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## Victim explains his relationship with Rev. Wilson

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When he arrived at St. Ann's Catholic Church in 1980, the Rev. Dozia Wilson was almost too cool to be a man of the cloth.

He was able to relate well to many of the church's youth with his outgoing, big-city demeanor.

Wilson singled out Joseph Woodward, a 14-year-old Hartford boy, as his favorite, ingratiating himself with the popular, athletic student. Woodward said his upbringing wasn't a privileged one, and Wilson was quick with gifts like clothes.

Wilson took an interest in Woodward's ability to play the guitar, having the boy play during church services, Woodward said.

"He was the cool priest from New York City, and I got to be the closest to him," Woodward recalled. "He'd take me to dinner. He'd buy me things."

Woodward and others in the Fort Ann congregation didn't know that Wilson was shipped to the church's Albany Diocese after allegations that he had sexually abused young boys in Boston, according to a lawsuit filed in January on Woodward's behalf.

It was at least the second time the diocese has been asked to pay for alleged sexual abuse by Wilson. The diocese settled a sexual abuse case against Wilson for \$500,000 last summer; that case involved accusations made by a man in the Albany area.

Woodward said it wasn't long before his friendship with Wilson turned illicit. The pastor would give Woodward beer, then marijuana, he said.

Then it turned sexual, Woodward said.

Woodward, now 37, said he does not recall the day or circumstances of the first time Wilson molested him.

But he said all of the incidents followed the same pattern: Ply the boy with alcohol and marijuana, then "have his way with me" on the couch in Wilson's home.

"As he gained confidence with me, he would try new moves," Woodward recalled. "He'd go to work, just like a guy would do on a girl."

## **A new life**

Woodward's lawyer, John Aretakis, said Wilson was last known to live in Westchester County. No phone listing could be found for him Tuesday. Aretakis said he has an unlisted phone number.

Woodward now lives in Fort Edward with his wife, Lurae, and their two children. A third is on the way. The 6-foot-3, red-headed man has forged a career in sales, making a living for years selling Rainbow vacuum cleaners.

His current wife and his first wife both knew of the past abuse. He said he believes it played a large part in the break-up of his first marriage.

He appeared crushed as he talked about his first wife's concern that his history as a victim might lead to abuse of their own child.

Woodward said he's watched in recent years as victims of clergy sexual abuse came forward. They seemed to have many things in common, such as histories of drug abuse and other problems in life. He said telling their stories publicly didn't seem to accomplish much.

He said he didn't think he could ever go through what they went through.

"I thought it would just be a skeleton I would have in the closet for the rest of my life," he said. "It's just the fear and the shame and the feelings of guilt and all these weird feelings you get."

If he believed his going public could have made a difference and stopped future abuse, he said he would have done it long ago.

But his attitude about discussing his abuse publicly changed in mid-2002, when he saw a television news report about victims in the Albany Diocese. He reached out to Aretakis, the Albany-area lawyer who represents dozens of victims of clergy abuse.

Aretakis sent him some paperwork, but Woodward said he never returned it to the lawyer.

Eighteen months later, he decided to renew his efforts and reach out to Aretakis again.

There was no epiphany, just a decision to follow through and try to hold Wilson accountable, he said.

Aretakis filed a lawsuit on his behalf, naming not just Wilson but the Boston Archdiocese and Albany Diocese as defendants. The lawsuit does not specify an amount of damages.

The last nine months, Woodward said he's gotten involved with the Albany chapter of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.

"Now I'm looking at a life goal of trying to get healing in the church," he said.

### **Five years**

Although many children who are abused withdraw and have trouble, Woodward said he persevered.

He did well in school, was popular and was a star athlete.

"No one would have ever thought that this was going on in my life," he said.

Virtually every weekend, Wilson would invite him to his home, giving him alcohol, marijuana, gifts.

Then he would abuse him on the couch.

The two would take trips to New York City, Boston and other places that seemed exotic to a teenager from Hartford.

"He'd take me to strip joints," Woodward said. "He'd take me to bars. I could get high any time I wanted if I could just tolerate his lusts."

After Woodward graduated from high school, the priest took him on a vacation to California, he said. They went to San Francisco, Hollywood and Tijuana, Mexico.

Wilson was later assigned to a church in Columbia County, and Woodward shared an apartment with him in Hudson while attending Columbia-Greene Community College.

One day in 1985, Woodward decided it was time to end the relationship.

"I just decided I was leaving," he said. "He didn't argue a lot. I just said, 'No more.' "

He transferred to the State University of New York at Cortland, graduating with a degree in education and starting a family there.

One day in the late 1980s, Wilson tried to visit him, and the priest also wrote him letters of apology in later years, Woodward said.

"It was like he was breaking down without me," he said.

He said he doesn't know why he just didn't tell Wilson "no" sooner.

"I just wonder why I never said 'Get your hands off me,' " he said hesitantly. "When you are a victim, you have this awareness, but you're not really aware."

## **Money and faith**

Woodward said he doesn't know how much money his lawsuit seeks in damages.

But money's not the point, he said.

"I didn't ask," he said. "But if I told you the money wouldn't be beneficial for my family, I'd be a liar. But my goal in coming forward is not a benefit. My goal is to have God receive satisfaction because of this great big conflict."

Woodward said he suspects he was not Wilson's only local victim. He said another Washington County teenager lived with Wilson in Hudson in the 1980s.

Woodward has now found solace in the Bible, thanks to the Rev. Ken Prater and Durkeetown Baptist Church.

"I still think the church is wonderful," he said. "I still think the Catholic church isn't bad. But I still think there are some bums in it."

He said he's confident some good can come of what happened to him, though.

"The Lord doesn't give us that which we can't handle," he said.