, Mrs. Plankey suggested that an investigation was under way regarding her son, and a nasty lawsuit could be averted with a quiet settlement. In 2008, Jon Plankey refused to answer inquiries regarding his claims.

Addendum

In 1988, Detective James McLaughlin and Sylvia Gale both served on the New Hampshire Attorney General's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. McLaughlin represented law enforcement in the development of written protocols for investigating and prosecuting cases of child sexual abuse. McLaughlin's own 1988 protocol pointed to the "absolute necessity" of creating and preserving both audiotapes and videotapes of all interviews with claimed victims of sexual abuse, and with suspects.

In 1990, Detective McLaughlin created a series of police reports detailing charges against Father Stephen Scruton. He meticulously created both audio and video recordings of every interview with the complainant in that case, logged them and preserved them as evidence, and created transcripts of those recordings. He also administered and preserved a polygraph examination of the complainant.

In 1994, Detective McLaughlin wrote an article for "Knight Stick Magazine" entitled "Law Enforcement Questioning of Suspected Child Molesters." In that article, he wrote of the necessity of creating and preserving recorded interviews of both victims and suspects. He dismissed as "inexcusable" any investigation that omitted recorded interviews.

Between 1988 and 1994, Detective McLaughlin conducted two separate investigations of Father Gordon MacRae regarding claims made by Jon Plankey, Lawrence Carnevale, and John, Thomas, and David Grover. Contrary to his own writings, protocols and past practice, Detective McLaughlin did not create and preserve as evidence a single audio or video recording of any interviews with the complainants against Father MacRae.

When Father Gordon MacRae faced trial in 1994, Detective McLaughlin's police reports made references to three separate audio recordings of interviews with MacRae. The first was his recording of the first hour of a three and a half hour interview with MacRae on November 14, 1988. The other two were subsequent recordings of telephone conversations with MacRae that McLaughlin claimed in reports to have made without the priest's knowledge. In his various reports, Detective McLaughlin made several claims about the content of these tapes, and attributed statements to Father MacRae.

Before and during Father Gordon MacRae's 1994 trial, Detective McLaughlin testified under oath in 1994 that none of the above recordings could be produced to MacRae's defense, despite court orders to do so, because they were "recycled for other investigations" and taped completely over. McLaughlin also stated that transcripts he claimed to have made of these tapes were in fact not made due to a clerical error. In his entire investigation of Father Gordon MacRae over a six-year period between 1988 and 1994, not a single recording of any interview has been heard by anyone except Detective McLaughlin.