

# Diocese knew of abuse in '86, church memos show

They appear to  
contradict the statement  
given by Bishop  
McHugh of Camden.

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Leaders of the Camden Diocese learned in 1986 of accusations of sexual misconduct against a South Jersey priest who was named in a lawsuit filed last week in U.S. District Court.

According to two confidential internal memos provided to The Inquirer, the Rev. Gary R. Hayes, who was one of three men who filed the lawsuit, told diocesan officials in October 1986 that he had been sexually abused by the Rev. Joseph F. McGarvey, who was serving in Millville at the time. The memos also show that the

Camden diocese made a decision not to allow Father Hayes to become a priest in the diocese because of the experience, recommending him instead for the priesthood in Kentucky, where he is now assigned.

Camden Bishop James McHugh, reached in New Orleans last night, said he had not read the documents but was aware of the meetings to which they referred.

"I don't doubt the authenticity of these memos but apparently [the authors] did not give enough substance to the charges, or they felt it was confidential information that they shouldn't do anything about," the bishop said.

In a written statement issued at a news conference Monday, Bishop McHugh said the diocese "had no prior knowledge of any abusive sexual behavior" that would prevent

See **MEMOS** on A13

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**MEMOS** from A1

Father McGarvey from serving as a pastor.

Bishop McHugh said at the same conference that the diocese "was not repeatedly put on notice regarding inappropriate behavior" by Father McGarvey.

According to the diocese, Father McGarvey, 68, is on a leave of absence at his own request and has hired an attorney to represent him. He has not been available for comment.

When questioned as to why Father Hayes was not approved as a priest in the Camden diocese, Bishop McHugh told reporters Monday it was due to "academic" reasons.

According to the memos, Hayes met with Rev. Joseph Perreault, the diocese's Director of Vocations, on Oct. 8, 1986, to discuss Hayes' interest in becoming a priest in the diocese.

One memo, titled "Write-up of Meeting Between Gary Hayes and Father Perreault," was initialed by Father Perreault.

"During the session on October 8, Hayes outlined, in some detail, his early-life experiences with Rev. Joseph McGarvey, then Pastor of St. Mary Magdalen Parish, Millville," the memo reads.

"During Hayes' high school years and initial time in seminary formation,

Hayes described his relationship with Father McGarvey to be most inappropriate. According to Hayes, Father McGarvey on numerous occasions abused alcohol and made certain sexual advances to Hayes which were seductive," it continued.

"Hayes stated that during these times of alcohol abuse, Father McGarvey became either most 'affectionate' or quite violent. He described two specific incidents which were most troubling to him. Further, he indicated that 'several' other young men in the parish were aware of this situation and had been 'victimized' by Father McGarvey," the one-page memo continued.

A second memo, recounting a meeting between Father Hayes and the Rev. John P. Frey, outlines why the diocese decided that Hayes, at the time a seminarian, should not be allowed to be a priest in Camden. That memo also was initialed by Father Perreault.

Concerning a decision by the Vocation Board on April 14, 1987, the memo states: "The Board also is sure that most of the negative input in his [Hayes'] growth and development stemmed from negative experiences in the Diocese from priests who are still functioning. The Board saw Camden Diocese so integrally involved in all that Gary is presently in

counselling to work out that it could not recommend him to study for the Diocese," the memo states.

According to the memo, then-Bishop George H. Guilfoyle "accepted and approved the Board's recommendation of non-acceptance."

The memo then notes, "He [Hayes] is especially grateful to Father Perreault because he was the first priest to have such a positive influence in helping Gary see his Church and priesthood in a positive light."

According to Bishop McHugh, the diocese recommended that Hayes be ordained in Kentucky, where he currently serves as a priest.

Bishop McHugh said he knew of the meetings between Fathers Frey, Perreault and Hayes and had spoken to each of the men about the meetings after he learned, in March, of an impending lawsuit.

Bishop McHugh said he believed both men took it upon themselves not to report the incidents to anyone higher. No mention of the account appeared in any other diocesan files, he said.

Hayes filed the suit Thursday, along with two other Millville men who said they were sexually abused as youngsters by McGarvey and the Rev. William C. O'Connell, formerly a priest in Rhode Island.