

WALTER HALLORAN

REV. WALTER HALLORAN, WAS IN FAMED EXORCISM

Wauwatosa, Wis.

The Rev. Walter Halloran, a priest who took part in an exorcism that spawned the book and movie "The Exorcist," has died at 83.

He was the last living Jesuit who assisted in the 1949 exorcism at a psychiatric unit in St. Louis. He died Tuesday night at a Jesuit retirement home in suburban Milwaukee.

Halloran was a 27-year old Jesuit scholastic at Saint Louis University when a priest called him to the psychiatric wing at Alexian Brothers Hospital.

The Rev. Will Bowdern was trying to help a 14-year old boy who he believed was possessed by a demon, and he needed a strong man to help control the boy. A third Jesuit, the Rev. William Van Roo, also was there.

"The little boy would go into a seizure and get quite violent," Halloran told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in 1988. "So Father Bowdern asked me to hold him. Yes, he did break my nose."

Halloran said he saw streaks and arrows and words like "hell" on the boys skin.

A three-paragraph news account of the incident inspired William Peter Blatty to write his 1971 best seller, "The Exorcist," which led to the movie a few years later. Blatty's store featured a 12-year old girl.

Halloran earned two Bronze Stars for serving as a paratrooper chaplain during the Vietnam War, the oldest airborne chaplain at the time, at 48. Halloran later taught at Saint Louis University and was named its director of national alumni relations in 1972.

He was born in Jackson, Minn., in 1921, the oldest of nine children.

Associated Press
Wednesday, March 9, 2005