

BishopAccountability.org

Jesuit School Sheltered Molesters, Groups Say

By Paul Vitello
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<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/22/nyregion/22fordham.html>

[Note from BishopAccountability.org: See assignment records of Revs. [Eugene J. O'Brien, S.J.](#), and [Roy A. Drake, S.J.](#)]

Two Roman Catholic priests who until recently lived on the campus of Fordham Preparatory School in the Bronx sexually abused teenagers there in the 1960s and '70s, two groups that advocate for sex-abuse victims said on Tuesday.

Leaders of the two groups — the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests and BishopAccountability.org. — who said they were making the accusations public for the first time, criticized the school's administrators for allowing the priests to reside there for years after the abuse complaints were made known.

One of the priests, the Rev. Eugene O'Brien, was the principal and president of Fordham Prep in the early '70s, when one accuser said he was molested, the groups said. A lawsuit the accuser filed was settled in 1997 for \$25,000 by the school, the Archdiocese of New York and the Order of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, which runs Fordham Prep.

The advocacy groups sent to The New York Times a copy of the settlement agreement, with the accuser's name excised. Father O'Brien could not be reached for comment.

The other priest, the Rev. Roy A. Drake, was a science teacher at Fordham Prep in late 1968 when he raped Richard Cerick, Mr. Cerick says. In an interview, Mr. Cerick, who was not a Fordham student, said he had been invited by a friend who attended the school to join him for a weekend ski trip with Father Drake. He said the attack occurred in the priest's apartment on campus the night before they left on the trip.

Joseph Zwilling, spokesman for the archdiocese, said that archdiocesan lawyers were familiar with Mr. Cerick's claim against Father Drake, but that he could not confirm the terms of the 1997 settlement involving Father O'Brien. In general, Mr. Zwilling said, religious orders like the Jesuits handled their own personnel and legal affairs.

The Rev. Thomas Slon, executive assistant to the head of the Jesuit order in the New York area, said he would not comment on the accusations. He, too, said that he was familiar with Mr. Cerick's complaint, but that he would not confirm or deny the terms of the 1997 settlement concerning Father O'Brien.

Mr. Cerick, now a 53-year-old New York lawyer, said he had kept the incident secret until 2003, when he became aware of the scandal over sexual abuse by priests. He began searching the Web for any mention of Father Drake. After discovering that the priest was living at Murray-Weigel Hall, the Fordham Prep residence for Jesuit faculty members, he said, he decided to alert the school's administrators. He filed his first complaint against Father Drake in 2005, he said.

Father Drake was transferred to a treatment center for troubled priests in 2006, and died on Aug. 21 of this year, said Terry McKiernan of BishopAccountability.org. Father Slon, of the Jesuits, would not

confirm that Father Drake had died.

Father O'Brien, after serving as president of Fordham Prep from 1960 until 1979, was principal at Fairfield College Prep, in Fairfield, Conn.; vice president for community relations at Fordham University; and president of the Gregorian University Foundation in New York, a Jesuit institute. He became known for his work in substance abuse treatment, traveling and lecturing around the world between stints at Fordham University and LeMoyne College in Syracuse. He is now retired, Mr. McKiernan said.

In a statement, Mr. Cerick said that after he reported Father Drake to Jesuit and archdiocesan authorities three years ago, "they allowed Father Drake, who lived and worked for decades on Fordham's campus after abusing me, to continue working and residing there."

"That is incomprehensible," he said. "The innocent deserve protection."

David Clohessey, national director of the Survivors Network, or SNAP, said that the church's failure to protect the young from sexual predators was part of a pattern of "secrecy and recklessness" that has plagued the institution for decades.

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