

**"DON'T TELL ANYBODY. . .  
...YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE, AND SO WILL I"**

**By Bob Ehlert/Staff Writer**

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned."

Young Gregory John Riedle whispered those words through the fabric divider in the confessional at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in St. Paul Park.

"It has been a long time since my last confession," said Greg, who was 14 then, in 1978. "I swore at my little brother, at my mom and dad. . . I am sorry for these and all of my sins."

But there was one sin, at least he thought it *might* be a sin, that he was told *never* to confess to anyone. Under any circumstances.

Not even to a priest.

So, time after time, Greg did not tell.

He listened to the priest's response. He made a mental note of his penance - a couple of Hail Marys and Our Fathers - and he received the priest's absolution and blessing.

Sometimes, just before he left, he heard the priest say, "And have a good day, Greg."

Sure enough, that would mean it was Father Tom. Father Thomas Paul Adamson.

It was Father Tom who taught Greg the sin that he was not to mention - if it even was a sin.

So through those years, 1977 to 1979, whenever he would go to confession, "even to Father Tom Adamson, *that* would never come up. . . . Never," said Greg.

The psychological demands of the secret sin began to pile up in Greg's conscience

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"DON'T TELL ANYBODY ...



...YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE, AND SO WILL I!"

ADAMSON: Father Tom noticed Greg at swim outing

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shortly after he became an altar boy at his church.

John and Janet Riedle, his parents, had encouraged their son to participate in the program, in which boys assist priests in church rituals. It was a good match because back in the summer of 1977 Greg had few friends and many idle hours to fill.

"I was a loner. Dad was working two jobs at the time. If I remember right, there just wasn't time," said Greg, now 24, whose tall, slim frame and styled blond hair make him appear much younger.

Greg's father, Tom, had a sense of belonging, contributing to the church's activities. He got involved in the church's social work, serving meals almost every Sunday at the home of the Rev. Fr. Adamson in St. Paul.

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with the priest.

About every other weekend, it seemed, Father Tom would call and invite Greg on an outing. On many occasions the priest would pick Greg up at the Riedle home, take him on a small talk with his parents.

"Once we got to know each other, they were happy that he was doing this, that he was going along, that he enjoyed it, those kinds of things," Father Tom said.

One Sunday, after Father Tom offered mass with Greg serving as altar boy, he went on one of their routine outings. This time they were alone.

"We had just gotten done playing some basketball, and we were at a steam room at a YMCA in St. Paul," Greg said.

It is a small room, about 10 feet by 10 feet, with the windows often fogged. From the outside one can not distinguish human forms, and certainly not faces.

The priest reached for Greg's glasses and then whispered words that the boy could not believe.

Father Tom asked Greg if he ever liked himself, Greg said. No, said Greg.

The priest asked the boy if he liked it, Greg said.

"I was scared, I still didn't know, all through it. There was something in me that said this isn't right. But at the same time there was part of me that said this feels good. It doesn't feel right, it feels right," Greg said. "It was like, you just trust him. There was no question about that. He was an authority figure that you look up to and trust. Not like a priest, that's how I felt. Someone I looked up to, someone I trusted. I had no reason, at the time, not to."

Later that day, the priest gave a warning that Greg would abide by for the next seven years.

"Don't talk anybody," Greg remembers Father Tom saying. "You'll get in trouble, and so will I."

Father Tom began to make his sexual rendezvous with Greg a routine. During the next several months they would meet and have sex in the basement of St. Thomas Aquinas church, the rectory, gas-station restrooms, motel and country-club saunas and pools, back to the steam room at the YMCA. Sometimes even in Father Tom's car. Greg testified in his deposition.

"Whenever he got the urge, convenient locations."

One of the most convenient locations was a little room in the church basement. On at least one occasion, Greg said, Father Tom wanted and got sex right after the last mass on Sunday.

"He told me to go in the little room in the basement. He went and got his little vibrator, he had his little message (vibrator) thing and used it," Greg said. The other items in the bag Greg remembers included petroleum jelly and towels.

As the outings with Father Tom continued, gradually Greg became a willing participant.

"I looked forward to it for a couple of reasons. One, I enjoyed the recreation," said Greg, referring to the sporting activities. "... and I also knew every time I got together with him I was going to have an orgasm. Yes, it made everything else OK."

Much later Greg began to realize that Father Tom never wore his religious collar on the days that they would engage in sex. If that was a sign of the internal struggle the priest faced, then so were these words in his deposition:

"All my life I tried to be celibate," Father Tom said. "I mean, these things would happen, you see, they would happen, and there would be no way to stop it. And I might go many, many months without any sexual outlet, masturbation or whatever."

Janet Riedle did not have the vaguest notion that Father Tom had recruited her teenage son for sex.

By that time the level of trust she

had with her priests and her church could not be measured. It was infinite. Janet was a devoted parishioner who cleaned the church, who helped teach or baby-sit for women who taught religion classes.

She had counseled with a parish priest earlier in her life when she could not conceive. That led to the subsequent adoption of Greg through an agency of the archdiocese in 1964.

"I thought, hurray! Greg had a multitude of birthmarks, but that didn't bother us," Janet said. "You don't get guarantees when you have your own."

Whenever there was a need Janet thought of the church as an extension of her family. It was natural for her to turn to her church when she noticed some troubling things about her son.

After finding a file of photos of lingerie models that Greg kept she approached a family counselor, one recommended by her church. Although the counselor told her the pictures weren't a problem, she still worried.

"His school changed. His grades changed. His whole attitude changed. And at the same time we were counseled. We were also counseled in Father Adamson," Janet said, her eyes beginning to well up with tears.

When she got home, she asked each of her three children, in private, if their father had been abusing them.

"You've got to be kidding," they all said," recalled Janet. "None of this had happened."

"So I took Greg aside, and I explained to him that they (the therapists) want to know if anybody, a grandpa, uncle, anybody could have done this."

No, he hadn't, she told the therapists.

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While the priest's career was heading in a positive direction, Greg was getting into scrapes with his family, his school and the law. In 1980, at age 16, he was repeatedly running away from home and had begun to experiment with drugs. On the occasions when he was found he was sent to youth ranches and juvenile detention centers.

After one drug experience he ended up in the psychiatric ward at Mercy Medical Center in Coon Rapids. There, he began receiving therapy, including counseling sessions that involved his mother.

"They took me aside and asked me if John (her husband) had ever sexually abused any of his children. And I became angry and upset," Janet said.

No, he hadn't, she told the therapists.

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sister told her parents. They told Janet, who was so shocked and revolted she nearly became ill.

Janet Riedle was a mother and a care giver for small children whose parents had entrusted her with some of the most important people in their lives. Her own son had betrayed that trust, and she did not hesitate to call the authorities.

"I didn't turn Greg in to the police, but I had to report Greg to the welfare authorities or to whomever, and that was turned in if the police," she said, still wondering if her son was angry with her for that action.

In turning Greg in, Janet's hope was that he would get into treatment. His feelings were secondary. Greg was nonchalant about it.

"Being turned in was like, well, I'm doing something else wrong," Greg said. "I got to get in trouble for this now. No big deal. On a scale of 1 to 10, what I had done wrong seemed like a 1 or 2. It was so natural for me to act out, sick as that may sound."

Janet Riedle did not try to hide what had happened.

"We didn't keep it a secret. I was a baby sitter. I went to all of the people who brought their kids to me and said, 'Hey, this has taken place in my house. And they had the option to check with their children. And to find someone else to baby-sit.'"

Some of the families, with the obvious exception of the abused girls' parents, wanted Janet Riedle to continue baby-sitting. Greg's mother took it upon herself to try to make sure the incident would never occur again by virtually banning her son from the house when the kids were present.

"He would come home, change his clothes and leave. Find something to do," she said. "He was not allowed to stay in the house. I wouldn't allow it."

Greg, meanwhile, pleaded guilty to criminal sexual assault.

"My sentence was two weekends in jail and treatment," Greg said.

He was ordered by the court to participate in a program for sex offenders in Minneapolis.

A few months after committing his sex crime, Greg began to wonder if his experience with Father Tom had been the right thing. He said he was just learning about homosexuality. He wondered if that's what he was, a homosexual.

