

Local & State

Former priest gets 22 months

Gateway resident found guilty of sexual abuse

The News-Press staff and wire reports

PHOENIX — A former Catholic priest and Gateway resident was sentenced to nearly two years in prison Wednesday for a decades-old molestation case.

John Maurice Giandelone, 55, pleaded guilty to sexual conduct with a minor for abuse of a 16-year-old boy in 1979. He had originally

pleaded guilty to two counts, but one of those counts was dismissed Wednesday.

He was sentenced to serve one year and 10 months in prison and three years' probation.

A registered sex offender in Florida, Giandelone is married to Lee County Health Director Dr. Judith Hartner. She has declined comment on his arrest.

Giandelone left the priesthood years ago. He was arrested in the 1979 case in December.

During the hearing Wednesday, Giandelone apologized to the victim, Benjamin Kulina, now a 39-year-old police officer and outspoken critic of the priest.

"Mr. Kulina, I'm sorry. You have every right in the world to be angry with me," Giandelone

said in court. "I hope you do forgive me for your sake and mine."

He already has served one previous term behind bars in another abuse case.

Several years after the incident in Phoenix involving Kulina, Giandelone was transferred to a Chandler church where authorities say he was caught abusing a 15-year-old boy.

He served six months in that case and is a registered sex offender.



GIANDELONE