



Fr. Brandt (centre) received the trophy from B.C. president Rory Glennie (left) and Valley Society president Martin Lamont

# An award well-deserved

By QUENTIN DODD  
Island News Service

Officially Father Charles Brandt is a hermit priest who derives his living from paper conservation and restoration.

But when Brandt is not restoring valuable documents, he's involved in an extensive variety of other conservation programs which led to him receiving the top environmental award from the Steelhead Society of B.C. last week.

Brandt, who lives alongside the Oyster River in a secluded house which is also his laboratory and workshop, was presented with the Cal Wood Award at a special ceremony at his home Friday.

The conservator was scheduled to receive the honor at the Steelhead Society's annual convention in Richmond Feb. 5, but he wasn't available at the time. He was one of numerous volunteers helping to clean up a major oil spill which spread along the west coast of Vancouver Islands from a sunken barge off the coast of Washington State.

So instead, B.C. society

## Cal Woods Trophy to Father Charles Brandt

president Rory Glennie and Comox Valley Steelhead Society chapter president Martin Lamont made the presentation at Brandt's home.

He received the Cal Woods trophy and a framed print of a steelhead being released for him to put on his wall to mark his achievement.

Brandt has been particularly active with the Comox Valley chapter of the Steelhead Society and is a member of a task group set up through the chapter to tackle concerns regarding the Puntledge River.

He is also chairman of the chapter's Tsolum River enhancement committee, which spearheaded local pressure for a government cleanup of acid mine drainage from the former Mount Washington

Copper Mine. The acid drainage and elevated levels of copper associated with it have been identified as the cause of the obliteration of fish stocks in the Tsolum River and a number of its tributaries during the past 20 years.

Glennie also noted that Brandt, who was nominated for the honor from the Lower Mainland, is also a director of Campbell River's Haig-Brown Kingfisher Creek Society, the local environmental council, the Vancouver Island Resources Society based in Campbell River, and the Oyster River enhancement Society.

He is also chairman of the environmental committee of the Social Justice Commission of the Catholic Church on Vancouver Island is involved,

with the museum societies in Campbell River and Courtenay, and is active with the Comox-Strathcona Natural History Society.

Glennie said shortly before the presentation that Brandt has shown "a long-standing dedication to conservation going right back to when the Pacific Playground marina was being proposed (in the Oyster River estuary in the early 1970s)".

Brandt said he and his supporters did not win the battle against the marina development, but he noted some aspects of the proposal about which they had been particularly concerned did not go ahead.

And he said he feels there are signs of cause for optimism that struggles for environmental conservation are now shorter and have a better chance of success.

Brandt said he found the award "very humbling", especially since he had a great deal of respect for the late Wood, who died about four years ago and whom he knew personally.

He said he used to fish the Oyster River with him in the early days of the formation of the Steelhead Society.

Brandt said he was quite surprised when he learned he had been awarded the honor.

He said he feels the award was given to him largely because of his work to restore the Tsolum River, the river he settled alongside with other hermits when he first came to the area in 1965.

"Even if you lose a battle such as the one on the estuary of the Oyster, what you do is you make people aware," he said. "If that battle hadn't taken place, we wouldn't be as aware of the importance of estuaries."

Brandt said that in his other conservation work he is restoring watercolored drawings by the late architect Francis Rattenbury, dating back to about 1912, from which the blueprints for B.C. legislative buildings would have been made.

They were found in the attic in Victoria and were brought to Brandt via the Maltwood Galley at the University of Victoria.