

Abuse victims claims no money from \$900,000 settlement

by [Aimee Green](#)

January 6, 2011

PORTLAND, Ore. (RNS) A man who secured a \$900,000 settlement for alleged abuse at the hands of a Catholic priest has yet to see a penny more than seven years after the church paid out the money.

In a lawsuit filed this week in Multnomah County Circuit Court, the man alleges that attorneys who represented him in the case managed to claim \$877,000 of the settlement, leaving him no more than \$23,000.

Yet the man, identified only by his initials, G.B., hasn't seen a check for any amount.

According to the suit, G.B. has been living off \$400 to \$500 a month in Social Security disability payments. Little has been disclosed about G.B. He's reportedly suffered a lifetime of damage because of the abuse, which occurred while he was a student at All Saints Catholic School in Northeast Portland by the Rev. Thomas Laughlin. Laughlin was kicked out of the priesthood in 1983 after being convicted of molesting boys.

"He was supposed to get some compensation for what happened to him as a kid, and he didn't," said Jack Polance, the Portland attorney seeking almost \$700,000, plus interest, for G.B. in the suit.

The standard attorney contingency fee is one-third of a settlement,

and it should be stated in a written agreement. If more than one attorney works on a case, the attorneys should hash out how they split that amount, Paul said.

G.B. hired attorney Michael "Mickey" Morey in 2001 to represent him in a suit against the Archdiocese of Portland. Morey worked on the case for 2 1/2 years, and got a \$650,000 settlement offer from the archdiocese. He continued to negotiate for a higher amount, but in July 2003, G.B. fired Morey and hired Portland attorney Frederick T. Smith.

Three days later, Smith negotiated a \$900,000 settlement offer, which G.B. accepted. Smith took one-third of the settlement -- or \$300,000 -- as his fee. But Morey believed he was due a large chunk of that fee because he'd done virtually all the work leading up to the settlement. Smith wouldn't share.

Morey sued his former client, and in 2004, a judge ruled that Morey had "substantially performed his contractual duties" and should get \$300,000 of the settlement, plus \$72,000 in interest and legal costs.

This week's suit claims the man's second lawyer gave him bad legal advice by encouraging him to fight the original attorney every step of the way, including up to the Oregon Supreme Court.

The years of additional litigation cost G.B. big; By the time it was all over, he was ordered to pay Morey \$527,000.

Morey, who is now retired, said he was willing to split legal fees for the settlement with the second attorney, but Smith refused to negotiate.

"I worked very hard on that case for G.B. for nearly 2 1/2 years, and literally at the 11th hour and 59th minute, (Smith) comes in, settles the case and says I was entitled to zero," Morey said.