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## **Man's Suit Alleges Sex Abuse by Priest**

\$3M Claim Cites Incidents in 1970s, Names Albany, Boston Dioceses, the Late Rev. Donald Starks

By Michele Morgan Bolton  
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ALBANY -- A man who claims he was sexually abused as a teenager by an Albany priest both here and in Massachusetts is suing the Albany and Boston dioceses for \$3 million.

Named in the lawsuit is the late Rev. Donald Starks of St. Francis de Sales Church in West Albany, Bishop Howard Hubbard, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany and defendant "Doe."

Leonard Motto made his case public Thursday, during a news conference in Schenectady.

A lawsuit with similar details about alleged abuse by Starks and another priest in the same time frame was filed in October 2004 by Charlton resident Michael Mooney.

Motto, 46, said he was 14 and attending Mass every week when he first met Starks in 1974.

A member of the church's folk music group, Motto said he often saw Starks for help with school work. He said the priest would comment on his looks and say with "time and patience" he could be a very smart student. But when Motto offered a wrong answer, court papers said, Starks would tell him "that's on your charge account."

"Plaintiff did not know what that meant, but would just ignore the remark," documents said. "Starting on a Sunday outing to defendant Starks' camp on Saratoga Lake, Starks told plaintiff it was time to pay up his account."

There, Motto claims Starks pulled him over his lap and spanked him. He then rubbed Motto's back until his hand reached down into the boy's bathing suit, where his thighs and genitals were fondled, court papers claim.

"This occurred on numerous occasions and also occurred in Massachusetts," the lawsuit claims.

Motto claims Starks brought him on trips to Framingham, Mass., Boston and Cape Cod where he was also sexually abused over three years, court papers said.

"After reading about Mr. Mooney's case I realized I was not the only victim of Fr. Starks," Motto said in a statement. "After many years of anguish and pain, I decided to reveal this ugly secret to my family. Only now can I begin to start the healing process."

Motto's lawsuit blames Hubbard for allowing the abuse to occur. It also alleges the bishop was aware of the situation and did nothing about it. Nor, claims the lawsuit, did he properly train the priest.

Ken Goldfarb, the diocesan director of communications, said he first heard about Motto's claims through media inquiries Thursday: "We have not been served with any papers related to this matter. The individual identified in this matter has never filed a complaint with the Albany Diocese."

Goldfarb said the diocese continues to urge anyone who believes clergy sexual abuse has occurred to bring complaints directly to the diocese for investigation, and, where appropriate, for assistance.

An alternative would be to seek out the Independent Mediation Assistance Program that has already successfully served a number of victims, he said.

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