

# The Townships

## Provost threatened to kill me — victim's brother

By Dan Hawaleshka

SHERBROOKE — Murder suspect Jean-Paul Provost threatened to kill his alleged victim's brother with a shotgun, jurors were told Wednesday.

Alain Leblanc, brother of murder victim Manon Leblanc, said he got a call at work from his upstairs neighbor last Aug. 29, the morning his sister was shot.

Leblanc told the 12-member jury, presided over by Superior Court Judge Pierre Boily, that his neighbor said it sounded like a struggle was going on in his apartment. Leblanc said he told his neighbor to call police.

Under questioning by Crown prosecutor Michel Ayotte, Leblanc said he raced home to his apartment which he had shared with sister since she moved in with him three or four days earlier.

### SHOTGUN THREAT

Leblanc unlocked the backdoor at 1243 Woodward Street in Sherbrooke. There he said he saw Provost standing in the apartment's corridor holding a 12-gauge shotgun with an open breech. Leblanc glanced around, long enough for Provost to close the breech and point the shotgun toward him.

"Get out of here or else I'll shoot you," Leblanc said he was told by Provost.

"He seemed nervous and moved around a lot," Leblanc testified.

Leblanc then fled to the upstairs apartment where he waited for police to arrive.

Manon Leblanc, 29, lived with Provost, 44, for between six and 12 months in 1990, her brother said. The two split, but Provost would occasionally see her.

"Manon didn't want to have anything to do with Jean-Paul," Leblanc said.

Her brother remembered one meeting in a Sherbrooke park while he was playing in a horseshoe tournament.

### 'GOING TO GET YOU'

Leblanc recalled seeing from

a distance his sister walk through the park from her car. On her way back she passed a picnic table at which Provost sat with another tournament competitor. He saw his sister speaking with Provost while she continued to walk toward her car. Leblanc said he approached the two and heard Provost calmly say, "I'm going to get you."

"I asked what was going on," Leblanc told the jurors. "He (Provost) said, 'Don't worry, it'll be worked out.'"

Manon Leblanc was found dead about three weeks later, he said.

However, at no time did Le-

blanc see Provost act aggressively toward his sister, he said.

Under cross examination by defence lawyer Conrad Chapdelaine, Leblanc acknowledged that his sister had "on a few occasions" used illegal drugs. He said he saw Manon consume cocaine with friends over a four to five year period.

Throughout the day's testimony Provost sat flanked by two courtroom guards, his arms crossed much of the time.

### POLICE TESTIFY

In other testimony, three Sherbrooke policemen said Provost behaved calmly and responded to all their commands once he exited unarmed through the apar-

ment's back door. His blood-stained shirt was later confiscated as evidence.

Inside, Manon Leblanc lay dead on a bed, covered with a bed sheet.

Once handcuffed and seated in the back of a police cruiser, Provost appeared dejected, police said.

"He looked like an individual who was troubled," said Cst. Alain Julien, adding Provost spent much of his time staring at floor of the police car.

"In the car he looked sad," Cst. Marc Fortier testified.

The trial continues today with testimony expected from crime-scene experts.

## Talks with natives on the wrong track — Gogan

By Sharon McCully

KNOWLTON — Option Canada leader Greg Gogan says giving native self-government access to the notwithstanding clause could be the beginning of the end for Canada.

Gogan made the statement after constitutional negotiators raised the possibility of including access to the Constitution's notwithstanding clause in any agreement on aboriginal self-government.

The controversial notwithstanding clause, included in the 1982 Constitution and used by Quebec to pass law 178 outla-

wing English on outdoor commercial signs, allows governments to pass laws which override rights guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

### 'CONTEMPTIBLE'

In a telephone interview Wednesday, Gogan said "political and aboriginal leaders have struck a deal using the lowest common denominator which will have the effect of entrenching the contemptible notwithstanding clause."

Option Canada's 2000 members may step up activity "including perhaps demonstrations" to bring the issue to the

public, he said.

The goal of native self-government is an admirable course for aboriginal leaders to take, "but there is a superior document — the Canadian Charter — which should take precedence over the collective rights of any one group or government," he said

"The great debate is over collective versus individual rights," Gogan added.

Gogan says he is not concerned that rallying against the terms of an agreement on aboriginal self-government might create another confrontation

similar to the Oka crisis.

### PRINCIPLES

"Option Canada has a position grounded in principles that won't be abandoned to lure or appease," Gogan said.

The party leader also noted that in June, billboards throughout Quebec will begin to carry the Option Canada message which is the flip side of a sentiment expressed on billboards across Quebec by truckdriver Jim Taylor.

Taylor's message was: "My Canada includes Quebec. The Option Canada message will read, "My Quebec includes Canada."

The fledgling political party established last year with the aim of establishing an eleventh Canadian province carved out of southwestern Quebec has had its own problems.

An internal rift within the party caused some party members to split and form a movement called Unity Canada.

Maurizio Colini, president of the Brome Missisquoi riding of Option Canada, resigned his position shortly after being elected to join between 15 and 20 party members who opted for a different approach to the constitutional debate.

"We want to eliminate laws

101 and 178 by demonstrating we can live together without such laws," Colini said. "I believe with time people will understand we can live together without these laws," the local businessman added.

"We want to remain in Quebec and in Canada and continue to live in peace and harmony together," he said.

Eighty per cent of Unity Canada members are disaffected Option Canada members, he said.

The new movement is being led by Michael Price, a Westmount businessman.

## Tourism industry puts emphasis on linear parks



Outgoing Tourisme Estrie president Robert Martimbeault, new president Sylvie Vandal and director Alain Larouche discuss the future of the tourism industry in the Townships.