His curiosity led him to seek out Father Tom.

For the first time in about three years, the two met in July 1982 at Rosedale Center in Roseville. From there they went to a YMCA, where they had a swim and sauna — this time, Greg said, without sex. Back at the mall they sat and talked for a moment in Father Tom's car.

And then, according to Greg — Father Tom has denied the accusation — the priest reached over and touched Greg's genitals.

Greg said he grabbed Father Tom and tried to grab his wrist.

"No," he said. "I don't do that anymore."

By the end of 1982 Greg had renewed high school in Chicago City (later earning his diploma).

His classmates were aware of his sexual offense, and Janet Riedle remembers how hard it was for her son to continue. But he finished.

In 1983 Greg was an adult in the eyes of the law. He had moved out of the house and began to live on the streets. Occasionally he would show up at home. She knew Greg was supposed to be participating in a therapy program, but she could not force him to go.

In the winter of 1983, Greg helped burglarize a Forest Lake liquor store.

"(We took) all the booze we could put in this Chevrolet. I did it for the excitement. I did it to get away with it. I had bad bags over my feet. I had gloves on. My hair was all up under my hat. I was smart," Greg said.

But not smart enough. Greg was arrested and charged with the liquor store burglary.

He spent Christmas 1983 in the Chicago County Jail. While there, he said, he was evangelized by a church group. Greg said he became a temporary follower.

One of the rules of the game was never to tell. Just as Greg had been told by Father Tom to keep his secret, he had instructed the girls to keep quiet.

His warning worked on at least three occasions the game was played. On the fourth, the younger

Janet Riedle had heard about Greg's new faith. But that news had been mixed in with reports of Greg's continuing criminal activity.

"I had gotten to the point where I thought I'm going to have a son who eventually is going to be in prison for the rest of his life because he was just doing habitual things," Janet said.

Concerned about Greg, John and Janet Riedle got into a discussion with him on a February day in 1984.

"I remember sitting, and his dad was sitting, and we were trying to talk to him," Janet said.

Greg sat in an old orange chair and began to speak of his religious experience. Janet was upset. Still devout Catholics, she and John Riedle were wary of the new religion.

"Why don't you go see Father Tom?" was her suggestion to Greg.

She remembers Greg answering that he had "only two fathers in the world. Dad and God." And he added that he was "sick and tired of people referring to priests as fathers."

Greg, tears in his eyes, rose from the chair and started to pace around the room.

John Riedle got up and began to speak, but he was interrupted by Greg, who said, "Sit down. You're not going to like this. You're going to hate me. You're going to tell me. You're never going to want me back. But I'm going to tell you something. That (explosive), do you know what he did to me?"

Slowly the words about Father Tom came out. For the first time since the first incident in 1977, Greg confessed the act.

He told about the outings. About the days and the nights and the sex. About the saunas. About the guilt.

His parents were dumbfounded. John Riedle, a machinist by trade who Greg said rarely shows emotion, wept.

As ugly and unbelievable as Greg's tale sounded, John and Janet Riedle believed him.

The warning of the psychiatrist at Mercy Medical Center flashed before Janet: There was something Greg was keeping to himself. You had to know until he freezes over, and it's not going to make any difference.

Greg's parents felt responsible. They had encouraged Greg to get involved in the altar boy program, allowed him to go with Father Tom for the long weekends.

"I listened to him, and I believed everything he was saying. And I sat there thinking, 'I'm going to throw up,'" Janet recalled. "The only thing I could think to do was to call the pastor at St. Bridget's in Lindstrom, Father Bill Whitler."

"I believe Greg," Janet told the priest after they recounted the story to him. "I believe everything he said."

Father Bill, who declined to be interviewed for this story, didn't seem to be taking sides in the matter, Janet said. He did not try to defend Father Tom, whom he did not know. Nor did he side completely with the Riedles. But he was supportive.

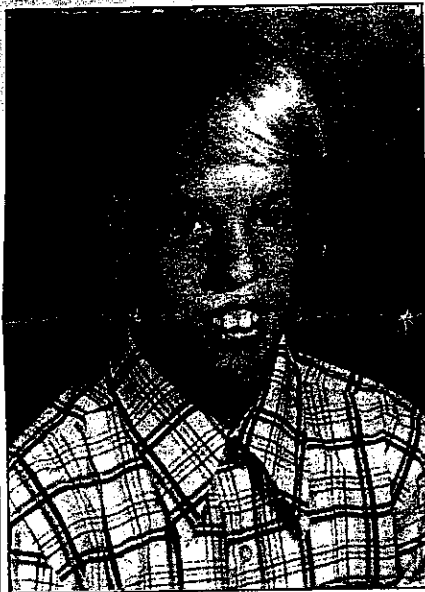
By March 1984 Greg had a probation-violation charge that came as a result of his sex crimes and the burglary. He was sentenced to 21 months and was jailed temporarily in Chicago County until arrangements were made for him to enter what was then known as the St. Cloud Reformatory. He remained at St. Cloud on May 22, 1984.

While Greg was in prison, Father Tom was an associate pastor of the Church of the Risen Savior in Burnsville.

The idea that Father Tom was still in a position to abuse other boys troubled Janet Riedle. As always, in time of distress, she turned to her church. This time, though, other than emotional support from Father Bill, she said she did not receive the kind of help she felt she needed.

Father Bill referred Janet Riedle to

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Greg Riedle, when he was 9 years old. Four years later, in 1977, he became an altar boy and, shortly after, a victim of sexual abuse.

In 1978 the Riedles moved from St. Paul Park to Chicago City, Minn. When the family joined a new parish, St. Bridget of Sweden in nearby Lindstrom, Minn., Greg wanted nothing to do with the altar boy program.

That bothered Janet some, but at least her son was still seeing Father Tom.

"He (Father Tom) would call on a Wednesday or something. He would say, 'Can Greg come back?'" Janet Riedle recalled. "We didn't think anything of it, so we dropped him off at church, like maybe on a Friday evening. And Father Adamson would drop him off at my grandma's" on Sunday. So he would actually be gone like for those days. And they would go golfing. Or whatever."

Gradually, Greg became cool toward the priest's invitations to get together.

"Father Tom would call, leave a message, and Greg wouldn't answer it," Janet said. "And by then I had decided that was Greg's choice, and if he didn't want to go, I couldn't do anything about that."

By the spring of 1979 the sex stopped. Greg began to masturbate. And he recalled, it had become increasingly difficult for the two to meet. Greg was living at the north end of the archdiocese and Father Tom was way to the south.

In June 1979 Father Tom, who had been an associate pastor at St. Thomas Aquinas, was placed in charge of Immaculate Conception Church in Columbia Heights.

As always, Greg did not tell.

A psychiatrist told Janet that he knew Greg was keeping something to himself. "You know, Janet, remember the psychiatrist saying, 'you can counsel until hell freezes over, and it's not going to make any difference.'"

Unless Greg wanted to talk and let it out. But he could not.

It was as if the old warning was still in effect: "You'll get in trouble, and so will I."

Just a 17-year-old in 1981, Greg knew girls, but he didn't date, even though he socialized with groups of boys and girls his age. He had been confused by his sexual experiences with Father Tom.

After Greg dropped out of high school in 1982 he was around the house a lot — and so were some neighborhood children that his mother had begun to baby-sit.

One day, as Greg was coming out of the shower, one of the little girls to the Riedle house.

With the 7-year-old girl as an audience, Greg began to masturbate. Before long, he had enlisted that girl and her 4-year-old sister to play a "game."

One of the rules of the game was never to tell. Just as Greg had been told by Father Tom to keep his secret, he had instructed the girls to keep quiet.

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John Doe 76B 479

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**...YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE, AND SO WILL I"**

Continued from page 4E

a Father Kenneth Pierre, a priest and psychologist who used to run the Consultation Services Center — an agency of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Part of Pierre's job was to provide psychological counseling for people in the ministry and, occasionally, parishioners.

In the midst of several unsuccessful attempts to contact Pierre, Janet Riedle got a call from a vocational rehabilitation counselor at Greg's prison. Greg had opened up to the counselor, Paul Ringsmuth, and told him about the sexual abuse he had suffered at the hands of Father Tom.

