**Who is telling the truth?**

Upper Canada College: A former student investigates allegations of sexual assault

Craig Offman

National Post

Saturday, March 2, 2002

On an overcast morning last December, William Monash already had a few Black Ice beers in his system when his landlord dropped by his basement apartment in North Toronto and asked Monash if he needed a lift anywhere.

Monash, who seldom left his room, said he had an appointment at Upper Canada College and, sure, he would love a lift.

Minutes later, his landlord dropped him off outside the imposing gates of the city's most prestigious private boys' school.

With a 12-pack of beer under his arm, the 34-year-old former Upper Canada College student burst into the lobby and marched into the waiting room of the principal, J. Douglas Blakey, where he demanded to see him.

The receptionist told him Mr. Blakey was not in at the moment, and asked for his

name. When Monash told her, people started to clear the area. "I'm just carrying some beer, honey," Monash told her. "I'm not going postie on you."

Given their reaction, the people in the office knew that William Monash (whose

name has been changed) was a plaintiff in a $64-million civil action suit against the

school, the principal and the person at the centre of the case, Doug Brown, a former

teacher whom Monash and nine other Upper Canada College Old Boys have

accused of molesting them when they were students during the 1970s.

Now, almost three decades later, Brown is facing charges on 19 counts of sexual

assault. (Brown denies the charges. A hearing to establish a trial date will take place in November).

Monash occupied Blakey's office for about three hours, sitting at the principal's desk, listening to jazz, drinking his beer and flicking his cigarette ashes into his baseball cap.

Vicki Kelman, the school's abuse expert, spoke to Monash, as did Mark White, the detective constable who arrested Brown last August.

"Good to see you're out socializing a little," the officer joked. After polishing off the beer, Monash left peacefully and a UCC security guard drove him back to his apartment.

Deeply troubled, William Monash is notorious among people following this case for his erratic behaviour.

Even when Monash and I sat near each other in Brown's English class 22 years ago, a year after Brown, the charismatic teacher and dorm master, had allegedly abused him, he was already jittery and nervous.

Nowadays, Monash's mood can shift dramatically in a matter of seconds. In the dozens of conversations I have had with him since September, a casual discussion could turn into a rant.

Sometimes, talking on the telephone, he would break down weeping and hang up.

Last November, he and I sat on milk crates at the back of his building while he rolled cigarettes with nicotine-stained fingers and told me that while most of the other former students in this case contend that they were occasionally visited by a drunken man who tried to grope them in their beds, he, Monash, had been "looking for an uncle" and was "complicit" with Brown.

(According to Monash and his lawyer Zoran Samac, Brown broke off their intimacy.)

Monash left UCC in Grade 12. After graduating from another independent school, he went to university, dropped out, and worked at various jobs, including one for an insurance company. Fear of authority and intimacy make it difficult for him to hold a job or enjoy a long-term relationship. He has had two failed marital relationships. "I can't touch a woman without thinking I'm abusing her," he said.

Monash didn't tell his parents about what had happened to him at UCC until 1997. At that point, his mother complained to the school. Monas filed charges with the police in 2000. But he has mixed feelings about the suit. If the action is successful, Monash won't receive any more than $275,000, the maximum damages a court will grant in Canada. In that event, he says he'll change his name and move somewhere else and open up a bar. "But do you even think $20-million would make a difference?" he told me, more in anger than in self-pity.

Allegations of sexual assault by teachers at all-boys schools are not unusual in Canada or anywhere else, but many consider Upper Canada College the flagship private boys school in the country. Often compared to Eton, the granddaddy of English public schools, UCC's list of alumni reads like a Who's Who of prominent Canadian businessmen, politicians and writers.

Upper Canada College is located on a 17-hectare piece of land in Toronto's posh enclave of Forest Hill, and the property alone is worth $220-million. But no one can put a price on its reputation and history. The school has long regarded itself in a class of its own, and for good reason: They have graduated 16 Rhodes scholars. Alumni include modern

medicine pioneer Sir William Osler, novelist Robertson Davies, Hollinger chairman Conrad Black, writer Michael Ignatieff, actor Brendan Fraser, and Canada's current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bill Graham.

The college has also acted in loco parentis to the scions of many families who are, as the late writer Mordecai Richler might have characterized them, "world-famous in Canada" -- the Thomsons and the Rogers.

Though the power of the city's Anglican ruling class has dwindled over the past few decades, the school is still popular with parents. In 1979, the odds of getting admitted to UCC were one in three. Now, for every 10 boys who apply, half drop out after a preliminary exam, and only one out of five is ultimately admitted, at a cost of about $18,000 a year. And, the school claims, every member of last year's graduating class, the school says, was offered admission to a college or university.

Under the decade-long tenure of principal Blakey, the school has moved away from its Anglo leanings and entered the global era. "We were a British school that's now a leading-edge school," the school's admissions director David Mumby said. The International Baccalaureate, which prepares students for a post- secondary liberal arts education, is now a compulsory program.

