

Big Picture  Local Focus
Daily Herald
SUBURBAN CHICAGO'S INFORMATION SOURCE

Church denies knowing murder suspect's past

Author(s): Garrett Ordower Daily Herald Staff Writer
Date: April 15, 2004
Page: 1
Section: News

Everywhere Michael **Pavone** went, his past followed him in the form of a package.

It showed up in the mail at the musician's new job shortly after he started.

It came from his brother, and contained a damning reminder of his past - a videotape with news footage and clippings from Buffalo, N.Y., describing the 1999 murder of his lover Keith Sutherland, 46, in which he was a suspect.

He was arrested charged in connection with that murder Monday, and faces 25 years to life in prison if convicted.

When he worked at St. Charles Episcopal Church, the package showed up around Christmas-time 2001, two months after he started working there.

"We looked at all the information and decided we were not going to fire him over this," said the Rev. William Nesbit. "It was pretty clear to us he was being hounded by his brother and that the police were not pursuing him."

At St. John of the Cross in Western Springs, the package showed up in June 2001, six months after he started.

After the information came to light he left that parish, according to the Chicago Archdiocese.

But St. Peter Catholic Church in Geneva - where **Pavone**, 58, of West Chicago, worked until being fired Monday in the wake of the charges - claims his past didn't come to light until a few weeks ago.

"We did not know," spokeswoman Rama Canney said.

Buffalo attorney Edward C. Cosgrove disagrees. He said the case, unfortunately, followed his client everywhere he went, including St. Peter.

"It was disclosed to them," Cosgrove said.

The church fired him after becoming aware "he misrepresented his employment history" and then lied about it, Canney said.

They won't specify what those misrepresentations, or lies were. The church also declines to discuss what references might have been checked.

Canney chalked this vagueness up to "personnel matters," but that isn't sitting well in a community that has been in tumult because of the ongoing legal battle over personnel documents related to Mark **Campobello**, a former St. Peter priest who is charged with sexually abusing two girls.

Although the Rockford Diocese has been fighting the Kane County state's attorney's office over access to those documents, many continue to hold the church's pastor, the Rev. Msgr. Joseph Jarmoluk, responsible for the trying situation.

"The overall opinion of many people is that we don't want forgiveness, we want accountability," said

Howard Clark, the former organist at St. Peter. "(Jarmoluk) is not a good judge of character."

Clark was asked to serve on the search committee for a new choir director in 2001, but before declining that position saw **Pavone's** resume, which had a break from 1999 to 2001.

Choir member Berni Mayer also knew of the gap, and, as someone with 40 years of human resources experience said, "those are red flags."

While the Chicago Archdiocese said it would not have disclosed **Pavone's** past if called as a reference, Nesbit said he would have discussed it with the pastor, had he been called by St. Peter staff.

After learning of the news, Nesbit said the church confronted **Pavone** and he proved cooperative, urging them to contact the Buffalo police and his lawyer.

"The police knew where he was, he wasn't trying to hide from them," Nesbit said. "If there was a concern the police would have arrested him."

It seemed, Nesbit said, **Pavone's** brother was "tormenting" him, and that the police were looking at other leads.

That changed when a jailhouse informant came forward, Cosgrove said, leading to a March 31 indictment on charges of second-degree murder, criminal possession of a weapon and criminal mischief. A judge set bail at \$100,000 for **Pavone** Wednesday and asked him to surrender his passport.

Cosgrove plans to try and get the case dismissed in part because it's based on hearsay evidence.

"The bottom line is that everyone is presumed innocent and that we hope and expect and pray that our criminal justice system will be fair and just," Cosgrove said.

© Copyright Daily Herald, Paddock Publications, Inc.

[Click here to go back.](#)