Ringsmuth began to look into the matter. He knew Greg had victimized others with sexual abuse, but nowhere in his records had it been mentioned that Greg himself had been a victim.

"Something isn't right. Let me see what I can do," Ringsmuth told Janet, she said.

Pierre finally returned Janet Riedle's call. She said he took notes of the charges she made concerning Father Tom and recommended that she call the archdiocese and ask to talk to Bishop Robert Carlson.

Carlson was a high-level administrator in the archdiocese and a confidant of Archbishop John Roach, the most powerful cleric in the archdiocese.

"I thought that was kind of awkward because that's kind of intimidating," Janet said. "Call the bishop? I'm not about to do that. How in the heck do I, as a parishioner, call the bishop and say, 'OK, bishop, and there's this priest, and I have

this son, and . . . I honestly, even though I believed Greg, I didn't think the bishop would believe us."

Paul Ringsmuth was not intimidated. After first seeking advice from a priest in the St. Cloud Diocese, he did what Janet Riedle wouldn't do and got in touch with several clergy in the archdiocese. Among them were Father Pierre and Bishop Carlson.

Ringsmuth, at the request of Janet Riedle, asked archdiocese officials what exactly was known about Father Tom. If he had been in treatment. Just what was going on.

In a letter to Ringsmuth, Pierre wrote:

"My last contact with Father Adamson before Mrs. Riedle called was in February of 1981. . . . The treatment centered on his sexual behavior and was motivated by his own concern to deal with his problem and by the pressure he was receiving from church authorities to do so.

"Since February 1981 Father Adamson has seen Dr. Joseph Gendron, a Minneapolis psychiatrist and consultant to us here at the Consultation Services Center. Father Adamson has seen him on a quarterly basis for maintenance and preventative therapy. To my knowledge, Father Adamson has been able to manage his problem with the assistance of Dr. Gendron since terminating his therapy with me early in 1981. . . ."

Janet Riedle went from being troubled to angry. Greg had told her of the time in 1982 at the shopping mall when he claimed Father Tom tried to fondle him for the last time. The priest denies the incident.

Ringsmuth asked her if she was satisfied that Father Tom was seeking treatment. And she said, "Well,



Archbishop John Roach, above, praised Father Tom Adamson for his administrative skills in 1976, early in his stay in the Twin Cities. By 1985 he had asked for Adamson's removal.

no, because what you've said now is that Father Adamson was having contact with Greg at the same time he was in a treatment program. What does that say, except that he goes for treatment and still has contact?"

Eventually Bishop Carlson called Janet Riedle. Then Carlson contacted Father Tom and asked him to meet with the Riedles. Carlson also planned to meet with Greg's parents at the archdiocese chancery in St. Paul. A date was set.

But before the Riedles' meeting at the archdiocese, they had their talk with Father Tom. Janet Riedle chose a Perkins Restaurant on County Rd. E north of St. Paul for the meeting.

"It was just John and I and Father

Adamson," she said.

Janet cannot remember what she ate or who paid the bill. But she does recall that, throughout the meeting, Father Tom "never admitted to us face to face that he had ever done anything to Greg."

Leaving the restaurant, Father Tom hugged Janet Riedle, and she says he whispered sorry.

"Just you remember that I'm not a wealthy person."

"And at that point in time I decided to *hell with you*," she said.

When Father Tom hugged her, she said, "It made me sick. And when he said what he said, it made me angry. So from that point on I just decided that this man was not inter-

ested in Greg. That he was only interested in not getting hurt himself."

But then Janet thought of Father Tom's mother, a woman she had never met, but a woman she somehow knew.

"And I knew his mother was older, an older person, and I knew, I thought of his mother because I knew how all this was going to hurt."

Janet Riedle cried again when the hurt came to mind. She wanted to keep talking, but words failed her.

"I didn't think it would be this hard," she said.

Monday: The Riedles and their attorney learn about Father Tom Adamson's past.

**"DON'T TELL ANYBODY..."**

**...YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE, AND SO WILL I"**



## Lawyer found priest had abused other youths

Second of three parts.

By Bob Ehlerz/Staff Writer

Locked up inside the stone-walled fortress of the St. Cloud Reformatory, Gregory John Riedle was more naive than frightened.

"I thought this is kind of neat. Like the movies," Greg said.

It was the summer of 1984 and he had begun serving his 21-month sentence as a result of his sexual abuse of a little girl and a burglary. He knew better than to broadcast all the reasons he was in "The Cloud," so whenever anybody asked, he played up the burglary.

What he didn't know is that there is a funny kind of communication inside prisons, and dark secrets don't live long.

"I was never scared until the first time I got pushed around," Greg said. "Somebody shoved me in the hall and they said, 'You baby rapper!'"

"I said, damn, my cover's blown."

Indeed, he was right. Before the end of the summer a fellow inmate would ambush Greg in the shower, punch him in the face and break his jaw.

Outside the prison walls a Roman Catholic priest named Father Thomas Paul Adamson faced no physical dangers, but his career and reputation were now under siege. His superiors in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis had learned that, seven years earlier, he had begun secretly abusing Greg Riedle — a 13-year-old altar boy back in 1977.

In late June 1984 Father Tom came to visit Greg at St. Cloud. The 51-year-old priest and the 20-year-old inmate had a lot to talk about. "He wanted me to come see him, and talk to him, and give him support," Father Tom testified in his depositions.

Greg remembers it differently. To him the priest's visit was the same old theme.

"Don't tell anybody. You'll get in trouble, and so will I." That's what he said in a roundabout way. His eyes were going everywhere, left and right. There was hardly any eye contact. He was scared."

Greg had begun to think about lawsuits and compensation for the damage done to him.

ADAMSON Continued on page 4E

**"DON'T TELL ANYBODY..."**



**...YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE, AND SO WILL I!"**

# ADAMSON: Mother felt clergy failed to understand

Continued from page 1E

He did not know what to do, here to turn.

July 1984 his mother, Janet Riedle, went to visit one of Archbishop John Roach's closest advisers, Bishop Robert Carlson, to talk about Father Tom and what he had done to her son.

At that meeting Bishop Carlson and a Rev. Kevin McDonough — both presenting the archdiocese — asked most of the questions and offered little in the way of information, Janet said.

The Riedles brought up the medical bills they had accumulated as a result of Greg's counseling over the years.

When the police was mentioned, it no one took any action. And the meeting ended on sort of a philosophical note.

She said she was glad you still have your son," as the way McDonough put it, according to Janet Riedle.

She commented particularly bothered and made her wonder if these men dressed in black and white could really fathom what she had been through. She believed she had lost her son.

"I mean Greg was running away. He didn't have Greg," she said.

And Greg never had a life. Greg was never a happy teen-ager. Greg never had the opportunity — I could say probably from age 14 on — to do the things in the manner that healthy-minded kids can do things.

At that July 5 meeting, Carlson asked Janet to compile a list of medical expenses and arrive at a total. He offered to visit Greg in prison and to be of any help that he could.

After Carlson and McDonough met with the Riedles, they spoke with Father Tom. On July 9, 1984, Carlson mentioned the meeting in a memo to Archbishop John Roach, who heads the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

In the memo, Carlson said that Father Tom had admitted his abuse of Greg and agreed with Carlson's assessment that the incident could be categorized as "first-degree criminal sexual conduct." The priest was advised that the crime might be reported to authorities in Washington County, although a "great deal will depend on what the archdiocese does with Father Adamson."

Carlson told Roach that he had instructed Father Tom to see Joseph Gendron, a Minneapolis psychiatrist who had been treating Adamson. Carlson also directed Father Tom to obtain a criminal attorney at his own expense.

"Furthermore, I told Father Adamson that I will be in contact with him when I visited with the archbishop and Bishop Walters (of the Diocese of Winona, in southern Minnesota). On Friday (July 8) I called Bishop Walters to inform him of the possible legal exposure. . . ."

In the same memo it was disclosed that Father Tom didn't get along with the priest who had supervised him in Burnsville and that there was an archdiocese file on Father Tom that contained information about his alleged sexual involvement with another boy in 1982 — an involvement Father Tom denies.

