

# BishopAccountability.org

---

## Hubbard Accused of Cover-up

By Robert Cristo  
The Record [Albany NY]  
March 18, 2004

Just weeks after retired St. Catherine of Siena pastor Rev. Louis Douglas was cleared of sexual abuse charges, two outraged women with past ties to the Albany parish have alleged that Bishop Howard Hubbard admitted to them that Douglas watched two boys perform an indecent act in front of him in the 1960s.

Albany residents Marsha Preusser and Trisha Brace went public Wednesday with details of a meeting they had with Hubbard in 1993 about Douglas, who was recently cleared by the Albany Diocesan Review Board of all sexual abuse allegations with minors.

Both women claim Hubbard told them about an incident that occurred in the 1960s in which Douglas allegedly had two children undress and masturbate in front of him, but did not touch them.

The women had past ties to St. Catherine of Siena School and parish, but eventually pulled their children out and left the parish because of how the diocese handled the Douglas investigation in the 1990s. The women recently contacted local attorney John Aretakis to get their side of the story to the public.

The women also say Hubbard, who became bishop in the mid-'70s, "explained away" the incident by allegedly stating that Douglas did it to make the children feel more comfortable with their sexuality.

"I was appalled, and said to the bishop, 'since when is that an appropriate method of teaching?'" said Preusser, 51, a local real estate dealer. "Why do we let these priests get free passes at the victim's expense?"

The early '90s meeting with Hubbard was prompted by Douglas' sudden departure from St. Catherine in 1993, one year after the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany launched an investigation into questions surrounding his alleged sexual past with young boys.

Preusser said Douglas told parishioners he was taking an "extended vacation," but never addressed the fact that he was under investigation for past sexual misconduct charges. Those charges have since been found baseless by the diocese.

"When we found out the true reason, we went to the bishop and told him for the sake of the children, everyone should have the right to know what's going on," said Preusser. "The bishop refused to do it. ... He said if any victims come forward we'll deal with it, but we're not going to make an announcement."

The women also said Hubbard told them Douglas was being sent to the now defunct Servants of Paraclete treatment facility for pedophilia in Mexico, and that he would never again be allowed around children.

"He went away under the false pretense of a health issue, but he was actually sent to a treatment facility and was supposed to never be placed back with children when he returned," said Brace, 48.

"Now, we find out he's in ministry part-time in Delaware, and that raised our concerns about children

there."

Diocese spokesperson Ken Goldfarb admitted the meeting between the women and Hubbard did occur, but said their description of what happened was not accurate.

According to Goldfarb, Hubbard discussed what he called the "inaccurate rumors" that were spreading about the 1960s incident, but never told them that Douglas had the two boys disrobe in his presence.

Goldfarb further stated that if what the women were saying was true, it would have been considered sexual abuse.

"Bishop Hubbard did not make the statement attributed to him today," said a diocese release."

Goldfarb declined to say specifically what transpired in the "rumored" incident, but he did say it was investigated and "no sexual abuse took place."

"I'm not going into details of what happened," said Goldfarb.

Goldfarb also declined to answer questions about whether Douglas was ever sent to Mexico for psychological treatment related to pedophilia.

Two Diocesan Review Board investigations (1992 and 2002) found no proof of sexual abuse against Douglas.

However, the diocese did provide financial assistance and counseling to the families who lodged complaints.

Even though Douglas was cleared by the Albany Diocese, he continues to be suspended from his part-time ministry by the Diocese of Wilmington.

The women who came forward Wednesday are also asking the Albany Diocese Sexual Misconduct Panel to both interview them and re-open the investigation into Douglas.

Aretakis, the attorney the women approached to assist, represents about 85 clients who claim to have been abused by a member of the clergy.

Douglas and Rev. Donald Ophals, pastor of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Troy, were each cleared of any sexual abuse allegations almost two weeks ago.

At that time, Hubbard also removed Rev. Robert Shinos, pastor of the St. Anthony-St. Joseph parish in Herkimer, for sexual abuse charges stemming from more than 30 years ago.

---

Any original material on these pages is copyright © BishopAccountability.org 2004. Reproduce freely with attribution.