Given its eagerness to enter the new century, perhaps it is not so surprising, then, that the 173-year-old institution has recently taken well-publicized steps, including the appointment of a "school safety expert," former Justice Sydney Robins, to study ways to improve policies regarding harassment and abuse. UCC has put Vicki Kelman, a respected expert on sexual abuse, on a retainer to consult with the complainants, and with current students.

- - -

Still, many in the school community have questioned the way in which the college handled the Brown case, which first came to light in 1975, when a student made a complaint about Brown to the headmaster of the Prep -- the junior boarding school of which Brown was a dormitory master. No substantial action was taken and Brown remained on the Prep faculty until 1993, when the same student, now a troubled adult, complained to the school once again. Brown was suspended pending an internal investigation, and later fired.

After news of Brown's arrest broke last August, criticisms of the college's handling of the matter intensified. The Globe and Mail reported that UCC had given the first complainant $25,000 to come forward in 1993 as part of a non-disclosure agreement. Four years later, in 1997, the same Old Boy, whom we will call Tom Walker, returned to the school once more and received another similar sum, which the school said was given to a counselling organization on his behalf. But this time, inexplicably, Walker also decided to go to the police.

About the same time, William Monash's mother made similar allegations about Brown. At that point, principal Blakey decided that the police should intervene.

James FitzGerald's 1994 book about Upper Canada College, Old Boys, was a chronicle of a controversy foretold.

An informal survey of Old Boys in the book mentions 14 instances of sexual misconduct by eight teachers at the college -- be it of a disciplinary nature (such as caning while teacher was aroused), casual (perhaps a hand down a student's shirt in the middle of class) or romantic (affairs between teacher and student.)

Despised by many alumni, FitzGerald's compilation of oral testimonies was seen by school loyalists as a cynical hatchet job by a vindictive graduate. His friend calls him the "Salman Rushdie of Forest Hill." In one Old Boy's recollection, the late teacher I.K. Shearer was called "a notorious homosexual, little-boy watcher and molester." Another Old Boy recalls an affair in which he seduced a closeted teacher, who left the school in the mid-'80s.

FitzGerald also possesses some astonishing material that hasn't been published. In a transcribed conversation with the late principal Patrick Johnson, Johnson discussed Clark Winton "Nobby" Noble, who was fired by the college for allegedly getting a student drunk and raping him in 1971. "I'm amazed that the parents didn't take legal action in that

particular case," Johnson said. He also claimed that he had forewarned Appleby College, in Oakville, Ont., where Noble went on to teach. Noble retired in 1991 and in 1997, pleaded guilty to sex-related offenses during his tenure at Appleby.

Casually dressed in chinos and a peach button-down shirt, principal Blakey speaks in low, hushed tones when I meet him in his traditionally furnished corner office. A former science teacher who has been at the school in various capacities since 1975, Blakey is a quietly tenacious man who, unlike most of his predecessors, has never been educated in

England. His small, thick glasses and his tendency to wince slightly make him seem like a milder version of Donald Rumsfeld.

Blakey has said that in 1975, when the first allegations of sexual abuse were raised by some students, the Prep school headmaster, Richard Howard, had conducted a series of discussions with some faculty and some students. Beyond that, Blakey says, there are no records of the investigation. Choosing his words carefully, he also dismisses the suggestion that the school paid Walker hush money in 1993. "It did not prevent [Tom Walker] from going to the police in 1997."

Blakey is not given to grand gestures or high flights of language.

When I asked him if the allure of UCC, with its young students ranging in age from five to 19, make it a draw for child molesters, he replied that "predators are currently are found at any locale."

We only know the official story. But the collective history of the claimants presents a darker, alternative reality.

- - -

"What happened with Doug Brown is my essence," Tom Walker said.

It took me several months to find Tom Walker, but when I did, he was a patient in a psychiatric hospital in western Canada. He was reluctant to discuss his case until I told him I had attended UCC around the same time as he had. We discussed some of the teachers we had had in the Prep, including Doug Brown, and swapped jokes about a few of them. It was the first of half-a-dozen conversations I had with Walker, and he insisted I report the fact that he was institutionalized. (He has since been discharged.)

Walker is the third generation of Walker Old Boys, so it was important to his father that he, too, attend Upper Canada College. As it stood, however, there were no spots available for day students at the time. So while the Walkers lived a 15-minute drive from the school -- in the old-money enclave of Rosedale in downtown Toronto - they enrolled him

as a boarder, one of around 60 boys who slept in four dorms on the grounds of UCC.

On his first night in the Prep at UCC, Walker told me, they had a singsong in a master's room and Walker, 12 at the time, had a terrible attack of homesickness and started crying. Doug Brown, the dormitory master, who had also just started at the school, walked Tom back to his dorm, wherehe quickly fell asleep. But within an hour, Walker says, he awoke to find a curtain drawn around his bed and a teacher forcing sex upon him. Walker says that it was light enough that he could see what he thinks was Brown's face.

Within days, he reported the incident to the headmaster, Richard Howard (who died in 1996). "He took a lot of notes," Walker recalls, adding that otherwise, Howard said little.

Walker's father, who initially believed his son's account, met with Howard but after their conversation, Walker says, his father changed his mind. "My father repeated what Dick Howard had told him: that I needed to be careful about what I said," Walker said.

