



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Seventh Judicial District

KEVIN P. MEENAN

District Attorney

200 North Center Street
Suite 300

Casper, Wyoming 82601

TEL: (307) 235-9223

FAX: (307) 235-9256

MEDIA RELEASE

July 30, 2002
Casper, Wyoming

TO: Casper, Cheyenne & State-wide Media

POLICE INVESTIGATION CLEARS BISHOP HART **Allegations of 25 year old abuse found to be without merit**

Seventh Judicial District Attorney, Kevin P. Meenan, announced today in a prepared release that the Cheyenne Police Department has completed its investigation into allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by retired Bishop Joseph Hart, which are alleged to have occurred in the 1970's. The Cheyenne Police investigation concluded that there was no evidence to support the allegations and recommended that the case be closed.

Meenan was appointed Special Prosecutor by First Judicial District Attorney Jon Forwood because of a conflict of interest in Forwood's office created by the personal friendships by some staff members with Bishop Hart. As Special Prosecutor, Meenan reviewed the preliminary investigation reports, asked for some follow up investigation and then reviewed the final investigation report.

Meenan commended the Cheyenne Police Department for the thoroughness of its investigation and said that, "it is clear that the allegations are without merit and that therefore the case must be unfounded". Meenan did not disclose the name of the alleged victim, now 39, citing privacy concerns for the man (referred to as EG) and his family.

CASE BACKGROUND

In late April of 2002 a relative of EG, (DOB [REDACTED]) alleged to Laramie County law enforcement that EG had been molested by Bishop Joseph Hart in the 1970's in incidences in Cheyenne and Kansas City while EG was 13 or 14 years old. Cheyenne Police Detective Lieutenant Jeff Schulz was named as lead investigator.

After repeated attempts to contact EG, Schulz finally received a story from EG that when EG was 13 or 14 years old, Bishop Hart had made him touch himself during confession in one incident and had made him change swimming suits in front of Hart in two other incidents alleged to have occurred in the Vedawoo area in Laramie County and in Kansas City. Despite repeated requested, EG has refused to provide additional statements or information and has not cooperated with the investigation.

Meenan indicated that many of the details provided by EG were not corroborated and some were contradicted in the course of the investigation. It was also revealed in the course of the investigation that EG had retained private counsel in Kansas City and was possibly pursuing financial damages from the Catholic Church.

Bishop Hart cooperated fully with the police investigators and provided all information requested of him, Meenan said. Hart has vehemently denied the allegations.

Meenan said in summary that the report concludes that there is some question as to the credibility of EG, noted EG's lack of cooperation in the investigation, noted the lack of any corroborated evidence for the allegations and noted that for over 25 years these claims had never been reported.

District Attorney Meenan said, "given the contradictions in EG's story, his refusal to cooperate with the investigation and the lack of corroboration for his claims, it was the conclusion of the investigator and myself that these allegations were without merit and not credible". Therefore, Meenan concurred with the Cheyenne Police Department recommendation that the case be closed as unfounded without merit. Meenan further directed that the Cheyenne Police Department take no further action in the matter and that the case investigation could be closed.

For further information, contact Kevin P. Meenan at above numbers. Meenan has served as the elected 7th Judicial District Attorney in Casper since 1987. He is a past President of the Wyoming Prosecutors Association and is immediate Past President of the National District Attorneys Association.