

### PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

**NAME:** Brother Thomas Thing                      **AGE:** 33

**DATE:** May 24, 1993

**REFERRED BY:**

Provincial Minister  
1500 - 34th Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94601-3091

**REASON FOR REFERRAL:** Evaluation of an allegation of past sexual misconduct reported to have occurred in approximately 1981-1982.

**BACKGROUND:** In 1993, the Franciscan Province of Santa Barbara established an Independent Board of Inquiry to investigate possible past sexual misconduct at St. Anthony's Seminary (S.A.S.) from 1964 until its closure in 1987. In response to this investigation, a                      came forward and identified Thomas Thing as a friar who had engaged in behavior with him in the early 1980's on one occasion which he now understands to have been sexually inappropriate.

**ACTUAL ALLEGATIONS:** In this case, I spoke on the phone with the alleged victim,                      who is now in his late 20's. I also read a copy of the letter he sent to the Board of Inquiry. Both over the phone and in the letter                      states that he was on a camping trip with his parents and two other families. Brother Tom Thing was with them. The evening of the incident, everyone was sitting around a campfire singing and telling stories. As night fell, most of the adults retired to campers or tents but several members of the camping trip opted to sleep outside in sleeping bags on a ground cover. Sometime during the night, on the first night (Friday) of the camping trip, reports being awakened by someone's hand rubbing his back.                      recalled that it was a warm night so he was sleeping without a shirt and his sleeping bag was unzipped. When he noticed that the person who was rubbing his back was Tom Thing, he didn't move for a while, thinking Tom would stop because of the lack of response on his part. Instead, according to Tom did not stop but continued rubbing down his back until he put his hand underneath                      undershorts and began to "knead my buttocks". At this point,                      reports that his discomfort

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reached its highest level so he rolled over the person next to him and wedged himself between two other people in sleeping bags.

Both in his letter, and in his self-presentation over the phone, sounded very credible and consistent in his story. It is not his desire to punish Tom in any way, but to make sure that this sort of behavior was neither indicative of a pattern on Tom's part, nor that it was happening to anyone else. further reported that he considered Tom a friend and felt badly that this event caused discomfort in their relationship. He never mentioned anything about the incident to Tom after it happened. was adamant, on the phone, that Tom's hand did extend underneath his undershorts and that he understands the action to be sexual in nature although at the time, he simply felt very uncomfortable with and confused about it.

**BEHAVIOR AND IMPRESSIONS:** Tom Thing was on time for his session at TARA and was pleasant, friendly, and engaging in his initial self-presentation. He is 33 years old, 5'5" and weighs 175 lbs. He has a somewhat stocky and boyish appearance. Although Tom appeared to exhibit some normal nervousness during our initial session, and throughout the process, he appeared to be doing the best he could to cooperate. Tom maintained good eye contact, a casual demeanor, and was oriented in his thought processes. I did not notice any unusual mannerisms or behaviors. His facial expressions seemed congruent with the issues being discussed. Tom came across as a likeable, sincere, although somewhat apprehensive young man (normal under the circumstances).

**CLIENT'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS:** Tom clearly denies any intentional sexual content in the event as it is described by . In Tom's words, "I don't see it as a sexual accusation or as necessarily deviant. I don't think what I did was that bad or wrong". Tom does remember the camping trip which took place on a weekend in 1981-82. According to his recollection, the three families, including himself, were sitting around a campfire singing songs and telling stories. The camping trip took place in the La Cumbre Mountains near Santa Barbara. There were approximately fifteen people altogether in the party, including three sets of parents. Tom was invited to go on the trip by one of the families (either the or the Smiths). Tom further reports that another friar (Robert Manhandle) was invited to go, too, but didn't show up. (This contradicts information from . who stated with certainty that Robert Manhandle was present throughout the weekend on the trip.)

