

Reverend Arthur R. Merrell

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	Unknown
YEAR OF DEATH:	N/A
ORDINATION:	1970

Employment/Assignment History

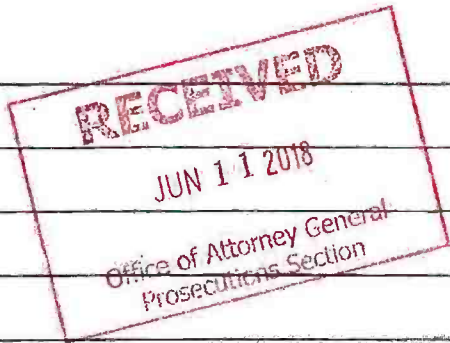
Not specified	Chaplain, Allegheny County Jail and Shuman Juvenile Detention Center
2/20/1998	Resigned

Summary

In September, 1997, the Diocese of Pittsburgh received a report that Father Arthur R. Merrell had inappropriately touched a boy under the age of 15. Merrell admitted to the inappropriate sexual act and withdrew from the priestly ministry in February, 1998. The Diocese did not forward the information to the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office.

A handwritten note in the file dated February 2, 1998, detailed a sexual relationship that Merrell had with "James," a mentally ill man. "James" stated that he and Merrell masturbated together and that Merrell stuck his finger up his [James'] rectum and they kissed on several occasions. Merrell admitted to these acts.

In a confidential memorandum dated July, 2014, Rita Flaherty of the Diocese recounted a meeting with Merrell wherein he minimized his inappropriate actions with minors and asked the Diocese for money. The Diocese granted Merrell's request for a "*charitable gift of money*" in the sum of \$5,000. In 2015, Merrell requested another sum of money from the Diocese.



Arthur R. Merrill
728 E. Warrington Ave, Apt 'B'
Pittsburgh PA 15210
412-463-2845
4/20/18 // 6/07/18

Dear Attorney Dye,

Thank you very much for your helpful responses to my phone call last week. I would presume that the Attorney General's office would have access to all information about this case, but since only the earliest parts are referred to, I want to give you information about the entire case.

1) The name of the young man referred to in this case is [REDACTED] (not [REDACTED]). [REDACTED] has been diagnosed with several mental health issues and was regularly interviewed. Early in 2011 he was asked if he had any sexual contact with anyone - he replied 'yes' and that led to the 'Child Advocacy Center in Washington County (where he lives)'. They notified Allegheny County Authorities in March of 2011. And, shortly after that, I received a notice from Allegheny County authorities that these charges were being filed.

2) As soon as I understood how serious this could be, I contacted a lawyer I knew of, Attorney John Knorr.

in Pittsburgh. He agreed to meet with me and agreed to begin the initial steps needed to successfully address my problem. He did not agree to follow up on the whole trial (I was unable to afford Tris charges for the whole trial (as I remember \$7,000) but he would "get things started".

In early May of 2011, Attorney Know called me and advised me to go to the Pittsburgh Police Headquarters on Pittsburgh's "North Side" where someone would interview me. A couple days later (5/06/11 - I believe) I went to the station where I surrendered to Detective April Campbell who, I found out later, was a specialist in the Sex Assault Family Crisis Unit. Detective Campbell got my identification information. She then interviewed me for about an hour, then released me to go home. She also assured me that, as long as I kept the promises I had made and showed up for any meeting at the court, I would not have to worry about police showing up at my door.

Unfortunately, someone at the Police Headquarters forgot to take my name off of the "wanted" list and two constables (J. Dytko and D. Brytius) showed up at my home and, at gunpoint, arrested me; put hand cuffs on me, put me in their car and drove me to the Allegheny County Jail. After going through

the "screening procedures", I was taken to a cell (with a cell-mate who, as I remember, was facing a homicide charge - but we got along pretty well). The next day I had use of a phone and called Attorney Knorr. He said he'd make some calls for me, and "especially" to respond to the regular visit of the Public Defenders Office to the unit. The Public Defenders office was there a few days later. I gave them my information and requested the services of a Public Defender. A short time after that I was assigned a Public Defender, Attorney David Obaro, and I met him a week or two later. He interviewed me, looking for all the details. I wrote to him (the "letter to the Public Defender") just wanting to include the details about my times with [REDACTED]. He used details of the letter to clarify some of the stories that Matt was telling. I was never present at the trial sessions that the judge and [REDACTED] were present, but my attorney said that my statements seemed to make sense to the judge more than some of the statements that [REDACTED] was making. That seemed to allow the judge to make the decision to lower my charges from felony to misdemeanor. After the last session, my attorney pointed out that accepting misdemeanor charges rather than felonsy = Court costs rather than fines; and probation rather than time in prison was a better

