

Drinking diplomats relinquished their driver's licences, but not immunity

Three foreign diplomats had their driver's licences suspended after being charged with impaired driving-related offences in Ottawa this year. They refused to waive immunity after it was determined there was "sufficient evidence" to warrant the laying of criminal charges, Ottawa police said. "A formal request for immu-

THREE CHARGED

nity to be waived was made but not obtained," said Ottawa police Supt. Charles Bordeleau, adding all three opted instead to turn over their licenses to Foreign Affairs under Canada's zero-tolerance

policy on impaired driving by diplomats, and avoid prosecution. That policy was created after Russian diplomat Andrei Knyazev killed Catherine MacLean in a January, 2001 drunk driving crash. *CanWest News Service*



Homeless again, Mr. Nobody in citizenship limbo

CAN'T GET PASSPORT

BY PETER BRIEGER
in Toronto
AND KATYA DELIMBEUF
in Lisbon

Almost six years after Mr. Nobody wandered into a Toronto hospital claiming he'd lost his memory, the man with no identity is back where he started: in a homeless shelter, searching for a country willing to call him a citizen.

Canadian immigration authorities have consistently refused to grant him a passport since he arrived under a cloud of mystery in 1999, saying he'd been mugged in a Toronto park. So Sywald Skeid (possibly also known as Philip Staufen, Keith Ryan and Georges Lecuit) is now

HE HAS NOWHERE

TO GO AND HE'S NOT

A DANGER TO ANYONE?

trying to win citizenship across the Atlantic.

His Canadian wife has petitioned Portuguese authorities to give Mr. Skeid, now living in Victoria, B.C., a passport because of her dual citizenship.

But Portuguese authorities aren't exactly welcoming the mysterious 30-year-old — believed by many to be a former gay porn actor — with open arms.

"Even if he applied for Portuguese nationality through his marriage, the lack of identity documents would make the process impossible," said Fernando Simoes Bento, a spokesman at the Portuguese Foreign Office Ministry.

Neither Portuguese diplomats in Canada nor immigration officials will discuss the case of a man who has been trapped in nationality limbo for years.

Meanwhile, Nathalie Hervé,

Mr. Skeid's wife and the estranged daughter of his former B.C. lawyer, said she is running out of money, and hope.

Working as an English teacher in Lisbon, the Portuguese capital, Ms. Hervé told the *National Post* that she can't afford to keep her husband in their Victoria apartment, so he's been forced to live in a shelter among the "violent and vulgar people" Mr. Skeid tried to avoid when he first arrived penniless in Toronto.

Ms. Hervé, who's been in Portugal since March, said she's had a nervous breakdown after striking out with the country's immigration authorities, Amnesty International and even the Red Cross, which she hoped would declare her husband "stateless" so he could leave Canada.

But the 26-year-old isn't planning to pack her bags just yet, nor has Mr. Skeid asked her to give up the fight.

"Going back would mean giving up," she said. "He is a man of his word, and so am I."

A Toronto detective who tried to help the mystery man recover his identity doesn't share the view that Mr. Nobody is committed to the truth — and he's not the only one.

Doubts about Mr. Skeid's amnesia story spiked in 2001 when international efforts to identify him turned up photos and movies starring Georges Lecuit, a porn actor in London who looked remarkably similar to the man of many names.

"Yeah, he's the guy," said Detective Stephen Bone, who now works in the Toronto Police Services fraud section. "I have absolutely no doubt."

Det. Bone thinks Mr. Skeid's memory loss is just a ruse to forget his past. "I'd have to think so," Det. Bone said. "We're faced with the knowledge we have now, which is that he worked as a model in London."

The peculiar story began in November, 1999, when Mr. Skeid says he woke up in a Toronto

park with head injuries from an apparent mugging. He told police he could remember nothing, except that he was born in 1975 with the name Philip Staufen, a medieval German king.

After bouncing from shelter to shelter, well-meaning strangers tried to help the multilingual man with a British accent, who showed little interest in finding out his true identity.

