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Woman describes 'secret, special' tickling game in ex-minister's sex assault trial

Posted By LINDA RICHARDSON, The Sault Star

Updated 11 months ago

A woman testified Thursday about a "secret" game Rev. Kenneth Gibbs would play with her during family visits to his church rectory in Elliot Lake.

"He would initiate what he referred to as the tickle game," the 40-year-old woman said, describing incidents she said occurred at his home when she was a young girl.

"It was a secret game, a special game I wasn't to tell anyone about."

The witness said she was about six or seven when the minister at St. Peter the Apostle Church would have her sit on his lap and play the game.

Gibbs would put his hand in her pants and touch her vagina, she told assistant Crown attorney Mike Kelly.

"He referred to it as tickling, but it was more like stroking, caressing."

She estimated they played the game about 40 times.

The woman said she never told anyone what Gibbs was doing because "I wasn't supposed to. It was a secret."

What was happening at the minister's house "came out" when her family was on a camping trip.

The girl and her two siblings were "horse playing" in the trailer when her brother began tickling her.

"I said that's not the way Rev. Gibbs tickles," the woman recalled. "My parents said, 'What are you talking about?'"



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She said she explained about the tickle game and showed her mother where he put his hands.

Her parents subsequently went to the church, and then the family began attending another church, said the fifth complainant to testify at the former Anglican priest's trial.

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Articles & Blogs

HORNEPAYNE CENTRE, 42 DAYS, TWENTY-NINE FOR BANK
 There are only forty-two days left before the Hornepayne Town Centre closes its doors, and even less, twenty-nine days before the CIBC Bank pulls up stake and moves all accounts left to its Branch in Hearst. While both events have mostly

The Melodic Noise of 'Glee'
 Once upon a time, high school drama was bleak and boring with the common jocks vs. geeks plot taking up most of preteen entertainment. But then, Disney came up with the "he said, she said" tale choreographed to the tune of sappy and snappy slightly passable pop songs. In a post High School Mus

soup kitchen
 A great article on Emile Philips and the Soup Kitchen. I have been away from the Sault for many years. I have known of the Soup Kitchen and am happy to see they are still doing their good works.

ALL THIS MAKES YOU WONDER
 There have been two announcements in the "Soe News" this summer out of MPP Oraziotti's office, concerning millions for the north and in particular Sault St. Marie Ontario. The first notice said \$90 million for Northern job creation, infrastructure and commun

HORNEPAYNE TOWN COMPLEX UPDATE
 Although there is not much to update on Plan "A" of the Hornepayne Town Centre, which would be the sale of the complete building, a local Economic Development Committee has made some progress with Plan "B", which is to sever the Apartment

Gibbs is charged with sex offences, dating back to the 1960s and 1970s, that are alleged to have occurred in Chapleau and Elliot Lake.

The 76-year-old, who resigned from the church in 1981, has pleaded not guilty to nine counts of indecent assault involving six complainants.

A publication ban prohibits reporting any evidence that might identify the complainants.

On Thursday, Superior Court Justice Edward Koke also heard from a 41-year-old woman, who described incidents that she said occurred at the minister's home.

This Crown witness testified that Gibbs touched her vagina with his fingers five or six times between the ages of four and eight.

Another woman told the court about incidents that occurred when she was an altar girl at St. Peter's.

The altar girls and boys wore white hooded robes, with a cross on a string around the neck, and a rope belt over their clothes, she said.

The now 43-year-old woman said she was an 11-year-old Grade 5 student when the first incident happened in a church office, just before the service was to begin.

Gibbs started fixing her hood and straightening her cross.

He touched her breast area as he moved his hand down the string, she said.

The woman estimated similar incidents occurred about 80 times until she left the church in Grade 7.

"It seemed to be a weekly basis," she told Kelly.

When the prosecutor asked why she hadn't said anything to Gibbs about his actions, she replied: "He was the reverend. I don't know. He was a man of God."

She described another incident where she thought Gibbs appeared to be looking up the robe of another altar girl, who was standing on a chair, posting hymn numbers for the service.

At one point, Gibbs suggested the girls, who always wore a dress under their robes, shouldn't wear underwear, she said.

It was advice, she indicated, she didn't heed.

During cross-examination by defence lawyer Andre Berthelot, the woman agreed Gibbs would occasionally tell off-colour jokes.

"Was he joking about the underwear?" Berthelot asked.

"We weren't really sure," she responded.

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