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## **Dead Priest Is Subject of Sexual Abuse Claims**

Diocese Probes Complaints against the Late Rev. John Klebie, Who Ran Camp Scully from 1958 to 1970

By Michele Morgan Bolton  
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ALBANY -- A long-deceased priest who for 12 years ran a church-sponsored overnight camp for underprivileged children is the subject of sexual abuse allegations dating back to 1958.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany is investigating five complaints against the Rev. John P. Klebie. A sixth complaint was one of seven cases just settled against priests last month through an independent mediation program.

Klebie, who died in 1981, was removed from ministry in the 1970s when a claim he faced then was found to be credible, diocesan officials confirmed Wednesday.

The priest, who at some point changed his last name from Klebauskas, ran Camp Scully, a Catholic summer camp on Snyder's Lake in North Greenbush for kids ages 7 to 14, from 1958 to 1970.

Besides those seasonal duties, Klebie was also an athletics instructor at Catholic Central High School from 1957 to 1962, and held parish assignments at St. Anthony's in Albany, Sacred Heart in Berlin and St. Paul's in Hancock, Delaware County.

He was succeeded at the North Greenbush camp by the Rev. John Fitzpatrick, who was also forced from ministry in 1996 because he abused at least five children.

New claims against Klebie were filed in 2003, 2004 and also this year, diocesan Director of Communications Ken Goldfarb acknowledged.

Church officials have previously declined to release the names of dead and senile priests who were removed from ministry because they said neither group could defend themselves.

Among Klebie's alleged victims is a 54-year-old Troy woman who was 10 when the priest befriended her parents during their stay at a summer home near Camp Scully.

The priest who lavished large gifts on her family had a mountain of empty Budweiser bottles behind his lakeside cabin, she said. When he came over to play cards, which was frequently, Klebie would bring along the altar wine, she said.

And he'd find an excuse at bedtime to be the one to tuck her in, she said.

"I said, 'You can't do that,' when he touched me. 'It's wrong.' He said, 'I'm a holy man. I can do no wrong,' she said.

Klebie often took away the bras of young girls who were beginning to develop, she recalled. They were then forced to endure the humiliation of participating in camp activities without them. The priest was also known to leave his cabin at night after choosing a boy to get into bed with, she claimed.

For the woman, the abuse ended in 1963 after Klebie approached her during a swim and tried to

reach inside her bathing suit bottom. She said she was 12 years old at the time.

Her thoughts today, she said, are with the children who were unable to break free and who thought they were the only one. For that reason, she said, it was important to get the priest's name out to the public.

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