Fear soon took him over. "I was a 12-year-old boy and I was scared," he said.

The rumour of Walker's complaint soon spread through the dormitory, but instead of gaining him sympathy, people singled him out. He says that one teacher drew him aside and tore into him. "He told me that there was no place for liars at the school. He told me that what I said about Doug Brown was despicable and that I should apologize."

"Nobody wanted to include [Walker] in any activities, or be included with him in any activities," recalls Steve Roberts, another plaintiff, whose name has been changed. "Everyone came down on him."

Walker said he had also confided in other three boarders, but only one of them, Simon Powers, believed him.

They were standing by a window overlooking the grounds. Powers, whose name has been changed, put his hand on Walker's shoulder and hesitantly claimed that Brown had attacked him, too. It was an awkward moment for both of them, and because they had little else in common, the two boys barely ever spoke of the matter again.

"It was one of the greatest days in my life," Walker recalled. "I wish I could bottle that feeling. It was like having an impacted molar removed."

Walker said he lived in terror of Brown, especially when it came time for communal showers and Brown was on duty. He'd watch the boarders, and had control of the water temperature. "I would do anything to avoid showers," Walker said. "I'd get a note from the nurse." He also had nightmares of Brown attacking him again and the panic would return. "What would I do the second time?" he said. "Who would I tell?"

After three years at UCC, Walker dropped out of school. He took several jobs working with horses, but battled bouts of depression. He has been hospitalized on several occasions. Still, it wasn't until 1992 that a girlfriend persuaded him to confront the school. "I had a lot of demons in my closet, and this one was the biggest," he told me. "But I didn't want people to treat me like a leper, as people did to sexual assault victims in the 1970s."

Ultimately, Walker said, he might have forgiven Brown and the college, but he still feels real resentment toward Richard Howard, the aloof, tweedy headmaster who had waved off his first tearful complaint in 1975.

Walker said he realized this when he was about 18 and living on the streets of Toronto. One evening, he spotted Doug Brown with another teenager standing in a line for a movie at Yonge and Bloor. Brown greeted him as though nothing had ever happened between them. "He just said, 'Oh, hi, how are you?' " Walker recalled. "For the first and only time in my life I wanted, with every fibre in my body, to cause serious physical harm to someone."

But Walker restrained himself. In hindsight, he realized why. "God gives you strength to forgive those who harm you," he told me. "But He doesn't give you the strength to forgive those who permitted the harm to happen," he went on. "What he did not do caused me some horrific scarring."

- - -

Doug Brown had arrived at UCC in 1975 with a Master's degree in English from McMaster University and some experience as an editor at a small literary press. He was 26 years old and was also friends with Richard Howard's daughters. "Doug used to come and visit them at the headmaster's house," said a former teacher. "That's how Dick [Howard] got to know him, and eventually hired him."

In a formal environment where boys would often wear blazers, ties and loafers, Brown was proudly unconventional. He wore denim outfits and construction boots. Of medium-height with a slight beer drinker's paunch, Brown had a mischievous streak that was underscored by an impish smile, granny glasses and a thick moustache. He played favourites. But even if you were one of the chosen, he could still turn on you.

At first, many faculty members regarded him as a gifted teacher and good company. "He was warm and witty and funny," says one veteran teacher.

When Brown was arrested last summer, after returning from his teaching job in China to visit his mother, the UCC community was still deeply divided over the issue of his guilt. Over drinks one night last November, former teacher Paul Illidge told me he had written a letter to the editor of the Toronto Star, which the paper published in mid-August. In it, he complained that the media had already accused Brown of sexual assault even before a judge had seen the evidence. Soon after the letter appeared, Illidge received an email of gratitude from a former student of Brown's who proposed setting up a defense fund on their former teacher's behalf.

Illidge also received a phone message left by an unidentified woman claiming that she had worked with Brown in China and believed he was guilty.

Countless Old Boys I've talked to claim that they weren't surprised with Brown's arrest. But one of them told me that he had spent an entire summer with Brown travelling through Europe in a van and insisted that the teacher's behavior was impeccable. Many students still maintain that Brown was one of the best teachers they ever had.

Few, if any of Brown's friends would speak to me at length, except Julia Hastings. Her late husband was a drinking pal of Brown's, and Brown tutored her son for free. When I visited her in her knicknacked apartment with many horse photos, she reported that Brown was shaken up badly, especially by the nature of the charges. "Imagine calling me a child molester?" she recalls him saying to her.

Hastings says there's no reason to arrest Brown, or to have the school's good name dragged down with the case. "These are the proclivities of boys who wanted their willies to be pulled. To me, this is not a crime," she said. "This is all about money."

As informed as her words sound, she denied knowing whether or not Brown had sexual relations with his students.

I tried to reach Brown through his lawyer for an interview, but my request was turned down.

Hastings, however, passed on a message from Brown: he remembered me fondly, was proud to have taught someone who was making his living as a "wordsmith," and he said he wished that I was writing about him under different circumstances. He said that he himself was writing about the doomed teacher and revolutionary Louis Riel.

I sent him an email, thanking him for the message. He didn't reply.