Previous Dowd allegation acknowledged

Diocese says it received Keene complaint in '71

The Associated Press

Contrary to what it said last week, the Diocese of Manchester did know of a previous allegation of sexual abuse against the late Rev. Karl Dowd.

The diocese has acknowledged that it received an allegation against Dowd in February from a man who says Dowd molested him in 1971 when he was 16 at a church in Keene.

On Saturday, The Associated Press reported that a different man said he was molested by Dowd at Camp Fatima in Gilmanton in 1972 when he was 9 years old. Diocesan spokesman Patrick McGee told the AP church officials had not known of any previous such allegations against Dowd, who died in February. McGee said yesterday he had known of the Keene allegation, but understood that the AP interview focused solely on Camp Fatima.

The published denial angered the man who says he was molested in 1971. The man, who asked not to be identified, says a diocesan official, the Rev. Edward Arsenault, called him to apologize after the AP story was published Sunday.

The man, a lawyer in another state, told the Concord Monitor he and his mother immediately reported Dowd to the pastor of St. Bernard's Church in Keene in 1971, and Dowd was appointed director of Camp Fatima shortly afterward.

"To say that we were shocked is necessarily an understatement," the man said. "It's the ultimate example of putting the fox in the chicken coop."

Dowd was director of the summer camp, which hosts hundreds of boys ages 6 to 15 each year, until his retirement in 1990.

Arsenault told the man the diocese had no record of the 1971 complaint he and his mother made.

The other alleged victim was abused by Dowd the following year after being made an altar boy, according to his lawyer, Peter Hutchins. Now 39, the man, who lives in Manchester, also asked not to be identified.

In February the diocese released a list of 14 priests accused of sexual abuse. Dowd was not listed.

The man who spoke to the Monitor and his brother said they contacted church officials to ask why. They learned Dowd had just died while on vacation in Florida.

In the three months since, the man said, he has spoken with several diocesan officials, including Bishop John McCormack, so he did not understand why the church told the AP no one had previously complained about Dowd.