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TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 2012

## "The Avery Files"

"Father Ed" Avery liked to hang out at Smokey Joe's and drink beer with college kids. He was into sleepovers with altar boys. He also preferred to spin records as a DJ rather than say Mass.

In Common Pleas Court over the past two days, the prosecution opened up "The Avery Files" -- more than 100 confidential documents dealing with accusations of sex abuse against Father Edward V. Avery.

The priest, a defendant in the archdiocese sex abuse case, pleaded guilty last week to conspiracy to endanger the welfare of a child, and involuntary deviant sexual intercourse with a 10-year-old, and faces a prison sentence of 2 1/2 to 5 years. But that guilty plea didn't end Father Ed's role in the ongoing archdiocese sex abuse case. The Avery files were introduced by Assistant District Attorney Patrick Blessington while he examined Detective Joseph Walsh, a Philadelphia police officer investigating archdiocese sex abuse since 2002.

Monsignor William J. Lynn began his investigation of Father Avery on Oct. 19, 1992, when he got a call from the victim, a married 29-year-old medical student. The accusations that the victim made against Father Avery allegedly took place 10 to 15 years earlier, when the victim was a teenager. At the time, Avery was associate pastor at St. Philip Neri, where the victim went to church. The victim said that Father Avery used to take him along when he worked as a DJ at Smokey Joe's, a bar on the University of Pennsylvania campus in West Philadelphia.

The victim said that Father Avery gave him his first beer when he was 12. He got so drunk one night at Smokey Joe's that Father Avery brought him back to the rectory, where the boy slept in the priest's single bed. During the night, the victim told Lynn he woke up and found the priest touching and fondling his genitals. That wasn't the only time. When he was 19, he told Lynn, the priest took him on a ski trip to Vermont, and wound up fondling him again.

When Lynn confronted Father Avery, the priest responded that the victim had "a selective memory." Father Avery admitted that he might have touched the boy during the night, but that it was "strictly accidental" while he was "tossing and turning." Lynn asked Avery if maybe the alcohol that he and the victim had consumed could have wiped out his memory. "It could be," Father Ed responded, adding "I don't know."

The once-confidential archdiocese documents unveiled in court Tuesday told even stranger stories. In one memorandum, Father Ed claimed that the real reason he brought the victim to Smokey Joe's was because the boy wanted to be a doctor, and that a number of doctors frequented the bar. Blessington pointed out that if Father Ed wanted to introduce the victim to some doctors, all he had to do was take the boy to work because Father Ed was a hospital chaplain.

It got weirder. During his psychological evaluation, the only sex abuse Father Ed would admit to was masturbation, according to the records. The priest said he begin fantasizing about women after "the devil entered him as a consequence" of officiating at pastoral baptisms.

The document also showed how the church and Msgr. Lynn covered for Father Ed while he was on a leave of absence from his job as pastor of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. While the priest was an in-patient at St. John Vianney Center, where he was being evaluated for sex abuse, Lynn told parishioners at St. Therese that Father Ed was "on leave for renewal." Father Ed deserved to

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be "refreshed and revitalized," the monsignor wrote.

A psychological examination of the priest concluded that Father Ed had a bi-polar disorder, and a history of alcohol abuse. A psychologist wrote to tell Msgr. Lynn that Father Ed was also "dealing with shame." It happened after the victim confronted Father Ed at St. John Vianney. After treating the priest, the psychologist wrote Msgr. Lynn that he had "concern about other victims."

Other archdiocese documents showed that Lynn had recommended that Avery be prohibited from working with adolescents and "vulnerable minorities" that Father Ed was attracted to. Lynn also wanted the priest to enroll in Alcoholics Anonymous and take a job as an associate pastor at Our Lady of Ransom, where he would be supervised by a veteran pastor.

On Aug 24, 1993, Father Ed wrote to Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua, offering to resign as pastor of St. Phillip Neri. He signed the letter "your obedient servant," closing with, "yours in Christ." But the cardinal decided not to follow Lynn's recommendations. Instead, he asked if there were any vacancies for a chaplain at local hospitals.

The cardinal subsequently appointed Avery as chaplain to Nazareth Hospital. He also granted Avery's request to live in the rectory at St. Jerome's, a parish that also had an elementary school. In announcing his decision, the cardinal wrote to Avery that he hoped his continued ministry would be a "source of many blessings."

Despite Father Ed's denials, in 1994, when he compiled a list of 35 pedophile priests, Msgr. Lynn put Father Ed at the top of the list, saying the priest was "guilty of sexual misconduct with minors." The monsignor noted that Father Ed had abused the same minor three times, referring to the victim.

Several documents in the formerly secret files talked about Father Ed's busy schedule of working as a DJ and officiating at weddings, as many as three in one month, and a dozen over a period of three months. The priest explained that all of the weddings involved relatives. Father Ed was accused of doing these events at the expense of saying Mass, as well as shirking his duties as a hospital chaplain. At Nazareth Hospital, Father Ed was one of two chaplains, and his busy DJ and wedding schedule prompted an "almost manic" reaction from the other hospital chaplain, Lynn noted in his confidential files.

Then, in 1996, the victim called Lynn, wanting to know "what in the end happened" to Father Ed. The victim told Lynn he wanted to be reassured that Father Ed was in a place "where he cannot harm others." In making the request, the victim said he was seeking to know for his own "peace of mind." Lynn wrote back that the archdiocese "took appropriate steps."

The victim's brother also wrote the monsignor to say he saw Father Ed working at a disc jockey at a local dance. When Lynn confronted Father Ed, he said he only worked as a DJ at senior citizen dances. But Lynn told Avery to stop working as a DJ.

The victim's mother, a pediatric nurse, wrote Lynn in 2002, asking if Father Ed had molested any other children. "If he is anywhere near children, you have a problem," the mother wrote Lynn. But Father Ed would not be defrocked until 2005, when he wrote a letter of resignation to Pope Benedict. The resignation came 13 years after Msgr. Lynn had received the first allegations of sex abuse against Father Ed.

When it came time to cross-examine Detective Walsh, Jeff Lindy, a lawyer for Msgr. Lynn, asked Walsh about an archdiocese memo from Bishop Edward Cullen to Lynn. In the memo, Cullen explained that the cardinal didn't want parishioners to know that Father Ed was being evaluated for sex abuse. Instead, the cardinal preferred to say that Father Ed was resigning his pastorate "due to health reasons."

"So, Cardinal Bevilacqua's a puppet master?" Lindy asked Detective Walsh.

"I wouldn't call him that, sir," the detective responded.

"I just did," Lindy said.

POSTED BY RALPH CIPRIANO AT 9:02 PM  
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JudyJones



To Bobby and all the victims who were sexually abused in the Philly Archdiocese or any diocese, stay strong, You are very brave, your voices are powerful and they are being heard. March 28, 2012 at 11:16 AM

The truth will prevail and children will be much safer because you do 'not' stay silent.

Judy Jones, SNAP Midwest Associate Director, USA, 636-433-2511  
"Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests" and all clergy.

Reply



**PatO** April 5, 2012 at 4:44 AM

Fr Avery had sex with at least one child, and you know there are dozens more that never came forward. The "party priest" certainly didn't stop at one. Of course, he lied about it for 3 decades, and allowed Catholics to trash the victim until he finally admitted it.

Reply



**LilWolf** September 3, 2012 at 12:59 AM

I know Father Avery. He was a priest at St. Dominic's Church in Philadelphia when I was in grade school. He yelled at me in the confessional and made me cry. I was afraid to go to confession after that. I never forgot him. I'm just sorry that he hurt those other people so badly...

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