

FATHER CHARLES BRANDT

Local priest wins Haig-Brown honor, celebrates his 25th

Father Charles Brandt, 68, of Black Creek became the 12th winner of the Roderick Haig-Brown Conservation Award at the Totem Flyfishers 23rd annual meeting.

He also marked his 25th anniversary of priesthood recently and a story on that appears below.

Father Brandt was recognized for his, "selfless devotion to conservation and wise use of natural resources".

In making the presentation, a past-president of the Totems said that, among the candidates considered, "none seemed more outstanding than Brandt."

Father Charles Alfred Edwin Brandt is not only a dedicated champion of careful ecology, he's an unusually interesting, colorful clergyman who "is one of us - an angler - the salt of the earth," said the presenter.

The Haig-Brown award is not necessarily awarded annually. Recipients include conservation organizations, and outstanding individuals like Brandt.

Following is an outline of Father Brandt's interests and activities:

Brandt derives his living from paper conservation and restoration. His involvement in conservation programs and campaigns has led to other such awards.

Brandt lives alongside the Oyster River in a house that also is his workshop. He was particularly active with the Comox Valley Branch of the Steelhead Society and of a task group on the nearby Puntledge River.

He also was chairman of the Branch's Tsolum River enhancement committee, which spearheaded local pressure for the governmental cleanup of acid mine drainage from the former Mount Washington Copper Mine on the headwaters of the Tsolum River.

Brandt earned a biology degree at Cornell University in the early 1960s and worked with eminent B.C. scientist Dr. Robert Bama in the late '60s on the Tsolum River pink salmon study. He was ordained as a Roman

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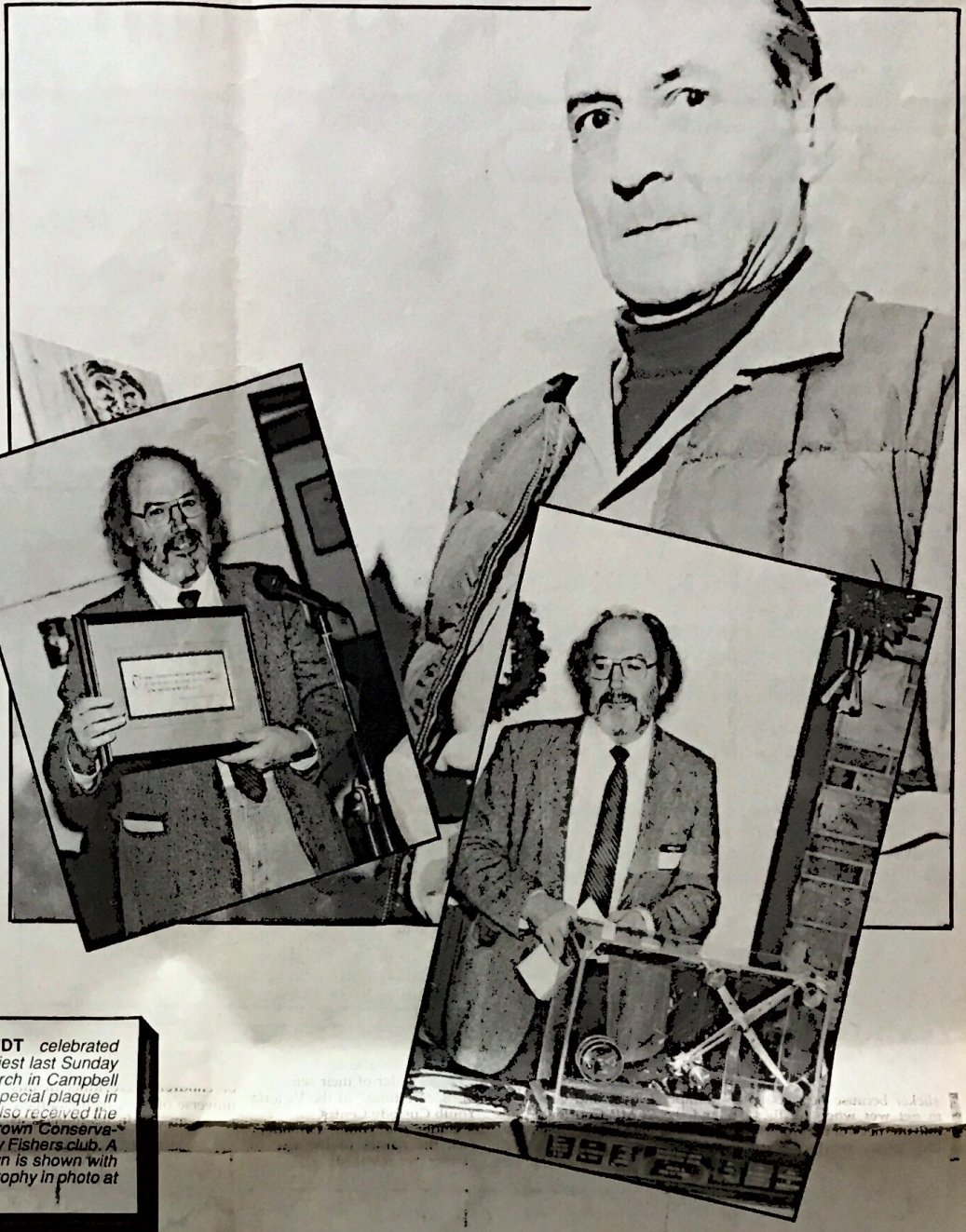
Catholic priest in 1966.