deal for me----- How could I disagree?
Anyway, after that I appeared before a Judge
in a room with multiple defendants. Each of us was
called before the judge, our charges were read
and we were referred to a court group who would explain the
details. Basically, the sentence was Court costs and
two years of probation. I arranged a payment plan for the
Court costs and was referred to the Probation Office
on Arlington Ave. In my first week or two I was interviewed
by probation officers at the center. Within a few weeks a probation
officer came to my home once a month for the rest of the
two year period. The probation officers were very civil and
I have no complaints at all about their service.

The end of my probation was the end of my sentence. I
was able to get two jobs because my security checks only
asked if I was convicted of a felony. That probably was
also the reason I was able to get a very reasonable
deal on my apartment rental.

I would just ask if it would be possible that
my name would not be printed in the public newspapers.
I have already served my sentence and that public
revelation would probably cost me my jobs and
my home. And now that I'm 75 years old, that would
be a disaster.

Well, Attorney Dye, thank you for giving me
the opportunity to present my case. With this I am

including a copy of the letter I provided my attorney (the Public Defender). If there is any other information I can supply, please let me know.

Sincerely

Arthur R. Merrell

728 E. Warrington Ave

Apt B'

Pittsburgh, PA 15210-1565

412-463-2845

Attorney Dge,

Unfortunately, there seems to be some confusion about the dates + the issues. In the mid 1990's I was the chaplain in the Allegheny County Jail. A guard reported that I had an inappropriate discussion with an inmate. That claim was investigated by a board at the jail and I was found to be "not guilty" of the charge, and was restored to my chaplain position.

At the beginning, the 'charge' was reported to the Diocese of Pittsburgh and they sent me to the St. Luke's mental health facility in Maryland for an "evaluation". After I returned to Pittsburgh, I was told that the Diocese wanted me to return to St. Luke's for a "treatment" program that could last many months. Since I really didn't like St. Luke's, I told the Diocese that I didn't want to go there, but offered to go to Western Psych or another local program. That was not accepted by the Diocese and I was suspended from the ministry. That was in

1997. Since that time, I have never identified myself as a priest to anyone.

That includes the teenage boy who, in 2008 asked me to become his "Big Brother". The story of my relationship with him is included here in the letter I wrote to Attorney Obara (my public defender at the 2011 trial). I just want to clarify that these two events (1997 + 2011) were totally unconnected, and the later events (regarding the teenager) were never, in any way, connected, and neither the teen, his parents, or anyone else involved in this case had any knowledge that I was a priest or had any official connection to the Catholic Church.

Again, thank you
Art

Public Defender's letter - page 1

To: Public Defender
July 19, 2011

After reading Detective Campbell's report, I find that she has merged several incidents into one and omitted several things I told her. I just want you to know what happened. I, of course, will provide you with any needed details.

I met Matt at a gathering of teens with Asperger's Syndrome which their parents had arraigned. This was early in 2008. I had worked with two of the boys and their parents had invited me. I have never had any professional relationship with Matt. He apparently heard from the other teens about activities I had arraigned for them and asked me if I could become his 'big brother'. I was a little taken by surprise, since that seemed to be a rather unusual request for a teen from an intact family to be making, so I talked to his parents and they said it would be a good thing. The parents are both very nice people, but dad has some very serious health problems.

