

Elderly woman dies of exposure in neighbor's yard

Second tragedy in week involving wandering senior

By Charles Rusnell

Citizen staff writer

An elderly woman who wandered from her Overbrook home was found dead in a neighbor's backyard early Saturday. It was the second such tragic incident in less than a week.

Aldea Picard, 75, was barefoot and clad only in her underclothes when she inexplicably stepped from the warmth and safety of her King George Street home into the cold, early morning darkness.

Across the street, neighbor John Kyle got out of bed at about 6:30 a.m. Saturday. As he shuffled across the kitchen to douse his outside lights, he glanced out the window to his backyard and stopped.

A small, frail, white-haired woman was stretched on her back in about a metre of clean snow next to a wire fence. The woman's arms were bent, with her hands nearly resting on her shoulders. Her right wrist was scratched and bloody, likely from falling against the fence as she struggled through the knee-high snow.

Because only a single set of tracks led to Picard's body, Ottawa police said they do not suspect foul play.

The coroner, Dr. James Dickson, believes Picard had lain in the snow since about 4 a.m., when the temperature was -6. He based his assumption on the state of her body, which was cold, but not yet frozen.

An autopsy showed she died of exposure.

Dickson said Picard was not

suffering from Alzheimer's or any other degenerative disease that affects memory. She was feverish however, and had been taken by a son to Montfort Hospital about 5 p.m. Friday. She returned home with her son about 11 p.m., the last time she was seen alive.

Members of Picard's family gathered at her home Saturday afternoon. "We don't know what happened," one of her sons said angrily. "The cops said they would come back and tell us, but nothing — nobody's come."

He declined to speak further about his mother's death, except to say she lived alone.

Picard had lived in her small, neat bungalow on the quiet cul-de-sac near the Vanier Parkway for 17 years. Neighbors said she was forgetful and had a history of wandering.

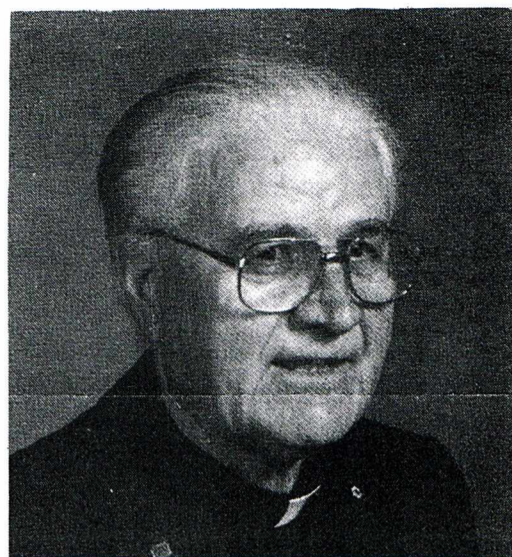
One neighbor, who asked not to be named, said she once found Picard sleeping in the rear of the neighbor's car. It was two years ago and the neighbor did not remember if it was spring or fall, but it was chilly.

Picard, dressed only in a night gown, had crawled into the unlocked car and curled up in a couple of wool blankets left in the hatchback.

"I brought her inside, warmed her up, gave her some coffee," the neighbor said. "The poor woman was completely lost. She knew her name and address, but she didn't know where she was."

Last Tuesday, 80-year-old John Butterworth was found face down in a snowbank near a house on Rothwell Circle in Gloucester. Butterworth, who had Alzheimer's disease, had wandered away from the Laurier Manor nursing home two days earlier.

An alarm was tripped when he left the home, but an extensive search by staff and police did not find him.



CONWAY, Joseph Harold O.M.I. 1911 - 1994. On December 26, 1994 at St. Patrick's Home, Ottawa. Father Harold Conway died after extended health problems and nursing home care. Born at Chute-a-Blondeau, Ontario, on March 13, 1911, he was one of several children of the late Thomas W. Conway and Laura Hoysted. Following primary and secondary schooling, Fr. "Hank" attended the Collegiate Institute in Vankleek Hill for 5 years and obtained an Ontario Teachers Certificate in 1930 at the age of 19. He then taught elementary school for a year (1930-1931) at South Plantagenet and for another year (1931-1932) in Ottawa at St. Patrick's College High School. In August 1932, he entered the Oblate Novitiate, made final profession in 1936 and was ordained by Archbishop Forbes of Ottawa on June 24, 1939. He was immediately appointed to the staff of St. Pat's High School. For 50 years he continued to devote himself enthusiastically to Catholic secondary education and even to the time of his death continued to be most interested and involved in the affairs of Catholic high schools in Ontario. After 9 years on the SPC staff he was appointed Principal and Vice-Rector, a position he retained for 15 years. During this period he was also able in 1952 to secure a Masters Degree in Guidance at Columbia University, New York. In 1960 he was elected President of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, and in 1961 President of the Ontario Teachers' Federation. He then accepted in 1963 a new assignment as Principal of Catholic Central High School in London, Ontario, a post he held for 6 years. During this time in 1967 he became President of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and in 1968 was elected an Executive Member of the World Confederation of Teaching Professions in Dublin, Ireland. In 1968 he became a member of the Oblate Provincial Council and the following year graciously agreed to a 3-year term as Superior of Holy Rosary Scholasticate in Ottawa. In 1972 he was made Chaplain and Administrator of St. Jude's Parish in Hawkesbury and in 1975 Administrator of the Oblate Springhurst Residence. In 1976 he was named to the Order of Canada by the Governor General, a recognition later duplicated by the Province of Ontario in 1973, when he was awarded the 125th Anniversary Medal for good citizenship. That same year (1976) he became Pastor of Queen of Peace Parish in Happy Valley, Labrador, until 1982 when he was appointed Pastor of Canadian Martyrs Church in Ottawa. In 1986 at the age of 75 he suffered a stroke forcing him into semi-retirement at Springhurst Residence. Although limited in his mobility he was able to continue being present to teachers, priests and students with interests in all things new and vital. Fully alive to people, to his priesthood and to thousands of ex-students, he will be missed by his brother Raymond (Lucille) of Vankleek Hill and sister Rita (Mrs. Dean Bangs) of Lachine, Quebec; sisters-in-law, Rachel and Eileen; nieces, nephews and all who knew him as family member, educator, priest and friend. Predeceased by sisters: Rev. Sister Margaret Mary and Evelyn and brothers: Cecil, Leo and Kenneth. Friends called at the Kelly Funeral Home, 585 Somerset Street. Solemn Translation, Wednesday, December 28th to St. Joseph's Church (corner of Cumberland and Wilbrod Street). Concelebrated Mass of Christian Burial was held on Thursday, December 29th at 12 noon, followed by a reception in the church hall. Interment Oblates of Mary Immaculate Cemetery, Arnprior.

PICARD, Aldea (nee Levac)

In Ottawa on Saturday, March 19, 1994, age 75 years. Dear mother of Aldei of Ottawa, Alban (Diane Demers) of Embrun, Henri (Johannes Rivers) of Ottawa, Albert (Lynne Ouellette) of Orleans, Herve (Francine Saumure) of Rockland, Jeanne (Jean-Jacques Sabourin) of St. Albert and Andre of Hallville. Dear sister of Omer and Napoleon Levac. Loving grandmother of 20 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. Predeceased by her husband Jean Picard and her son Armand. Visitation at Racine, Robert & Gauthier Funeral Directors, 300 Olmstead Street, Vanier, on Sunday from 7 to 10 p.m. and Monday from 2 to 5 and 7 to 10 p.m. Funeral Service on Tuesday at St. Sebastien at 11 a.m. Spring burial at St. Victor Cemetery, Alfred.