

Ex-priest accused of child molesting

2 men in N.M. lawsuit say Denver retiree assaulted children across nation for years

By Katie Kerwin

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A retired Roman Catholic priest in Denver sexually molested children across the country for more than three decades, a lawsuit to be filed today in New Mexico alleges.

The Rev. David A. Holley, 65, was free to assault countless children because the church failed to stop him, instead transferring him from one unsuspecting parish to the next, according to the lawsuit.

Joe Hafermann, 28, of Minneapolis and Mark Sanchez, 35, of Albuquerque said Holley molested them repeatedly in the early 1970s in the sacristy and his parish home at St. Jude Mission Catholic Church in Alamogordo, N.M.

"It's just sick. He was so blatant. You just have to believe there are hundreds and hundreds of people he literally touched," Hafermann told the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Holley, who lives near Sloans Lake, declined to discuss specific charges until he consults a lawyer.

A strapping, quiet man, Holley was visibly shaken when confronted with the accusations.

"It is devastating," he said. "I'm very worried about it. It's very upsetting."

Holley was on leave from a Worcester, Mass., diocese when he assaulted the boys in New Mexico in 1973 and 1974, according to the lawsuit. Worcester clerics in

CHRONOLOGY OF DAVID HOLLEY'S CAREER

1927
 1958
 Teacher, Gastonbury School, Hingham, Mass., 1958-59
Assistant pastor:
 ■ St. Benedict's Church, Reading, Pa., 1959-62
 ■ St. Philip's Church, Granton, Mass., 1962-64
 ■ St. Denis Church, East Douglas, Mass., 1964-66
 ■ St. Mary's Church, Mornington, Mass., 1966-68
 ■ Our Lady of Fatima, Worcester, Mass., 1968-72
 ■ St. Jude Mission Catholic Church, Alamogordo, N.M., 1972-76
 (Holley spent several years at the Servants of the Paraclete in Jemez Springs, N.M., and served at St. Jude during that period.)
Pastor:
 ■ Sacred Heart Church, McManey, Texas, 1976-82
 ■ St. Lawrence Church, Garden City, Texas, 1982-84
Assistant pastor:
 ■ St. Joseph's Church, Amarillo, Texas, 1984-85
Chaplain:
 ■ St. Joseph's Hospital, Albuquerque, 1985-87
 ■ St. Anthony Hospital, Denver, 1987-88
 ■ Sacred Archdiocese of Denver

1971 sent Holley to be treated for pedophilia at the Servants of the Paraclete, a center for troubled priests in Jemez Springs, N.M., the lawsuit states. He was released periodically to work with children throughout the Southwest.

"I'm mad as hell," said Hafermann, a loan officer. "They think they can cure people. Forgive and forget. But it's an illness, and you can't cure them."

Holley moved to Denver in 1987 and worked for a year as an assistant chaplain at St. Anthony Hospital Central before retiring in 1988, according to Archdiocese of Denver records. He has no criminal record in Colorado, and lawyers for the two men say they don't believe he has faced charges elsewhere.

One of the lawyers, Bruce Pasternack of Albuquerque, expects

scores more to come forward. He knows of a half-dozen other victims, he said.

"It's the Massachusetts-to-New Mexico pervert pipeline," Pasternack said, referring to the highly publicized case of James Porter. Porter, a former Catholic priest, sexually assaulted scores of children in the Fall River diocese south of Worcester before being sent to New Mexico, where he molested more children. The church reached an undisclosed settlement with victims last month.

The men in the New Mexico case, who don't know each other, say publicity about priests sexually assaulting children spurred them to come forward.

According to a new book, *Lead Us Not into Temptation*, 400 U.S. and Canadian Catholic clerics have been accused of child molestation, costing the church at least \$400

million for victims and legal expenses. The church often has transferred troubled priests rather than treat them, said author Jason Berry.

Holley acknowledged he had been treated at Paraclete but declined to say whether he had been accused of pedophilia. The center also helps priests coping with alcoholism and other problems.

Hafermann recalls Holley as a man popular with children and obsessed with pornography and young boys. He said he was 8 years old when Holley coaxed him into back rooms at the church and Holley's home, showed him pornography, then molested him.

According to Denver archdiocese spokesman Bob Feeney, officials in the metro area were never warned about allegations of sexual misconduct when Holley applied to work at St. Anthony.

If the Worcester diocese knew of such complaints and did not warn Denver colleagues, "it would be alarming," Feeney said.

"Our policy on sexual misconduct is very clear," said Feeney. "If there were a priest originally from Denver looking for an appointment in another diocese, we would give them full information."

Authorities from the Worcester diocese, named as a defendant in the suit, said they had not seen the suit and refused to comment.

But Holley said he has been summoned to Worcester and probably will attend meetings there this week.

Also named as defendants are the El Paso, Texas, diocese, which, in the '70s, supervised the Alamogordo church, along with Holley and the Paraclete center.