Regarding the alleged incident, Tom reports that about 9:00 or 9:30, while everyone was sitting around the campfire, he recalls reaching over and rubbing back in a circular fashion up around his shoulders for a brief period of time. When asked

further about his memory of the event, Tom reported that he didn't actually remember doing this but "I guess I did because he said I did". He thinks that they were laying down on some blankets or a sleeping bag and that he probably just reached up and rubbed back as a friendly gesture. At the time Tom was 22 or 23 and would have been about 16 or 17 and a sophomore in the high school program at St. Anthony's Seminary. Tom was in the college program. Both young men knew each other and sang in the choir together at St. Anthony's Seminary. Regarding the incident, Tom doesn't believe that he "kneaded buttocks" but only remembers rubbing his back. Tom doesn't think that he had any sexual feelings during this backrub. He regarded it as a form of affection, adding that the family was pretty affectionate as was his own family. He further added that he (Tom) is an affectionate person and in his own family his parents on occasion rubbed the backs of their children before they went to bed at night.

FAMILY BACKGROUND: Tom reported coming from a generally happy and healthy family background. He is the fifth of his parents' eight children. He has six brothers and one sister. Both of his parents are retired, in their mid-sixties, and generally in good health. There was nothing in Tom's self-reported background that would suggest childhood trauma or problems in growing up that would be related to the development of unhealthy psychosexual behavior in an adult. In some ways, Tom's self-description of his family of origin was overly positive. His only criticism of his childhood is that he would have found more attention from his parents helpful at times. However, since the children were numerous and quite close together, Tom believes that his parents did the best they could in showing love and affection to their children.

Tom described his father as very supportive and hard working and indicates that, although both he and his father are somewhat shy or reserved, they got along well during Tom's childhood. He described his mother as very supportive, outgoing, and loving. He indicated that she is the type of person whom others enjoy being with. Tom does not indicate any problems in any of his adult siblings' lives.

mentioned, in passing, during our phone conversation, that Tom had a younger brother who was also in the high school seminary for a time at S.A.S. and "left abruptly" as did other seminarians on occasion. Tom did not refer to this during our discussion of his family background.)

PSYCHOSEXUAL HISTORY: Tom described a generally uneventful and normal psychosexual developmental history. He reported that he and his brothers found a Playboy Magazine when he was somewhere between 10 and 12 years of age and took it to the bedroom, shut

the door and looked at it. He described both enjoying it and "being grossed out" by the magazine. His mother came into the room because the door was closed, took the magazine away, and said in a raised voice, "I don't want you boys looking at this kind of stuff". Tom said that she did not spank them or scold them further.

Tom recalled having his first "girlfriend", who was the granddaughter of a neighbor, when he was about 8 - 10 years of age. He remembered kissing her while they were sitting in his father's truck one summer. His younger brother was in the backseat while they played "the kissing game". Around this same time, Tom and a boy next door, who was the same age and a good friend, "checked each other out" by touching each other's genitals and getting erections.

Tom reported "falling in love with Laura" in the seventh and eighth grades. She was taller and developed at that point and Tom remembered going to school dances with her and calling her on the phone. They also held hands and "maybe kissed on the side of the cheek".

Somewhere between 9 and 11 years of age, Tom played nurse and doctor in a tent in the backyard with four or five other boys and girls in the neighborhood. This behavior involved primarily noticing and touching.

Tom stated that he obtained information about sexual intercourse in a canyon near their house where he and his friends and brothers played. He was somewhere between 9 and 11 years of age. An older boy, who was a friend of his brother's, explained "what moms and dads have to do to get babies". Tom thought, "oh, no, not my parents, that's gross".

Tom also reported sleep-overs with classmates (other boys) who shared minimal sexual ignorance with each other through jokes and conversation.

In terms of formal sex education, Tom stated that "there was not much of it". Following the Playboy incident, he remembers both parents talking to he and his brothers about the differences between boys and girls. He recalled the information that the parents shared with their sons as being quite minimal.

Tom went to the seminary at age 14 and completed his high school at St. Anthony's Seminary at the age of 18. During the summers, he "hung out with the guys" but did attend a few dances in which he danced with girls. In terms of sexual orientation, Tom seems uncertain. He reports both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. He has fallen in love with women and is still attracted to women, but does not ever recall falling in love with a guy, although he states he would be open to it.

Tom's sexual experience, according to his description, has primarily been oral. He reports having had oral sex approximately five times with two different men and oral sex about five times with two different women. The first was a woman he dated steadily for a year and a half who was two years older than he was. This occurred when Tom was in the college seminary. The second sexual experience involving a woman occurred a year after novitiate in Las Vegas. It involved a teacher who was married and having problems with her husband. She and Tom had oral sex on one occasion and engaged on another occasion in heavy petting. Their relationship ended when both of them moved out of the area.