Fearing scandal, Carlson addressed the church's image in a recommendation to Roach that accompanied the July 9 memo. . . .

"It is my recommendation, given the seriousness of our exposure, that the archdiocese posture itself in such a way that any publicity will be minimized. I would recommend that in cooperation with Bishop Walters, that Father Adamson be sent to the Paracletes in Albuquerque or to the House of Affirmation (treatment centers). It is obvious to me in dealing with Father Adamson at this time that he has more to lose other than the fact that we found something else out and completely minimizes the entire situation.

"At one point in his treatment, Dr. Gendron told me that Father Adamson will have to choose between his sexual problem and the priesthood. . . . I have never been convinced that Father Adamson has come to grips with his priestly responsibility."

Later in July 1984, Bishop Carlson visited Greg in prison, he said, as



Greg Riedle in 1982 at age 18.

part of his pastoral responsibility to the youth.

Earlier Greg had sent a letter to Carlson making some financial demands, such things as a car and a college education.

Greg was reluctant to discuss the details of the abuse with Carlson during his visit, but he did talk about compensation. According to Carlson, Greg said, "Do you have an attorney? Because I have some demands."

Once again there was a discussion of the car and education. Then, according to Greg's deposition, Carlson asked how he was doing mentally and spiritually. He also made a request. "He tried to talk me out of getting involved with courts and things, which is the same thing Father Adamson tried to do," Greg said.

Carlson denies making any such request.

**B**y August 1984 the archdiocese had been consulting with one of its attorneys, Andrew Eisenhammer. He supplied a legal opinion about the case to Carlson. A copy of the legal opinion was passed along to Bishop Walters, who at the time headed the Diocese of Winona.

Technically, Father Tom was still a priest of the Winona Diocese, which is a separate corporate entity from the archdiocese. Father Tom was serving in the archdiocese in the capacity of an "extern priest" — one who is ordained in one diocese but who ministers in another.

The archdiocese and the Diocese of Winona were in the same boat, in one sense, because Father Tom had ties to both. Nonetheless, it was the archdiocese — where Father Tom had been serving since 1975 — that made pastoral appointments to the parish where the abuse took place. The legal strategy was cautious, to say the least.

"We were wary of entering into any kind of negotiations with him (Greg) where we give him what he wants and he in turn releases us from any liability, because during that time there were a number of court decisions that would have a final effect of releases were being challenged," said Eisenhammer. "And we didn't feel that it would be appropriate legally to try to get what he was in prison. That's why the suggestion was made that he might want to consult with an attorney. Once he got out of prison, we could discuss with him in a much better situation."

Financial issues kept coming up anyway. At the recommendation of Father Tom had given the Riedles a check for \$1,600 to cover some of the counseling expenses the Riedles had been paying for Greg.

"She (Janet) had asked for some help with some expenses that they had had. And since Father Adamson had admitted doing it, I suggested that he help out," Carlson said.

When the Riedles received the check they were afraid to cash it, fearful that accepting it might rule out any future compensation due them. They consulted a lawyer friend who, after reviewing the case, referred them to Jeffrey Anderson, a partner in the Reinhardt & Anderson law firm in St. Paul.



Staff Photos by Joey McLaister

Last summer Greg revisited St. Cloud Reformatory. In the summer of 1984 he spent several months there as a result of a burglary and his sexual abuse of a little girl.



Father Thomas Adamson was living in Eau Claire, Wis., this summer. He has said that his superiors have asked him to refrain from publicly exercising his priestly function, although he still received some financial support from the Winona Diocese.

The Riedles showed Anderson the \$1,600 check from Father Tom. Anderson advised them to "cash it for me, and I will look into it." They did.

By the time Anderson had begun to represent the Riedle family Greg had been transferred out of St. Cloud and into a program specifically designed for sex offenders at a prison facility in Lino Lakes.

The brash and confident Anderson became an ear to listen, a shoulder to lean on for the Riedles. The client/attorney relationship, in fact, began to replace priest/catholiconer ties that Janet Riedle had relied on through the years.

Especially after December 1984.

That is when Anderson brought a lawsuit in behalf of Greg Riedle and his parents. The suit stated that the archdiocese and St. Thomas Aquinas church were negligent in their placement of Adamson, whom the Riedles alleged had "repeatedly inflicted intentional, unpermitted, harmful and offensive sexual contact" upon Greg.

What lies had remained between Janet and her church were severed by the suit.

"I think we are a very litigious society, and I think the lawsuit certainly made it a very difficult situation," said Carlson, who said he was gripped because the legal matters hampered his ability to pastor to the Riedles.

**A**fter the suit was filed, Anderson proceeded to obtain volumes of information through the legal discovery process.

There were no criminal charges being sought against Father Tom in the case because Washington County authorities had determined that the statute of limitations had expired on his abuse of Greg.

Ground rules for civil lawsuits allow both parties to take depositions — sworn statements — in order to discover information: names, dates, documents and testimony germane to proving their case in court. Court reporters heard by the parties involved transcribe the testimony, and copies are made available to all sides in the suit.

During the discovery phase of the Riedle action, Anderson, who had very little background in the Roman Catholic Church or the tenets of its canon law, slowly began to piece together a theory that Father Tom had begun sexually abusing teenage boys soon after the priest's ordination in 1958.

"We had reason to believe that the archdiocese knew about this guy and that it had happened before," Anderson said. "We didn't know about Winona yet. Then we started to do discovery and investigation and learned that he was a priest in the Diocese of Winona, and the history went back. And then we brought in the Diocese of Winona (as a defendant in the lawsuit) in August of 1985."

Those witnesses who have been subpoenaed to a deposition are required to answer questions unless their attorney advises them not to. In the beginning of the Riedle lawsuit it had been agreed that the matter would not be made public.

"We wanted to find out what was involved," Anderson said. "They didn't want to make this thing public. Because of that we were able to obtain some materials, do some discovery, that otherwise we might not have been able to do."

Archbishop Roach, Bishop Loras Walters of Winona, Bishop Robert Carlson and many other priests and nuns were asked about Father Tom. One by one they were questioned about what they knew, when they knew it and how they dealt with allegations about Father Tom's sexual misconduct when, and if, they became aware of them.

As the information grew in Anderson's office on the 10th floor of the Mentor Tower in St. Paul, the attorney became convinced that there was a pattern of abuse by Father Tom and a cover-up by his superiors that spanned the three decades of the priest's career.

Anderson's staff had begun uncovering more and more instances in which rumors had surfaced about the priest's sexual involvement with juvenile males — most often in recreational settings, most often as a result of the priest's position of authority or influence.

To make them aware of Father Tom's sexual misconduct. Yet almost wherever Father Tom went in his career, Anderson believed, he had left behind a trail of broken boys and bewildered parents.

Some of those who tried to understand Father Tom's "special problems," as he once called them, made efforts to get him into treatment, or to remove him from the geographical area of his temptation. But those who knew made little, if any effort to do the same for his victims, or to alert others to the hazards of allowing these sons to associate with Father Tom.

In 1986 Anderson and Mark Winoka, his assistant, had enough information to construct something akin to a sexual-abuse resume of Father Tom.

According to Anderson's tally in the Diocese of Winona, Father Tom allegedly had been involved with nine boys while serving in parish assignments there. Anderson bases that total on signed affidavits from alleged victims he has contacted and the admissions of abuse in Father Tom's testimony.

The abuse alleged is said to have occurred at Father Tom's assignments at a parish in southwest Minnesota; Rochester Lourdes High School; St. John's Church in Calmar; St. Francis and on occasions while assigned to St. Francis Church/St. John's School in Rochester, Minn.

Father Tom does not admit to all of the allegations.

Anderson estimates that as many as two dozen priests, nuns, bishops and parish workers eventually learned of Father Tom's sexual problems. He said that at least 15 priests in the Winona Diocese knew in the 1970s of abuse by Adamson.

Some have made known the extent of their knowledge in depositions. But how much the various priests knew for a fact, rather than just through hearsay, is unclear.