- After visiting their home several times and getting to know each other, I agreed to give the relationship with Matt a try. I asked Matt what he would like to do and he said "Lets go camping". Since their home is only a short drive away from Raccoon Creek State Park, we gave it a try for a weekend. Things went well at first, pitching the tent, cooking a meal over the fire and taking a short hike around the park. Then we got ready to bed and things got complicated. We both had an air mattress and sleeping bag and were laying there in almost total darkness. I then heard (and dimly saw) Matt get out of his sleeping bag and move over till he was kneeling over me. He then reached down, pulled back the top of my sleeping bag and laid down (face down) on top of me. Now, Matt is over six feet tall and weighs nearly 300 pounds and this was uncomfortable to say the least, but given some of his psychiatric diagnoses I thought he was just acting a little immature and wanted to 'wrestle'. Then I felt something pushing into my abdomen and realized it was his erection. I reached up and rolled him over onto the ground and grabbed my flashlight. He was laying there, clutching his penis and masturbating by 'punching' it. He asked me to join him. I refused, but couldn't help watching because of the pain he must have been inflicting on himself. It was over in a few minutes and I just told him to go to sleep and he did. The next morning I decided to pack up and go home after just one night. He got very angry about not staying the second night. On the drive home, he punched me as I was driving and then opened the car door and made as though he was going to jump out of the moving car. I pulled over, got him calmed down then returned him home with no further problem
- For the next couple weeks, I saw Matt at his home and talked to him about the incident at the park. I thought we had it worked out. He did ask to visit my home and I agreed. A week or so later (I believe it was on a Saturday) I took him to my place - 606 South Main - and showed him around. As soon as we got to the bedroom he pulled down his pants and began masturbating. I just told him he was on his own and that I was going downstairs and that he should call me when he was done. I walked down to the kitchen and had a cup of coffee. Eventually, I heard something from upstairs and walked up. Matt was standing at the top of the stairs - masturbating - but this time his hand and penis were covered with blood. I was more concerned about his injuring himself than about the sexual matter. I showed him (using my pointed finger -not his penis as the police report has it - to illustrate how most other boys do it). I did also tell him about using a lubricant because I could imagine that he was doing this frequently and could really hurt himself. I was also beginning to worry that I should get him to a doctor to take care of the torn skin. However, after a few minutes I began to understand that this had been all for show, He had been using stage blood!!! Matt is smart, and his 'encompassing preoccupation' (a la Asperger's) is anything to do with movies and TV. He is constantly writing and 'shooting' movies with his cameras and recording equipment. I had already taken him to a store in Robinson that specializes in costumes and stage equipment ... and yes, he had been looking at stage blood.
- The date that my attorney and the District Attorney had agreed to focus on - April 1st 2008 - was apparently chosen because Matt had told them that that was the first time he stayed over at my place. (I was told that I could get a detailed account of what he told them but although both I and my attorney have written and asked for it, I have never received it.) Matt had been acting fairly well and he constantly asked to stay with me over a weekend, I had set up my bedroom for two of us. He was to use my bed and I had set up an air mattress and sleeping bag on the other side of the room for myself. As I remember, we had picked up a movie to watch and gone out for something to eat. It was getting late

and we were getting ready for bed. I was sitting on the side of the bed taking my shoes off when Matt sat down right next to me. I don't remember if I realized he was naked but I would in a few seconds. He reached over, took my right hand and pulled it over to him. By the time I looked over, he had placed my hand over his erection and was holding it there with both of his hands. I just remember asking him "What are you doing?", and telling him to "let go!". Of course, at this time we get into the problem of defining what I was doing. In Matt's mind, I was masturbating him--- in my mind, I was trying to jerk my hand free from his organ. Of course, it was all over in just a minute or two and I can assure you that the only 'seminal fluid' that was produced here belonged to Matt, not me. By my response to Detective Campbell's question that I felt like "a somewhat willing participant", I meant that I realized after this incident started that I could have ended it by getting very physical (by hitting or otherwise harming him) but I decided not to because I still really wanted to try a more positive approach to helping Matt.