The case garnered heavy media attention and then-immigration minister Elinor Caplan offered Mr. Skeid a temporary residence permit so he could work in this country. He initially refused the offer, demanding full citizenship, much to the shock of immigration officials.

He later accepted the permit, though his status meant he couldn't leave the country.

Over the years, Mr. Skeid moved to Montreal and then to Halifax — changing his name and appearance several times. But last year, immigration officials — armed with the knowledge that former acquaintances in England identified him — demanded Mr. Skeid sit down with them for a chat about his past. He was later arrested and jailed for a short time, and launched a hunger strike.

"There is no reason why he can't be at home even if they aren't satisfied with his identity," Ms. Hervé said at the time. "He has nowhere to go and he's not a danger to anyone."

After his release, the couple moved back to Victoria, where Mr. Skeid now lives. He is supposed to check in monthly with immigration officials.

A CBC investigation this year found a Romanian woman who believed Mr. Skeid is her missing son, a theory buffered by family pictures that show a young man who bears a strong resemblance to Ms. Hervé's husband.

National Post



Mr. Nobody has changed identities several times, and his true one is uncertain.



COURTESY OF THE POST NEWSPAPERS PERTH

Rory Christie, accused of killing his wife, Susan, spent four years in prison before the case was thrown out.

Albertan wants payback for failed murder charge

Australian wife's body still missing

BY EMMA POOLE

CALGARY • An Alberta man who spent nearly four years in an Australian prison accused of killing his wife, will seek to recover the nearly \$1-million in legal fees spent to secure his freedom.

Rory Christie, 36, of Lloydminster, arrived home from Australia on Saturday, one day after a judge threw out the case against him.

It was an emotional reunion with friends and family — including Mr. Christie's nine-year-old son Fraser — who haven't seen the computer expert since he was charged in 2001 with the murder of his estranged wife, Susan, who vanished that November and hasn't been seen since.

After a full-night's sleep at his parent's home in the city of 23,643 on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border, Mr. Christie said he's looking forward to rebuilding the relationship with his son and spending the holidays with his family.

"A lot of time and money was stolen from me that shouldn't have

been," Mr. Christie said yesterday in a telephone interview from Lloydminster. "We can only hope we can move forward from here."

The nightmare that became Mr. Christie's life began in 2001 when Susan Christie, a 42-year-old native Australian, disappeared without a trace from her Perth apartment.

The couple had met in Canada in 1995, were married and then moved back to Perth, where Fraser was born.

Years later, the marriage began to crumble and the pair legally separated.

By 2001, Rory Christie had won full custody of Fraser, after evidence in family court showed Susan had surrounded herself with hard-drinking, hard-living friends and several lovers.

She disappeared on Nov. 15 or 16, 2001. Mr. Christie was charged several months later with her murder despite the fact his estranged wife's body was never recovered.

Mr. Christie was found guilty in 2003 and sentenced to life in prison.

Last March, his conviction was scrapped and a new trial ordered. The retrial started last month.

On Friday, Judge John McKechnie ordered the charges dropped and Mr. Christie released due to lack of evidence.

Mr. Christie, who always denied killing his wife, said yesterday he was targeted by Australian police who used outdated technology and shoddy detective work to build a case against him.

"Basically, I guess that the police department there had a history of getting away with soft forensics," he said. "They didn't care if I was guilty or not. They wanted to get someone."

Mr. Christie had the feeling investigators "made it a personal thing."

"If we held the case to Canadian standards, there wouldn't have been a trial," he said. "Everything they did was completely flawed and exaggerated."

It's unlikely he will ever return to Australia. Prosecutors have said they will abandon the case against him.

"All my family is here so I don't have too much to go back to," he said.

Mr. Christie still holds out hope his former wife will be found. If she was murdered, he wants to see her killer punished.

"As for my son, she was his mother. I'd like for him to have that," he said.

He said he plans to pursue a malicious prosecution case against police and the courts.

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