Of the two bishops Father Tom served under in the Diocese of Winona, Bishop Edward A. Fitzgerald (1958 to 1969) is deceased (information in depositions indicates he had knowledge of Father Tom's problems), and Bishop Walters

(1969 to 1974) claims unspecified knowledge of an unspecified problem that plagued Father Tom.

"The only thing I had," Walters said in a deposition, "was vague references from people who were unwilling to sign statements or to come with me to confront Father Adamson. . . ."

**N**o one knows exactly when Father Tom began abusing youths, although biographical information gives clues to why he may have abused.

Father Tom, like many other sexual abusers, was himself a victim as a youth.

Thomas Paul Adamson was born in 1933. He grew up on a dairy farm in Byron, Minn., where his 11 brothers and sisters were close and devoted to each other and their parents. He was the oldest of the sons.

In a staunch Catholic family of that size, and in that time, it wasn't a surprise that one of the five Adamson boys would become a priest.

"We always played church, and Tom was always the priest," recalls a sibling, who asked to not be identified by either sex or place in the family. "We had marshmallows for the hosts."

The parents, Paul (now deceased) and Mildred Adamson, would not think of missing a Sunday in church. There were many times when the family would be packed up on a sleigh in deep snow to get to mass.

As a teen-ager, Tom Adamson was befriended by a hired hand from another farm. The 60-year-old man sexually seduced the 15-year-old Adamson, according to the priest's medical records, which are exhibits in his depositions.

"The relationship continued occasionally over the next two years" until the man moved away, the records indicate.

No one, not even the priest himself, perhaps, could judge how the abuse would affect his later life. Like many sexual-abuse victims, and like Greg Riedle, Tom Adamson hid the abuse.

Young Adamson was one of five boys who, upon graduation from Lourdes High School in Rochester, entered to become priests. In 1951 he entered Immaculate Heart of Mary, a seminary in Winona.

There, Father Tom struggled with the priesthood and celibacy issues.

"I was thinking about marriage. I was dating a girl I had met where I worked shortly after I entered the seminary, so that was a concern," Father Tom said. His other doubts questioned his ability to preach, teach and lead people. "I couldn't sing at all, that was a big practical problem for me a long time. Caused a lot of pain."

After seminary Father Tom furthered his spiritual education at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. There he was class president and captain of the basketball team.

Not long after ordination at his home parish in Rochester in 1958, Father Tom, according to his depositions, began engaging in sexual relationships with two adult males — one a priest and one a serviceman. According to his depositions he saw each man once or twice a year.

In 1961, while serving as an assistant principal, teacher and basketball coach at a school in southwest Minnesota, Father Tom had an eighth-grade boy into a sexual relationship that was carried on for more than 10 years — almost until that victim entered the priesthood.

As Father Tom's career progressed from assignment to assignment in the Winona Diocese, rumors about his misconduct began to filter back to his superiors — and that often provoked reassignment.

In 1964 Father Tom was admonished by Bishop Fitzgerald to control his sexual behavior, according to a psychiatric history of Adamson taken in Hartford, Conn.

After another alleged sexual indiscretion with a boy in Rochester in 1967, Father Tom was ordered by Bishop Fitzgerald to counsel with a Rochester psychiatrist, Dr. Francis Tye, who was a member of Father Tom's congregation. After about 15 sessions over three months, the priest was transferred once again to another part of the diocese.

In 1969 Bishop Loras Walters assumed leadership of the Diocese of Winona — a job that included dealing with Father Tom's troubles.

Walters, in his sworn statements, has maintained that he never knew what Father Tom's specific problems were until the Greg Riedle lawsuit was brought to his attention in 1984. But Father Tom, in his Adamson continued on page 5E

John Doe 768 481

"DON'T TELL ANYBODY..."

...YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE, AND SO WILL I"



Continued from page 4E

deposition, said Watters confronted him in 1973 after the bishop was told a rumor about sexual misconduct involving the priest and a Rochester youth.

"I think I told him that there was a basis for it (the rumors) and that I accepted the responsibility for the wrongness of it, whatever," Father Tom said, referring to a meeting with his bishop.

Watters had driven to Rochester, unannounced, to confront the priest. Father Tom said, "(Watters) said that I should do something, some kind of counseling, and that he would consult with others as to what I should do."

At a later meeting in 1973, it was agreed that Father Tom would again begin seeing Tyce, who at the time worked with the Rochester State Hospital. After Father Tom allegedly was involved in yet another sexual-abuse incident with a boy in the spring of 1974, Tyce recommended that the priest seek therapy in Hartford at the Institute of Living.

Father Tom reluctantly agreed. Just before leaving in June 1974 for his two-month stay at Hartford, he began seeing Father Kenneth Pierre, a priest and psychologist who headed the Consultation Services Center, an agency of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Throughout his stay at the Institute of Living at Hartford in the summer of 1974, Father Tom corresponded with Bishop Watters, Father Pierre and others.

In a June 27, 1974, letter to Watters from inside the institution, Father Tom remarked that "the spiritual void remains. . . The light security or lack of freedom weighs on me.

The persons I live with remain a problem.

"I know there can never be a recurrence of the problem I had this spring. I don't want to be in a place like this again — never! I also am keenly aware of the possibility of automatic suspension if there is a recurrence and that says a lot to me. . . ."

Father Tom had been quite humbled by his experience in Hartford. During visits home to Minnesota he confided in a number of his close priest friends about his psychosex-

ual problems, but never was unsuspecting parishioners informed.

"Tom told relatives he was going away to school whenever he went away for treatment," said one of Father Tom's siblings. "One sister said once that if someone said to her that Tom walked on water she could believe that rather than this."

After repeated pleas to be discharged from the Hartford facility, Father Tom got his wish in August 1974. Having been admitted with what his attending psychiatrist, Dr. John Curran, termed a "homosexual" problem, Father Tom was released with a status that Curran said was "slightly improved."

Curran recommended to Bishop Watters that Father Tom continue to seek therapy on an outpatient basis.

After returning to his parsonage in Rochester in August 1974, Father Tom began seeing Father Pierre, the psychologist in the Twin Cities.

"The experience in the East was painful in that it took so long and it was so regimented," Pierre wrote in his notes of Aug. 22, 1974. "It looks like he will maintain his parish and that the Hartford experience was some kind of trade-off on this."

Following subsequent visits with Father Tom in September, October and November 1974, Pierre concluded that the priest "continues to do well."

Although December 1974 began with great promise for Father Tom — he was back in his Rochester parish and progressing in therapy — one of his first sexual indiscretions came back to haunt him.

One of Father Tom's abuse victims in southwest Minnesota had later been ordained into the priesthood. While serving in his first assignment in the Diocese of Winona, the young priest — who has since left the country and his religious calling — wound up in a chemical-abuse treatment center in Rochester.

There, according to one of his brothers, in December 1974 the priest confessed to therapists that, in 1961, Father Tom had sexually abused the then eighth-grade boy. According to Father Tom's depositions, that sexual relationship did



Greg Riedle stood behind Jeffrey Anderson, the Riedles' attorney since 1984, who quickly became a shoulder for the family to lean on.

not end until 1973 — at which time the youth was a grown man ordained into the priesthood.

Greg Riedle's attorney, Anderson, had learned about Father Tom and that youth in 1988 while investigating the priest's past. During that quest Anderson came upon a brother of the ex-priest who had been abused as a boy.

The brother was deposed with the condition that his testimony be sealed from the public record. The same man would later agree to an interview for this story on the condition that no one in his family was identified. For that reason the man will be referred to as Dave, and the ex-priest as George.

In 1974 Dave was a teacher in the school Father Tom supervised in Rochester. When he found out about his brother and Father Tom he was so angry he wanted to harm Adamson physically.

A fellow teacher, Sister Tierney Trueman, recalled in her deposition that Dave came to the junior high school where they taught on a Saturday in late 1974.

"He was very angry, very angry. And he literally said to me, 'I am

going to kill him.' And he was talking about Father Adamson," Trueman testified.

After she found out why he was so angry — Dave explained about how Father Tom had sexually abused George — she promised to drive to Winona the following day and inform Bishop Watters about the accusations. And she did.

"I'm here only because Dave is saying if that man (Father Tom) is not out of the parish within a week he'll be a dead man," she told the bishop.