SHERBROOKE — Linear parks and cycle paths are the key to the development of the tourism industry in the Eastern Townships, say local industry spokesmen.

Since the success of the Estrie triade cycle path between Granby and Waterloo, the transformation of old railway beds into pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian paths has spread throughout the Eastern Townships.

Spokesmen for *Tourisme Estrie* said Monday these "green corridors" will be their main emphasis when it comes to future development and promotion of tourism in the Townships.

Tourisme Estrie spokesman Alain Larouche said traditional tourism activities such as skiing have reached maturity. He said linear paths are a growth area which could have a great impact on local tourism.

At a press conference, the association's new board of direc-

tors announced their three-point plan to ensure the success of the local tourism industry.

The first is to follow through with recommendations put forward by a sub-committee which proposed better manpower training, better packaging of tourism attractions and regional strategies to attract tourists.

### PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

Association leaders are also planning a regional tour of businesses buying advertising and organizing tours to re-evaluate target markets and publicity and promotion methods.

The third priority is to look into the integration of linear paths throughout the Eastern Townships and study the possibility of linking trails with neighbouring regions. For example, the American group Rails to Trails is considering a link between trails in Beebe with those in Stowe, Vermont.

Right now the 23-km Gran-

by/Waterloo trail is getting ready to add 31 kilometres of trail around Yamaska Park. In Magog/Orford, some 23 kilometres of trail have been forged between Katevale and South Stukely.

Lennoxville has acquired the stretch of CP railway between the town and North Hatley and Sentier Massawippi has acquired the stretch between Ayers' Cliff and Beebe. Both are completing feasibility studies on the paths.

The Greater Sherbrooke Tourism Development Agency is spending \$40,000 on a study and plans to invest \$500,000 in linear paths in the region.

Sutton/Brome Lake plan to link up with the Waterloo path this year and a group has purchased the rail bed between Foster and Drummondville. Another group has purchased the line between Granby and Farnham. The line between Farnham and St-Jean has already been acquired.

## Missing woman's family asks for help

SHERBROOKE (AE) — The family of a Cowansville woman missing for almost three months has turned to the public for help.

In a statement released Wednesday, Nathalie Champigny's parents requested any information that might help police find her body and relieve the family's "moments of anguish".

The parents are offering a cash reward for the informa-

tion, but said the amount will not be revealed right away.

Champigny, 21, has not been seen since the evening of Feb. 22, when she had dinner with Kelly Whittier, her 24-year-old ex-boyfriend, in Knowlton.

Whittier is currently facing charges of obstruction of justice and of counselling someone to commit perjury in connection with the case. He has been accused of lying to the Quebec Police Force about his

whereabouts on the night of Champigny's disappearance.

The part-time ambulance driver, who was freed without bail from police custody, is next scheduled to appear in court on May 19.

Champigny has been presumed dead by the QPF. Because of information they obtained, investigators have searched dump sites for her body.

In their statement, released

through the QPF, the Champigny family implored anyone with information that could help police in their search to contact the QPF in Sherbrooke immediately.

"Should the body be discovered, rest assured that our family will be grateful and that this will help to relieve somewhat the moments of anguish we have been living with for far too long," the statement read.

## Good Samaritan shot, beaten up on highway

SHERBROOKE (AE) — A Chambly resident was beaten and shot for no apparent reason early Wednesday when he pulled his car over to help a man on the side of Highway 10, in Sherbrooke.

The attack occurred between 3:30 and 4:30 a.m. near Sherbrooke University Hospital, said Quebec Police Force spokesman Tom McConnell.

The victim stopped his car after noticing a man standing next to a pickup truck and si-

gnalling for help.

When the victim got out of his car, he was attacked by two men, who shot him in his hand and knocked him unconscious.

After talking to the victim in hospital, investigators could not unearth any immediate motive for the assault. The attackers did not steal anything from the victim.

Police are looking for two men, both around 20 years old, driving a pickup truck.

## Thetford couple to be tried for child abuse

THETFORD-MINES (CP) — The trial of a couple who face 21 charges of assaulting and sexually abusing eight of their 11 children will go ahead, a judge ruled Wednesday.

Quebec Court Judge Jean-Francois Dionne dismissed arguments by the couple's lawyer that it took police too long to charge his clients, who live in nearby Coleraine.

Police say the couple — a man of 48 and a woman of 46 — assaulted and sexually abused the children from 1968 until 1991.

Their lawyer said police and juvenile-protection officials in Montreal were aware of allegations as far as back as 1973.

On Wednesday, the couple's eldest child, now 28, began the Crown's case by testifying that between the ages of 5 and 8 she had to get food from the garbage because she was so hungry.

"I remember once taking food from the fridge," she said, her voice trembling. "My father said: 'You do that again and I'll cut your arm off.'"

"The next time he cut me with a knife," she said, showing the court a scar on her arm.

"We were hit every day." The woman testified she shared a bedroom with three brothers and a sister and that she was responsible for changing their diapers.

"Once, I fell asleep and they played with their diapers and their excrement."

"My father took some and put it in my mouth and told me it had better not happen again."

She told the court she and four siblings escaped one night by smashing a window and taking refuge in a restaurant, where police officers took them to a hospital in Montreal.

## Risk of forest fires up due to weather

SHERBROOKE — Recent warm weather has made the danger of forest fires extreme, according to a forest watchdog group.

The *Société de conservation du sud du Québec* says citizens should exercise extreme caution when in the woods, and use fire only if absolutely necessary.

There are currently two forest fires burning in southern Quebec, including one in the Windsor area which has been contained, the group says.

So far this year there have been 43 forest fires in southern Quebec that have destroyed 43.2 hectares of forest. At the same time last year, 34 fires had destroyed 19.1 hectares of forest.