Tom denies having ever experienced anal sex, sexual intercourse with a woman, anonymous sex, or sex involving animals. He denies any sexual activities with minors.

Tom seemed confused about questions regarding sexual images and fantasies, initially reporting that he didn't believe he had any. Upon further discussion, however, Tom acknowledged images involving both males and females which were sexual in nature. He estimates that about 70% of his fantasies would involve females and about 30% would involve males.

During Tom's freshman year in college he was involved sexually, approximate four times, with another seminarian who was a junior. Their involvement consisted of caressing, genital touching and mutual erections. A second relationship, when Tom was a junior in college, involved two different men who were about his same age or a little bit younger. Tom described this sexual contact as exploring and touching. He denied any recall of ejaculation during these experiences, although this would have been unusual given their ages and the activities involved. Tom indicated that both of these men were friends with whom he had established relationships.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT:

##### Tests Administered:

The Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory/II (Millon)  
 The Multiphasic Personality Inventory/II (MMPI-II)  
 The Multimodal Life History Inventory  
 The Multiphasic Sex Inventory (MSI)

\* Tom refused to take the polygraph. Initially when first approached him to undergo a full psychosexual assessment and explained the tests that would be used, Tom agreed to involve himself in the entire process. However, in the meantime, before coming to Seattle, Tom discussed his situation

with a couple other friars from the Province who discouraged him from taking the polygraph. Tom was apparently told by them that this would be a violation of his rights and that he could refuse to take it. We did attempt to encourage Tom to take it, particularly if he genuinely believed he was innocent, but Tom was adamant in his refusal, stating that it was a matter of principle to him. Consequently, the report on Tom's psychosexual assessment is limited. Without the polygraph, we are unable to verify any of his self-report statements.

Results:

All of the psychological assessments that Tom completed indicated an elevated degree of guardedness, defensiveness, and evasiveness. There is also an indication that Tom may not be particularly sophisticated in the area of psychological self-awareness, so it is difficult to tell whether the evasiveness identified on the testing instruments was a conscious and deliberate attempt to avoid disclosure, or, a sincere self-presentation coming from someone who has not had either the opportunity or the skills to be more deeply self-reflective.

A good example of what appears to be evasiveness is given in Tom's response on the Multimodal Life History Inventory to a request to describe significant childhood memories and experiences. Tom dispensed with high school and college in two sentences: "I had pleasant high school experiences. I have good memories of college and my college relationships." As is fairly obvious, neither of these two sentences shed any light on Tom's high school or college relationships or experiences. Whether he attempted to be evasive because he had something to hide, or he simply didn't feel there was much more to say, remains open to interpretation. This particular response on the Life History Inventory is typical of other responses Tom made in response to other questions. He simply did not provide us with very much detailed information that would give a comprehensive picture of his psychological and/or psychosexual development and experiences.

Both the Millon and the MMPI are similar in portraying Tom as a young man who has elevated needs for dependency and a desire to obtain a positive response from other people. In general, Tom appears to be somewhat self-effacing and non-competitive. He has a tendency to lean on others for guidance and security, and to avoid autonomy and independent decision making, particularly when he is feeling most insecure. Strong underlying fears of abandonment appear to be present, although these would be typically covered over by an attempt to appear calm, happy, and socially engaging. A mixture of anxiety, sadness and guilt was evident to some degree, but it is difficult to know if these represent feelings that are deep seated and of long duration or reactions to Tom's current situation regarding the allegations

against him.

Tom also endorsed a large number of items on the tests that indicate a tendency to succumb easily to physical exhaustion, fatigability and weakness, and a variety of other somatic complaints. Sometimes these conditions represent the experience of psychological or emotional distress in terms of physical symptoms. They may also represent an underlying mood of mild to moderate depression. Tom's dependency behaviors, and need to rely on the approval of others may, at times, cause him to deprecate the virtues and very real talents that he may possess. There is very likely a connection between Tom's brief allusion to a lack of sufficient attention shown by his parents during his childhood and his current dependency needs, reliance on others for guidance and fears of abandonment.