According to her testimony, the bishop then said that Father Tom was one of his "best men" and had received some of the finest treatment that could be given. But he added that Father Tom was unable to control himself.

Sister Trueman recalled that the bishop was "neither upset, neither angry, neither surprised" at the news, although he seemed "pained."

Later that week, Dave himself called Bishop Watters and gave him an ultimatum: Either remove Father Tom before Sunday or all of the family members were going to

drive to Rochester, walk up to the podium during Father Tom's sermon and make public their knowledge of his abuse.

On the eve of that Sunday in late 1974, Father Tom resigned his duties at St. Francis parish in Rochester. He told parishioners he was going to the Twin Cities to pursue his education at the University of Minnesota.

Father Tom did go to the Twin Cities and enroll in classes at the University of Minnesota. Arrangements were made with the archdiocese to allow Father Tom to room and minister at a parish in St. Paul. Father Tom hoped the move to the archdiocese, beginning in January 1975, would be short-lived. But it would be 10 years before the priest would return to his home diocese.

The depositions make it clear that Bishop John Roach, who was soon to become the archbishop of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, knew Adamson was coming, that Watters had told Roach that Father Tom was "a victim of a situation in Winona," and that because of that situation, Father Tom was seeing Father Pierre — whom Roach knew to be a priest and psychologist.

But just what had Watters told Roach, or not told him about Father Tom?

Neither Roach nor Watters would agree to be interviewed for this story. However, in one of the archdiocese's summation papers related to lawsuits filed in Ramsey County District Court, it states that in 1976, "Archbishop Roach understood that allegations of homosexual conduct had been made against Adamson. He absolutely did not receive any indication that the homosexual nature of the conduct had to do with youth."

When questioned in his deposition, Father Tom said he assumed Roach knew something about his sexual molestation of youths.

Father Tom made that assumption because he had resigned from "one of the top parishes in the Diocese of Winona. . . and it just seems, for the bright man that he (Roach) is, he would be savvy. 'Why?' " Father Tom testified. "I just felt that he had to have some awareness that there were some

problems, but he never discussed that with me at any time."

The troubled priest arrived in the Twin Cities and began attending the University of Minnesota, as planned. But there were no restrictions put on him, and the half-million Roman Catholics in the archdiocese had no inkling of the abuse incidents.

For the next year, until February 1976, Father Tom continued to see the priest psychologist, Pierre, regularly — and he regularly contacted his bishop about returning to the Winona Diocese.

Time after time, Watters denied the request — even on the occasion when he received a letter from Pierre that endorsed it.

On that occasion, Bishop Watters wrote: "While I do not question your evaluation regarding the progress Father Adamson has made, I must also add that I am convinced that he doesn't even begin to appreciate the numbers of people in at least five different communities across the entire diocese who have finally pieced together incidents occurring over a fifteen year span and who now openly raise questions about the credibility of all priests. Obviously I am writing to you in confidence. You would only have to struggle through the painful sessions I've had with heart-broken and bewildered parents who only (now) have come to discover the source of some of the problems of their sons."

It should be pointed out that, in his first deposition in 1986, Watters denied specific knowledge of Father Tom's sexual abuse of boys during that period and that, in reference to "painful sessions I've had with heart-broken and bewildered parents," he explained that the comment was made regarding an incident some 30 years earlier when Watters was a principal of a high school in Dubuque, Iowa.

In 1976 Father Tom stopped seeing Father Pierre. In June of that year, he was named associate pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas in St. Paul Park.

A year later, Greg Riedle became one of Father Tom's altar boys.

Tuesday: The allegations of other victims; the Riedle suit is settled out of court.

"DON'T TELL ANYBODY..."

...YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE, AND SO WILL I"

Secrets finally become matter of public record

Last of three parts. By Bob Ehlers/Staff Writer

The call came in to the Mendota Heights police station at 7 p.m. on Aug. 21, 1977.

A patrolman in neighboring Inver Grove Heights was relaying information from the parents of a 16-year-old boy who had just reported a sexual-abuse incident. He had been picked up hitchhiking in St. Paul Park that day and was later allegedly assaulted by the driver. The suspect was white and about 45. He wore golf clothes, had a beer belly and drove a Plymouth, according to the police reports.

His name was Tom.

Tom had picked up Mike hitchhiking at 2:30 p.m. After exchanging pleasantries and names, Tom said he was going golfing later,

and asked if the boy wanted to caddy.

Mike (whose real name is withheld because he was a juvenile) said he would. The two made arrangements to rendezvous at a gas station later that afternoon near the boy's home in Inver Grove Heights.

They shot a round of golf, and, as agreed, Mike pulled the cart around.

After golfing, Tom suggested that the two go get a Coke and a sandwich. Then Tom drove to the Mendota County Club down the road and invited Mike into the locker room.

"We sat in there for a couple of minutes, and then we went out to the shower, then we went back in the sauna," Mike said, according to a statement he later gave the Mendota Heights police. "We were sitting . . . and he tried grab-

bing my penis. I tried shoving his hand away and stuff, and he's sitting there saying 'I'm shy and all this, and then he kept trying to do it.'"

On the way out, Mike said Tom lunged at him again, this time grabbing him around the middle and reaching for his genitals.

After the two had dressed, Tom bought Mike a can of pop and then took him back to the gas station.

Mike told his mother about the incident, and she called the police, who asked Mike to call them if he heard from Tom again.

Three days later, Tom called, according to police reports. Mike and Tom arranged another golf outing for 4:30 p.m.,

ADAMSON Continued on page 4E





# ADAMSON: How much did church know?

continued from page 1E

meeting at the same gas station, then Mike called the police.

When Tom arrived in the white limousine, right on schedule, Richard Thul, who was then the Mendota Heights police chief, and a fellow officer arrested Tom and read him his rights.

Tom turned out to be Father Tom — Father Thomas Paul Adamson of St. Thomas Aquinas rectory in St. Paul Park.

He was very calm, especially considering the charge (indecent liberties) and since he was a Catholic priest. "Thul said."

Father Tom asked what he should do and said that the matter was not such a big deal. Thul wrote in his report: "I asked him whether he had touched Mike's penis."

Father Tom told the chief that he did try.

The priest was handcuffed and loaded into the police car.

At the police station, Father Tom was fingerprinted, photographed and asked if he would like to make a statement.

He declined and then was released.

Some 10 years later, when asked in depositions about the events outlined in the police report, Father Tom remembered the arrest but not the details.

The priest was never prosecuted, nor was the incident discovered by his fellow priests, by his parishioners, by his superiors or any other authority in the archdiocese, where he worked, or the Diocese of Winona, where he had been ordained in 1958.

Jakota County authorities did not prosecute the indecent-liberties charge, claiming the language of the law at the time would not support it. So Father Tom's case was reassigned for prosecution to the city of Mendota Heights. The charge: Indecent exposure, a misdemeanor.

What happened next is anybody's guess. No one seems to remember how or if the case was settled, and to record of it could be located in Jakota County.

"I don't remember how it was resolved," said Thomas Anderson, who at one time was assigned to prosecute the case for Mendota Heights.

Did the archdiocese know about Father Tom's admitted abuse of Mike?

"I know of no one (in the archdiocese) who was contacted. All my discussions were with (other) attorneys. I have the general sense that they had had some discussions with someone in the church, but it really is an impression."

In his depositions, Father Tom said he engaged James O'Connell, a Hastings lawyer, to defend him as a result of his contact with Mike. O'Connell does not deny that, but he said he does not recall who did the defense work.

After negotiations between the city of Mendota Heights and Adamson's legal counsel, Father Tom once again was referred to a therapist for evaluation, according to the priest's depositions.

Although the reason is unclear — Thomas Anderson suggests there may have been some plea bargaining — O'Connell called Carl A. Schwartz, a psychiatrist then practicing in St. Paul to examine Adamson. Schwartz did, he said in a letter to O'Connell written Nov. 23, 1977.

"... This young man has recently been more overwhelmed by his homosexual needs and desires and has on one occasion allegedly reached out to fondle young male teenagers' genitals," Schwartz wrote. "I would point out in passing, this is about as far as he will go homosexually with males."

