

# Woman says Mtn. View priest abused her 21 years ago

Times Tribune staff

A priest who heads the psychiatric unit of El Camino Hospital, charged with sexually abusing a teen-ager many years ago, was investigated by the hospital and his work found to be "flawless," a spokesman of the Mountain View hospital said Wednesday.

A Pasadena woman has filed suit against the Rev. Thomas Havel, alleging he sexually abused her when she was a teen-ager.

Joan Munteer, 34, has said Havel attempted to have sexual intercourse and engage in other sex acts with her when she was 13

years old. The acts, she charged, took place from June through November 1968 in the rectory of the parish of St. Philip the Apostle in Pasadena, on the grounds of a high school, at Havel's parents' home and on freeways throughout Southern California, according to the suit.

Munteer's attorney, M. Patricia Marrison, said a deposition is scheduled for April 7, when Havel will be asked to make a statement. She said she filed a motion in Los Angeles Superior Court, where the

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suit is filed, to not delay the deposition, because Havel reportedly has threatened to commit suicide if the allegations were made public.

"Dr. Havel has been a respected member of the medical staff since 1983," according to a statement released by the hospital. He has been director of the psychiatric unit since 1985.

Prompted by Munteer's allegations, hospital administrators in November conducted a thorough investigation of Havel's work at the hospital, said El Camino spokeswoman Jean Altman.

"There was no evidence of any sort of misconduct or inappropriate behavior at any time during his six-year tenure at El Camino Hospital," Altman said, reading from a prepared statement.

Havel's performance was "found to be flawless by the administrative review panel," said Mary Smithwick, associate administrator, patient care services.

Havel requested a leave of absence from his hospital duties on Nov. 17, when the investigation

began. He was reinstated Dec. 6 following the investigation, Altman said.

As director of the psychiatric unit, Havel's responsibilities include assuring that the medical staff adheres to care policies and procedures.

Munteer, who now works as a law clerk in Pasadena, said she turned down a six-figure settlement offer from Havel.

"Filing a lawsuit in a way was therapeutic for me," she said. She added that she hopes to pursue legislation that would allow adult women who discover late in life that they were molested as children to file suit.

"I relied on his representations that it would be good for me. He really mesmerized me," she said.

Munteer said she went to Havel as an adolescent dealing with her emerging sexuality and he befriended her.

She said Havel allegedly began to touch, caress and embrace her and then kiss her. Eventually the acts escalated to oral copulation, and then the priest attempted to have sex with her on several occasions, Munteer alleged.

Times Tribune news services contributed to this report.