

# S.I. suspect spoke of girl

## Minister recalls words

By MARY ENGELS and PAUL MESKIL

Daily News Staff Writers

The Staten Island minister in whose home Andre Rand was arrested for the kidnaping of Jennifer Schweiger says he believes the ex-con knew the missing 12-year-old girl.

"He would talk about the case and then he would veer away from it," the Rev Charles Muskett said yesterday as police and volunteers pressed the month-old search for Jennifer.

"I really think he knew Jennifer because, at one point in our conversations, he compared my son Chippy's speech with hers."

Chippy—Charles Jr., 17—has a speech defect similar to that of Jennifer, born with Down's syndrome. Muskett said that when he asked Rand if he knew Jennifer, he replied, "I read that—some-where—that she was retarded."

"I really think he knew the child," Muskett said. "He must have known her. He was always in that neighborhood."

Muskett, who lives with his wife and four of their six children above his storefront Church of the God Within, on Castleton Ave., said he rented a room to Rand after Jennifer disappeared July 9.

A few days after the 43-year-old sign painter moved in, Muskett said detectives told him Rand was a prime suspect in the girl's disap-

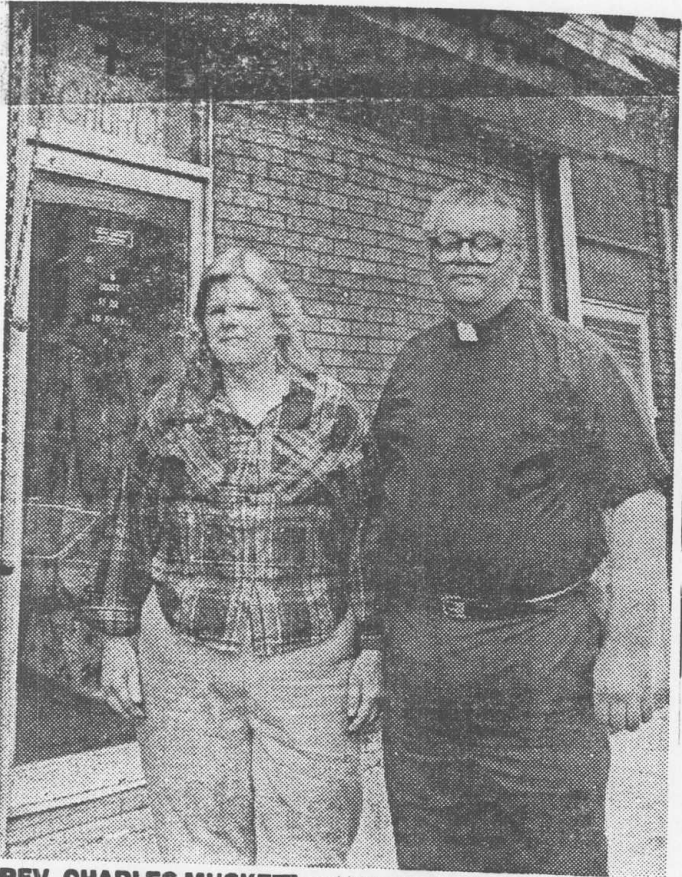


Jennifer Schweiger

pearance. The minister said he permitted investigators to install an electronic listening device in his kitchen and agreed to question Rand about the case on the chance that he would incriminate himself.

"We're not talking about someone who's a dummy," Muskett said. "He has a very high IQ. He reads a great deal. He told me he had studied criminal law at John Jay College in Manhattan. He knew more about the law than some of the cops who arrested him."

Rand, who served time for sexually abusing a 9-year-old Bronx girl, was sent to Kings County Hospital for psychiatric evaluation after his arrest last week in Jennifer's abduction. He reportedly told hospital authorities he wants to talk to Muskett, so police plan to bring the minister to the hospital Tuesday.



REV. CHARLES MUSKETT and his wife outside his church on Staten Island yesterday.

BOB PARSONS