Schwartz made note of Adamson's relationships with "older males" and recommended psychotherapy for "about a year."

"This has a good chance of remitting and not recurring at a later date," said Schwartz, who offered Father Tom a discount psychother-



Staff Photo by Joey McLeister

Greg Riedle sat in his apartment in a town north of the Twin Cities, where he lived last summer.

apy fee of \$25 an hour because of the priest's professional status. "... This man has clinical psychiatric difficulties in the form of conflicting homosexual feelings. He is not a criminal type and very definitely is not a person who wishes to go out and hurt others. As such, he does not represent a danger in an open community."

Mike, Greg Riedle and five other boys who allege abuse by Father Tom during his tenure in the archdiocese probably would not agree with that assessment.

But a decade ago it was standard procedure for institutions and the parents of victims to deal quietly with sexual-abuse situations.

Never in the first 16 years of his career in the Diocese of Winona, 1958 through 1974, was Father Tom subjected to public or judicial scrutiny for sexual misconduct.

Even while he was in treatment, Father Tom was sexually abusing Greg Riedle, Carolyn Wheeler, the wife and associate of Carl Schwartz, administered the treatment, beginning in late 1977. Schwartz and Wheeler declined to comment for this story.

"It seems like I was meeting with her every other week for over a period of a few months," Father Tom testified. "She did a lot of dream therapy; that's the principal memory I have of my working with her."

There are affidavits from three other boys from St. Thomas Aquinas parish who now allege Father Tom abused them between 1976 and 1979. The priest either makes outright denials of the accusations or says he cannot recall the incidents. But he does admit continually abusing Greg Riedle during that time.

Not until 1980, a year after Father Tom became administrator of Immaculate Conception Church in Columbia Heights, was the archdiocese rocked by the revelation that this priest of promise had been molesting a boy in that parish.

After being reported by a fellow priest in November 1980, Father Tom was summoned to the chancery of the archdiocese. There Father Tom confessed the abuse to Father Robert Carlson (who later became a bishop).

When told that he would have to resign from the parish, Father Tom wept.

The parents of the abused boy met with Carlson in December 1980. At that meeting, Carlson said he told the parents "something would be done."

Father Tom was asked to leave his parish position and instructed to enter treatment, which he later did. But according to a signed affidavit prepared for Jeff Anderson (the Riedles' attorney) the parents of the eighth-grade boy also were told that this was an isolated incident.

The family was not told later when archdiocese officials consulted with one of Father Tom's therapists, Father Kenneth Pierre, who told Carlson that "there have been other incidents of this nature."

Carlson and Archbishop Roach had permission in writing from Father Tom to review his private, psycho-



Bishop Loras Watters



Bishop Robert Carlson

logical history, which included Father Ken Pierre's notes about past sexual indiscretions in the Diocese of Winona. Carlson said archdiocese officials did not consult the files then, choosing instead to discuss the matter with Pierre.

Archdiocese officials say they were under the mistaken impression that Father Tom's "homosexual problem," up to that point, included only adult males. The diagnosis of a "homosexual problem," in fact, was the conclusion of therapists who treated the priest in the 1960s and 1970s.

As a result of Father Tom's abuse of the eighth-grade boy at Immaculate Conception parish, he was removed from his duties as administrator and was hospitalized by a Minneapolis psychiatrist, Dr. Joseph Gendron.

At the conclusion of Father Tom's 19 days of inpatient therapy at St. Mary's Hospital in Minneapolis, he stayed out of Anoka County, continuing to talk with Gendron, and keep in regular contact with an archdiocese adviser, Father Michael Kort.

Father Tom stayed in contact with Kort and Gendron but, at one point or another, he eventually broke the other rules.

The talks with Gendron eventually became sporadic and mostly conversational, as in, "How are you doing?" To which Father Tom would respond in person, or over the telephone, that things were going well.

As for forbidden people and places, Carlson — who himself was suspicious of Father Tom — passed along reports that Adamson had been seen with youths from Immaculate Conception; a secretary at Risen Savior said boys frequently called for Father Tom. Also there was the July 1982 meeting with

Greg Riedle at a Roseville shopping center.

And there was an October 1982 episode — which archdiocese officials contend they didn't learn of until March 1983 — involving Father Tom and a youth from his new parish.

In that case an Apple Valley boy alleges that Father Tom reached for his genitals while the two were in a whirlpool at a Burnsville athletic facility. The boy's mother had been taking religious instruction from Father Tom.

The priest has denied the allegation, but admitted that he and the youth were naked in the pool. The police report states that Father Tom said he was merely "kicking" the boy.

The youth's mother had informed the Burnsville police, who, after an investigation, concluded: "status undetermined — no crime occurred." Next she alerted the archdiocese.

No one in the archdiocese told her about the 1980 incident involving Father Tom and the boy at Immaculate Conception.

Nonetheless the archdiocese considered the incident a violation of its 1981 behavior agreement, which was an unwritten understanding between Father Tom and his superiors.

Subsequently the agreement was put in writing and signed by Father Tom and Archbishop Roach. Father Tom remained as associate pastor of Risen Savior until early 1985, when the Riedles began to press the case for their imprisoned son, Greg.

By 1986 Father Tom's history was becoming clear to the Riedles, even though none of the priest's past had been made public.

"You know, I honestly believe that I am more angry at Archbishop Roach because I believe that he knew," Janet Riedle said. "I don't care if he didn't know exactly. I believe he knew that there was something wrong. And that he had a responsibility to know why that priest was being transferred from Winona. Why he was being asked to accept a priest from someplace else."

"As a parent, and as a parent of a

victim, I just feel that the church had a responsibility. We didn't walk away from the church. We didn't stop being practicing Catholics. We didn't stop supporting our parish. And the church never came out and said, 'What can we do for the victim and his family?'"

On Oct. 30, 1984, Archbishop John Roach received a letter from the spiritual leader in the Diocese of Winona, Bishop Loras Watters. Father Tom's abuse of Greg Riedle had been made known to both men at that time.

"I am very sorry that Father Adamson's many talents continue to be compromised because of his involvement with juvenile males, and all the more so now that his irresponsible conduct has now become a matter of public record. As you will recall, when I asked you to consider helping Father Adamson in January of 1975 I indicated that I could no longer ask him to accept pastoral responsibility in the Winona Diocese because of this same type of problem..."

Jeff Anderson, the Riedles' attorney, questioned Watters and Carlson about the letter in their first depositions (many parties in the suit were called upon to testify more than once, under oath but not in open court).

After providing sworn statements, Roach and Carlson called a meeting with Watters at a location halfway between St. Paul and Winona.

In the Villa Marie Academy south of Red Wing, Minn., in August 1985, the three men discussed who knew what and at what point they knew it, according to a later deposition by Carlson.

Attorney Anderson, who was not at the closed meeting, said, "They met for one purpose: to discuss the fact that they were pointing the finger at each other and to resolve their differences."

Carlson, who was at the meeting, said that neither Roach nor Watters prevailed upon the other to change his story.

Later, in October 1986, Bishop Loras Watters of the Diocese of Winona resigned his post at 70, citing his age.

When asked to comment on the Adamson situation last summer, Watters declined.

In February 1987 — after 25 months and several failed attempts to settle the Riedle lawsuit in private — the Riedles and Jeff Anderson decided to go public.

There were TV news stories, front-page headlines and many links to national trends about priests who had sexually molested minors: Millions of dollars had been awarded to victims of abuse by a Catholic priest from Louisiana. Many more cases were being investigated and decided — some of them in Minnesota.

Officials from the two Minnesota dioceses and the Riedle family found themselves in the midst of the local fray. Charges and answers to charges from both the plaintiffs and the defendants were bandied about in the local media.

But it was an article in the March 1987 Catholic Bulletin — an archdiocese publication — that caught Janet Riedle's eyes.

In the March 1987 Catholic Bulletin, Roach — who would not entertain questions on the Adamson situation for this story — addressed the topic of sexual abuse by priests.

In the article Roach said he was praying for the victims, the families and members of the priest community who had suffered as a result of the sexual abuse. "I pray also for Father Adamson. Whatever torture the rest of us may experience, he must be the most tortured of all," he wrote.

