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Former Resident of Boys Town in Nebraska Files Sex Abuse Lawsuit

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A man who lived at Boys Town, the home for wayward youths that was made famous by a 1938 Spencer Tracy movie, has filed a lawsuit alleging a priest and a counselor molested him in the 1970s.

James Duffy said in the lawsuit filed Thursday that he was repeatedly abused beginning in 1978 but repressed memories of it until about a year ago.

Duffy, who lives in Arizona, is seeking unspecified damages.

The lawsuit names Father Flanagan's Boys Home, the parent company of what is now a nationwide chain of homes for troubled youth, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Omaha.

Neither the counselor, Michael Wolf, nor the priest, the Rev. James E. Kelly, was named as a defendant. They could not be reached Friday for comment; neither is listed in the Girls and Boys Town's current employee directory.

Duffy's attorney, William Walker, said the counselor and priest weren't named primarily because they could not be found.

The Rev. Robert Hupp, 87, who was executive director at the time of the alleged abuse, declined to comment on the lawsuit but said he had never heard of problems with Wolf. Hupp remembered Kelly as a disciplinarian who had the best interests of children at heart.

The Rev. Val Peter, the current executive director, said the allegations are quite serious if true.

"If those people really did this, they should be thrown in prison and the key tossed in the river," Peter said. "If, on the other hand, they didn't do this and he's making up this story, then I am very, very angry that someone would try to destroy Father Flanagan's dream."

The archdiocese's chancellor, the Rev. Michael Gutsell, said the Omaha Archdiocese should be stricken from the lawsuit because it is not affiliated with the boys home.

The Rev. Edward Flanagan started the home outside Omaha in 1917. It was made famous by the Oscar-winning movie "Boys Town." The organization now runs 19 campuses in 14 states and the District of Columbia.

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