Brandt has been or still is a director of: Friends of Strathcona Park, Oyster River Enhancement Society, Haig-Brown Kingfisher Creek Society, Campbell River Environmental Council, Vancouver Island Resources Society and, not forgetting his clerical concerns, he is chairman Commission of the Catholic Church.

Brandt once wrote: "In the past, we have looked at this tiny planet as a provider of resources without limit for Man, yielding without end, whatever he demanded.

Now the end is in sight. It can be turned around but it will never be the same again. We belong here. The earth is more than just a home. It is a living system, and we are part of it."

FATHER CHARLES BRANDT celebrated his 25th anniversary as a priest last Sunday at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Campbell River (he is seen with the a special plaque in the inset picture on left). He also received the prestigious Roderick Haig-Brown Conservation Award from the Totem Fly Fishers club. A picture of the late Haig-Brown is shown with Father Brandt in front of the trophy in photo at right.



"An honor to have a man like him among us"

**By Joan Brown
Special to the C-I**

Father Charles Brandt celebrated his 25th anniversary as a priest last Sunday at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Campbell River.

In his sermon, Fr. Gary Hartmann said, "It is an honor to have a man like him among us - one who shows us by his way of life that many different ways to follow God are possible."

Two hundred parishioners gathered for lunch in the parish hall, after mass to honor the hermit priest who is well known for his activism in the environmental movement.

Parishioner Frank Roberts outlined the many environmental awards given to Brandt, calling him "an extraordinary person who saves souls and rivers and

wants to restore man's contemplative spirit."

Parish Council chairman Ed Hrechuk presented Fr. Brandt with a framed quote by theologian Thomas Berry from his book, "The Dream of the Earth".

Following the presentation, Fr. Brandt sketched in his own background that brought him as a hermit priest to this area.

"In the early 1960's as a Trappist monk in the United States, I studied the roots of monasticism and found the earliest monks were hermits in the desert. When I heard that hermits were settling in Vancouver Island I wanted to join them and got permission from the Abbot to go to the Tsolum River site."

"Father Jaques Winandy was the leader of the colony of her-

mits of St. John the Baptist here who accepted me in March 1965 and on Nov. 21, 1966, I was ordained by Bishop Remi de Roo in the Church of the Canadian Martyrs in Courtenay."

Prior to coming to the Comox Valley, the 41-year-old hermit had served in the U.S. Air Force during World War II, then earned a bachelor of science degree in 1948 before being ordained in the Anglican Church in 1951.

In 1956 he joined the Catholic Church and sought out a life of contemplation and prayer in the monastic life.

Once here as a member of the hermit colony, Brandt found he had to earn his own living and build his own hermitage.

"It was a life of real commun-

ism," he said, "Give what you can and receive what's needed." With the help of the Trappists of Lafayette who sent him printing and bookbinding equipment, he set up his paper conservation and bookbinding studio.

Brandt told his audience that the late Rod and Ann Haig Brown and their daughter Valerie helped him get established in his conservation business and that, in 1969 with the help of the Knights of Columbus, he left the Tsolum River and built a new hermitage and book bindery on the Oyster River where he still lives.

He noted the church's growth in awareness of the importance of the environment over the past 20 years.

"After returning from India in

1968, I applied to the diocese for funding to attend a conference on the environment in Saskatchewan called 'Deep Ecology'. My request was turned down as it was felt the environment was not a priority."

"Recently I applied again for funding to attend an environmental conference in Seattle and this time the diocese approved. The keynote speaker was Thomas Berry who spoke of ours as a critical time in which we are turning down our life support systems."

In concluding, Brandt listed the four things he says are necessary for the individual. "We have to be attentive to science and appreciate that all life is interconnected. Next we must really study the spirituality of our na-

tive people for they are the most spiritually sensitive people the world has ever known."

"Thirdly, we must practice Christian meditation to get beyond our senses to a deeper awareness of Christ. And lastly we should 'Follow our Bliss' and do that in life which brings each of us the most joy."

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