To Janet Riedle, Roach's words were just more evidence that her church was out of touch with the victims.

At a press conference shortly after public disclosure of the lawsuit, Bishop Robert Carlson said that if mistakes had been made during the Adamson affair, they would not be repeated.

"In retrospect, we would handle it differently today," said Carlson during an interview.

After the lawsuit was made public, Carlson helped formulate a new five-point set of guidelines that provide for immediate and ongoing care for the victim and swift removal from duty of the alleged victimizer. In all future cases, police are to be alerted. In February 1987, when Carlson received a call from someone accusing a Byzantine Catholic priest — not affiliated with the archdiocese — of sexually abusing parish children, Carlson himself reported what he knew to authorities.

Under the guidelines, a priest such as Adamson would have to spend up to five years in treatment and after-care programs before he was considered for another permanent assignment — one that could not include ministry to minors. The Diocese of Winona has revamped its approach to dealing with such situations too.

"The Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis is painfully aware that information is now available which clearly argues against a decision to place Thomas Adamson in a position of responsibility, which may include youth contact," the archdiocese wrote in court papers defending its position.

Bishop Carlson echoed that sentiment when he said, "It's unfair if they just take it from hindsight and apply kind of a 20-20 vision to it." Using hindsight, people argue that the church didn't do enough, but, he said, "We did try to do something..."

The question that will always remain is: How much and what kind of information was relayed from bishop to bishop in Winona, from Winona to the archdiocese?

One of four lawsuits brought against the church as a result of Adamson's behavior may leave that question up to a jury in a civil trial scheduled to begin in February.

The alleged victim at the Church of the Risen Savior in Burnsville and his mother are among those suing the two dioceses now.

Anderson's firm represents all of the plaintiffs in the suits that involve Father Tom. What separates the other three outstanding suits from the Riedle action is that the others did not allege abuse over an extended period of time. Greg Riedle's relationship with Father Tom went on for two years.

Most of the other alleged victims in the two dioceses where Adamson is accused had only brief encounters with the priest. The exceptions are two southwest Minnesota youths with whom Father Tom allegedly carried on extended relationships. One lasted 10 years, overlapping that youth's passage to legal age. Both are now adults, and neither has filed a suit.

Mary and John Doe, as the Risen Savior family appears on their suit, argue that the "five-second" alleged contact with Father Tom in the whirlpool in 1982 caused severe trauma.

There is debate among psychotherapists about the impact of such brief encounters on victims. Nonetheless a Ramsey County judge earlier this year ruled that the Risen Savior victims could ask a jury to assess potential damages. The damages could exceed the normal ceiling of \$400,000 in noneconomic loss, such as pain and suffering and emotional distress.

If the civil case comes to trial in February, and if the jury finds the Diocese of Winona and the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis were negligent, Anderson believes the case could have an impact on actions all over the country.

ADAMSON Continued on page 5E

John Doe 76B 483

**"DON'T TELL ANYBODY...**



**...YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE, AND SO WILL I"**

Continued from page 4E

"The claim for punitive damages, we believe, is going to be a lot more substantial than for compensatory damages," Anderson said. "They know there's a cap on compensatory damages in Minnesota of \$400,000. They see their exposure in compensatory damages as no more than that."

To prepare for a possible punitive-damages award, Anderson and colleagues have begun trying to gather information to help them measure the assets of the various church entities. Anderson believes that means he should go beyond the region — even to Rome, if necessary — to gauge the Catholic Church's ability to pay.

Andrew Eisenzimmer, an attorney representing the archdiocese in the suit, said he doubts Anderson could take the financial-discovery process beyond the archdiocese level.

**T**his past March, the Riedles and all the parties from the other side — the Diocese of Winona, the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, the insurance companies, St. Thomas Aquinas Parish and Father Tom — reached a monetary settlement.

Officially designated as a "substantial sum," the exact amount was not disclosed. Although no one involved has breached the nondisclosure agreement tied to the settlement, there was a hint of dollar figures discussed before the settlement was made.

Shortly after the suit was made public in 1987, Greg Riedle was charged with sexually abusing another girl. Although the judge eventually dismissed the case, during the testimony one of the witnesses in Greg's criminal trial testified that she had heard Greg say he had been offered between \$1 million and \$1.5 million to settle.

"There is no amount that is enough because you can't give back, the church can never give back to me the total trust that I would love to have," Janet Riedle said. "No amount of money is going to give Greg back the living happily ever after. . . . I think Greg was robbed of too many years of that process of growing up. I think Greg grew up

when he had his first contact with Father Adamson. And it was like an adult affair, and he was a child."

Janet Riedle has stopped taking the sacraments in the Catholic Church. She has, more or less, quit the Catholic Church, although "I go to church once in a while to please my husband." Her husband, John Riedle, who declined to comment for this story, is still active in the church.

When their son was discovered to be a sexual offender, Janet Riedle turned him in, alerted authorities and warned all those who might come in contact with Greg. Janet will never understand why her church did not do the same with its son, the Rev. Thomas Paul Adamson.

Bishop Carlson, who was asked to answer Janet's question about why the church did not inform people such as she did, said he did not think, under the circumstances, he could answer it to her satisfaction.

He regrets that she feels the way she does toward the church. When asked what advice he had for the Riedles, he said he didn't know if he had the right to advise them. But his advice in general would be this:

"There are lots of things that happen to people in their lifetime. And some of them are good, and some of them are bad. I think that if we let a negative experience paralyze us in some way and make us bitter, that experience continues to have some power over us. . . . It takes away our freedom."

**A**fter leaving the archdiocese in January 1985, Father Tom went back to the Diocese of Winona and then on to a treatment program in St. Louis.

For the past three years friends and family say he has been able to say mass privately. His superiors in the Winona Diocese have asked him to refrain from publicly exercising his priestly function, Father Tom said. He said in his most recent deposition.

He still receives some financial support from the Diocese of Winona, but his future is unclear even to him.

Father Tom has audited and taken courses at the University of Wis-



Staff Photos by Joey McLeister

Greg Riedle continued in a sexual addiction program after completing an in-patient treatment program. He has recently moved to Florida.

consin-Eau Claire. As of this past summer, he was living in Eau Claire. He still visits often his large family in Byron, Minn., and still officiates some church liturgies for family members.

When asked if the family had forgiven him, a sibling, who agreed to talk on the condition no name was used, praised the Tom Adamson who was always there to listen, to christen, to marry and bury the members of his family flock.

"He's my brother. I would never

turn my back on him; neither would the rest," the sibling said. "You forgive your brothers 70 times seven."

Father Tom sees therapists when he feels the need. But he still grapples with unanswered questions.

"Why would a person with my gifts take this kind of a risk and so on? You know, what does it have to do — you can masturbate by yourself without a 14-year-old present and all those kinds of things," Father Tom said when discussing his

problem during the Aug. 30 deposition. "I think there's a lot in the intimacy-needs area, a lot in control, being a forceful, dominant perfectionist type of guy that would like people around that I could be the lead guy."

"I've always worked at the idea of being celibate. . . . anybody can be celibate for a day. But then you extend that over weeks and months I found in my experience that something was going to explode. . . ."

On a summer afternoon, when a



Father Thomas Adamson

reporter and a photographer knocked on Father Tom's door to ask about his side of the story, he declined to discuss any of the matters or personalities involved.

He even declined to open the door.

So Father Tom spoke through it the way priests speak through walls in confessionals:

"My mother sees it in the papers. Her friends call her. You can't know what she has been through. You can't know," Father Tom said.

Greg Riedle is no longer involved in an inpatient treatment program, but he is a member of a sexual-addicts support group.

"I have my one-year meditation," said Greg, who has since moved to Florida. "I haven't showed (myself) to anybody for a year."

When asked if he, also a sex abuser, were any better than Father Tom, Greg bristled at the question.

"Anybody who tried to compare me to Adamson, I'd argue that. And it's an argument I'd win. Because I am better," he said.

But he admits it is a battle. "I will always have this stuff in the back of my head. It doesn't go away. It always comes back somehow, some day. Anytime it wants."