Tom's particular way of meeting his needs for connectedness to other people appears to be by playing rather fixed social and religious roles, and conforming to common social standards. It is possible that his desire to appear socially correct could shade toward an over-preciseness at times. He tests as extroverted and as having many ways of gaining social approval from others. He also demonstrates many areas of strongly organized functioning and practical self-sufficiency, especially toward achieving his immediate and short-term goals. Although he may, at times, have a lack of self-awareness, particularly in terms of the long-term consequences of some of his actions, Tom does appear to desire ongoing personal growth.

Tom obtained the type of profile on the MMPI that is sometimes associated with individuals who have more family conflicts and struggles than Tom has personally admitted having. Many people who obtain profiles similar to Tom's, have a strong sense of self-blame and a low tolerance for frustration. This may, at times, manifest itself in explosive outbursts or touchiness. Persons who obtain profiles similar to Tom's often come from families where the father is more emotionally aloof and the mother more dominate in the home. These families typically do not allow children to express resentments and anger openly and require the presentation of a "good public front". Sometimes this includes various deceits and "white lies". Still, such persons typically feel quite home-oriented despite family struggles and frustrations.

Tom's testing profile suggests that he is the type of person who would be quite cautious in interviews about any possible improper reactions he felt he was being asked to reveal. Underneath this there may be a fear of moral judgement or of being shamed by others. Any public occasions in the past when he might have lost self-control or openly violated his own moral self-expectations or felt judged by others, could have contributed to his apparent high vulnerability to shame. To the



extent that Tom may not have consciously intended to be overtly sexual with the current allegation of sexual impropriety could certainly create a great deal of shame and need to protect himself. If he did engage in any level of improper behavior, such as that indicated by , it could take a great deal of time, support, and non-judgmental therapeutic environment for Tom to come to grips with the truth of this.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

In general we are unable to come to any clear conclusions or recommendations regarding Brother Tom Thing. Although Tom came across as genuine and sincere in his efforts to participate in the assessment process, the fact that he was so strongly opposed to taking the polygraph examination does not allow us to verify any of his self-reported statements. I do not have the impression that Tom is either a predator or a pedophile, but I do have the impression that we do not have the full story from him about his psychosexual history. If so, it appears that this may be due to a high level of fear and shame on Tom's part. Unless or until Tom feels more comfortable completing a full assessment process, I can neither recommend nor not recommend that he continue in his youth ministry work.

If Tom did engage in some inappropriate sexual behaviors as a 22 year old seminarian, in an effort to explore his own sexuality and struggle with his own adolescent and young adult development needs which may have been somewhat delayed as a result of his early entrance into the seminary, this does not make him a sex offender or dangerous to youth. On the other hand, to the extent that Tom may carry a heavy load of shame and denial around any such experiences without openly dealing with them, he may be at greater risk to act them out in a "repetition compulsion" fashion in order to relieve any residual anxiety and shame that these events might carry for him. Tom does test as someone who is rather psychosexually unsophisticated and, at the very least, could certainly benefit from some increased education and personal growth experiences in the area of psychosexual development. This could come both by way of some individual therapy as well as other learning experiences that would come from more formal classes.

At the present time, our difficulty in the assessment with Tom is not so much that he refused to take the polygraph (although this certainly raises concerns for us), but, the fact that there remains a major discrepancy between Tom's description of the events and description of the events surrounding the alleged sexual abuse/misconduct. There is a major difference between briefly rubbing someone's upper back while sitting around a campfire in a group, and fondling the buttocks of a sleeping adolescent. The only thing that we can say about this



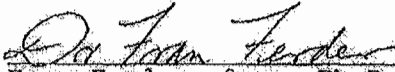
discrepancy is that one of the two parties is either lying, distorting, forgetting, or experiencing confusion about the details of the events. When both individuals seem credible in telling their stories (as they seem to in this case), we have no way of knowing whose story is accurate and whose is not.

There is no small significance to this, since one portrayal of events (Tom's) would be describing a fairly common gesture of affection or, at the very worst, a behavior that might have been inappropriate only insofar as it was not comfortable to the recipient. The other and quite different rendition describes a behavior that may or may not be indicative of a pattern of sexual abuse of adolescents.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

Without completion of the full assessment process, I am unable to make any further specific recommendations with regard to Tom's personal life and ministry.

Sincerely,



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