

Jeanne Cotter

Submitted 9/30/2020

On 1987 incident

Fall of 1987 I was engaged to be married to David Haas. His career was in a dramatic ascent as several of his all-time hits were recently released including Blest Are They. That same fall we moved in together and hit a major crisis. David had done a concert/workshop at the College of St. Benedict. Within weeks we received news that a freshman had reported to her parents, college officials and the Archdiocese of St. Paul that David had sexually assaulted her after the concert he gave at St. Benedict's.

A major crisis ensued. David had been closely connected with the St. Paul Seminary, had maintained a rent-free office on that campus for some time and had the official title of "Composer in Residence". He was called to a meeting with the rector, Father Charlie Froehly. I did not attend the meeting but listened for hours to David as he recounted everything that had happened at the meeting and he cried and panicked about what was going to happen to his career. The worst fear of all was that he would be criminally charged for something he vehemently denied having done.

What I remember is that the girl's father had contacted a lawyer and was considering whether or not to press criminal sexual assault charges against David. He was holding St. Benedict College, David, the Archdiocese and the St. Paul Seminary responsible. His daughter was in counseling following the assault and the dad was very concerned about his daughter ever having to take the stand at a rape trial.

I know there was more than just the one meeting between David and Fr. Froehly because there were several days in which the fear of being criminally charged hung over David and certainly over our relationship, as well. David told me that the girl must have had mental or emotional problems because she misinterpreted their interaction. He argued that I know he is "touchy/ feely" and that maybe she misinterpreted a long hug after the concert or something. I remember questioning David how on earth she could misinterpret their encounter so extremely that she was accusing him of raping her. David didn't know how such a misinterpretation could happen except, he conjectured, that maybe she had been previously raped and now was pinning it on him. I felt absolutely terrible and terrified for my fiancé, the man I loved. And I was enraged that a girl could erroneously accuse him of something as awful as rape. At that time, my understanding of rape was limited to male brute force causing great harm through brutal violence against a woman that included forced intercourse. David was not strong or in shape and I couldn't imagine him violently raping a college-

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age girl while she fought back. Because I just couldn't imagine such a "rape" scene, I believed the college girl was lying and that David was the true victim, falsely accused.

My understanding was that the girl's father made demands through Fr. Charlie Froehly. He was looking for other ways to hold David accountable while protecting his daughter from the trauma of a public trial. He made demands of David and those David was affiliated with: the St. Paul Seminary and the Archdiocese, in exchange for not pressing criminal charges. David had to apologize, he had to promise (and I believe sign an agreement) that he'd never perform at St. Benedict's College or for that demographic (college-age girls) again. He had to move out of his rent-free office at the St. Paul Seminary effective immediately and lose his title as St. Paul Seminary Composer in Residence. I don't know if part of the deal for the family to not file criminal charges was that David had to go to counseling or if the demand to attend counseling came from the Archdiocese. But David did immediately start counseling with a priest who worked for the Archdiocese, Fr. Ken Pierre.

After I had posted my June 21st, 2020 statement about Into Account's letter announcing several reports of Haas sexual misconduct, I received a private message from the 1987 St. Benedict student. She introduced herself and we ended up having a lengthy phone conversation. Amy told me the details of her story about the night David assaulted her. I was taken aback because she denied there had ever been an accusation of rape made in 1987 and that her parents never thought the sexual assault included vaginal penetration or rape. I couldn't figure out why the accusation of rape was so etched in my memory. When David went through the Sexual Addiction Treatment program at the Golden Valley Mental Health Center in 1990, the St. Ben's assault came back up within the addiction context. Even in front of our therapist, David and I discussed the 1987 rape allegation. David did not dispute that the accusation was made. He said it was false and he was the victim.

It's only in recent weeks, as I have learned the story of the 1979 rape of the 13 year old child on her confirmation retreat that I've begun to figure out the only thing that makes sense to me around the language of rape used in the crisis of 1987. The Archdiocese of St. Paul had numerous reports about the 1979 rape, as Into Account illuminates. I question if Father Froehly used the word "rape" with David in those 1987 meetings precisely because he knew about the 1979 rape report? Fr. Froehly represented the Archdiocese as well as the St Paul Seminary through the 1987 crisis. He likely knew the details of the 1979 rape of the 13 year old child as it had been recorded at the Archdiocese.