- During the first couple of months I knew Matt, he wanted to spend all of his weekends at my place. In fact, he said several times that he wanted to move in with me. He was constantly arguing with his parents and in trouble at school. He did come back to my place overnight several times and, yes, he tried the masturbation thing again. I told him strongly that I was getting sick and tired of it but if being 'close' to me - as he put it - was so important, I asked him to think of another way to do it. He asked if I could give him a back-rub. That seemed to be offer an improvement in the situation, so I agreed to try it. Unfortunately, the first time we tried it, he reached behind himself, grabbed my hand and pulled it down over his buttocks. When I told him I didn't want to do this either, he became angry again. He really seemed to think that rejecting these sexual advances were rejecting him! I believe that on the drive home, he tried another 'acting out' for the first time - while we were driving down a road near his home, at about 45 mph, he lunged over from the passenger side, grabbed the top of the steering wheel, and tried to make a hard right turn - which would have had us crash into a bridge abutment. Fortunately, I saw it coming and was able to slow down and keep control of the steering wheel.
- After several instances like this, I was getting very concerned about where this was going and felt that I should let his parents in on what was going on. I finally called his dad (dad apparently didn't remember the call when the detective asked him about it). That's probably because I wasn't too explicit when I talked to him, I just told him about the incident at the park as "Matt had laid down on top of me", and that "Matt was masturbating and wanted me to help him".
- Finally, after several talks and frequent admonitions didn't change things, I began to see that this couldn't continue. After Matt had acted out sexually three or four more times, trying to involve me, I had to address this - or get out of it! On one of the Saturdays I saw Matt at his home, we went out to lunch in McDonald and, on the way back to his place, we drove past the Ft. Cherry High School. Matt wouldn't talk about any of these things at home because he felt he would be overheard, so I pulled into the school parking lot. It was a sunny and warm day, so I guess it was the end of May or beginning of June. I told him that we really had to do more than just talk. I had to say something that he would have to agree to or our relationship, which he said meant so much to him, was headed nowhere. As well as I can remember, what I said was "Matt, I really like you and care about you. I want to be your big brother and I appreciate how smart and talented you are...but this sex thing has to end! It can get me into a lot of trouble.. and it's going to finish off the first real friendship you've had in your life. If you don't end this stuff right here and now, I'm just going home and staying there. I'm going and never coming back. You will never see me again! Do you understand?" He seemed to be tearing up, but he nodded a 'yes'. The amazing thing was that it worked! From that day, he never tried to involve me in any sexual act or situation. For the next two and a half years, I saw Matt on most weekends and he did stay at my place a few more times, mostly on a few weekends when we had arraigned for him to have an 'extra' part in a motion picture being filmed here in Pittsburgh. But from the time of our 'talk' in the high school lot, he never again tried or even suggested that we have any improper contact.
- The last time I saw Matt was at Christmastime last year (2010) when I dropped off his present, a book about how to become a movie producer. When I didn't hear from him after Christmas, I called him a couple times but he didn't return the calls. My guess is that the conversation with the social worker had taken place and he was afraid to follow up on it. During those two and a half years, Matt asked me to teach him how to drive (we tried that out for a few times on a neighbors private road, but he gave up on it). For most of the time, he was constantly getting me to have a 'part' in one of the movies he was constantly producing. The scripts were usually rather strange - featuring strange relationships between seriously disturbed people, but he would come up with a new project at least once a month, and ask me

to appear in it. I think he's worn out several camcorders. Things changed a little during 2010. As I have already pointed out, for all of his emotional problems and diagnoses, he is bright and talented. One of the local cable companies actually gave Matt his own television news show! (You can see several of his 'newscasts' at: mcdonaldareanews.com). For the last months I was with Matt, I was constantly helping him to finish his studio. You can still watch several of his shows on-line. There are none done in the last few months, so he may have lost his connection with the cable channel. On the negative side, he is still having sexual problems. I didn't know it at the time. But he was apparently downloading 'kiddy-porn' from the internet. A speaker from the FBI had apparently appeared at his school and told the students about the government crackdown on the problem. He stopped the downloads, but has become obsessed with the idea that the government might be spying on him. The last time I really spent time with Matt, he was totally absorbed in his television show and wanted me to help him get enough money to upgrade his studio. I don't know whether my inability to do so had anything to do with his recent statements.

- Finally, even as I sit here typing this out, I ask myself why I didn't try to get out of this situation a lot sooner. I guess it's as follows: When this kid came up to me over four years ago, I could feel the loneliness and frustration in his story. He had no friends and had already been diagnosed with several psychiatric problems (Asperger's, Bi-Polar and several others). He's been under treatment and taking a rather heavy load of medications for most of his life, this includes several hospitalizations. When he came and just about begged me to be his 'big brother', I knew that I had some unused free time on my weekends and just couldn't refuse him. I guess that my reaction to his bizarre behaviors at the beginning was that I thought of them as symptoms of his mental health problems that I could help him overcome. Several schools and programs have thrown him out because of his behaviors (not necessarily his sexual ones), I didn't want to be another rejection, and after a few months I succeeded in what I was trying to do.. But now I have to ask if those schools and programs were right...like them, maybe I should have just walked away.

My contact information: Arthur Merrell, 606 South Main Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15220
Phone: 412-922-3844. e-mail: arthurmerrell@gmail.com

