

## Rosaries & Ovaries

I was born in 1953, already behind the 8 ball. The end result of an affair which ended after 7 years, I could not even be called a 'love child' as my father was once again back with his legal wife & had had another 2 kids with her. As for my Mum, her youngest child before me was 14, & I was certainly an <sup>unwanted</sup> <sup>unwanted</sup> <sup>unwanted</sup> baby. There was no one to love me except for the 4 year old daughter, who tried. Unfortunately for us, our mother died from pneumonia & there was no one else. By this time I was 6 & my sister was 3 & a mother herself. My Dad then stepped in & took me away from the only life I knew & tried to 'make me fit' into his very white, very 'anglified' family. (I am Melanesian, born in Rabaul of a half-caste mother.) My Dad's wife hated me & rejected me outright, & on the advice of his Catholic priest, my life in Australia began. I was fostered out to the ~~the~~ family in Brisbane - good Catholic family!!! They never bothered to try to understand me & the culture shock was severe enough to take away my power of speech, let alone the death of my mother & being wrenched away from my sister, & village life. I was unused to such things as stodge food, forks, knives cups & saucers, shoes, uniforms - blazers, coats & berets. I'd never even seen a bed, let alone a TV. Can anyone ever begin to imagine, if they have no idea of village life? I attended Sacred Heart Primary, & my first glimpse of a nurse ~~was~~ almost made my little heart stop - I didn't know if I wanted to laugh hysterically, or cry hysterically! I got accustomed to them in a hurry & also priests. I was never allowed to grieve for my lost life. I wasn't even allowed to think of Rabaul, or family.

I was rejected, humiliated & abandoned. Once when  
I ran my hand down Mrs. [unclear] arm to thank  
her for my dinner, she rounded on me & screamed  
at me to never touch her. (I was only 6!) Anyway  
after nearly burning down their house ~~the~~ accident  
I was shifted from there in such a hurry, my  
feet never touched the ground. That's when my  
life in institutions began. Now I was surrounded  
by these weird creatures in their habits of black  
& white. Another culture shock! I started Grade 2  
here. I had to walk to & from the convent every  
day - about a million miles - I don't know, but to  
a little kid it seemed that way. I had also  
never known a winter. Cold weather was as  
foreign to me as a Martian to Aussie folks! Or  
perhaps as foreign to them as I myself must have  
been. Here I was, a white-blende ~~white~~ <sup>Melanesian</sup> skinned child  
who was so traumatized by all the experiences in her  
short little life, she was struck speechless. To make  
me speak, I was smacked, starved, made to  
kneel for hours with my hands on my head, kept  
away from other boarders & generally abused by  
whoever was passing. I was the youngest kid there.  
The closest in age to me was Carol, who was about  
11 or 12, I think. She was the only girl there who  
spoke to me. The others either pretended I was  
invisible, or verbally abused me, calling me half  
red, or nigger. My skin isn't noticeably brown, so  
they must have got their info from elsewhere?  
The next most humiliating thing that happened  
was "the pound note incident". Someone had a  
pound stolen & I was blamed. Now here I was a  
little skinny kid from PNG...

we went again. My father tried to put me into St. Vincent's orphanage, but they sent us to Nazareth House, an orphanage in Wynnum in Brisbane. He dumped me again! He never said & eventually I was made a ward of the state & so began another nightmare from which I never wake from till recently - in fact, September 2002. [These 2 1/2 years I spent in cell. I thought the previous 4 years were painful; they had nothing on what I was now forced to endure. These 2 1/2 years I had effectively blocked out almost completely, I had never told anyone, even my kids, who have only recently been told. I ~~was~~ <sup>felt</sup> too guilty & ashamed of these years, coz I was made to believe it was my own fault, that no one wanted me & even my own father had abandoned me, & that I should forever get down on my knees & be grateful to God who I didn't believe in. How could a just wise loving God allow bad wicked things to happen to innocent kids? We were being punished for the sins of our parents, at least I was.

From the time I arrived, Sister Philomena who was in charge of us took an intense dislike to me. It was never ever possible for me to do the right thing in her eyes. She called me lazy, brazen, good for nothing, that I'd never amount to anything much & that I would end up in the gutter where I came from & where I belonged. There were other nuns involved in the abuse of us kids, but she loathed me with an unnatural intensity.

I started school within the orphanage, but after a 10 test, it was decided I should attend Wynnum

Primary State School. There were a few of us chosen to go, but I'm unable to remember who those others were. Again I felt different - different from the kids who didn't get the opportunity to attend <sup>schools</sup> outside, & different from the State School kids. To N.H. kids, I was ignored coz I was so different, & <sup>to</sup> the others, I was just a 'home' kid whose parents didn't want me. It was awful - catching the bus each day & feeling like a lepar. ☹

~~The home provided it's services to babies, orphans, or unwanted or neglected kids & a section for the poor old people. (I felt so sorry for the old ones.) I was in the little girls sector & opposite was the big girls, & up the corridor was babies & toddlers section, & upstairs & out near the church was the oldies sections.~~

We had to pray, go to mass, make beds, scrub sinks, baths, toilets & floors. And all this before getting ready for school. Not to mention doing all the dishes in grey <sup>greasy</sup> water, after eating breakfast of weevilly oats.

After school, I was expected to wash & feed the babies & toddlers, - in silence. These fragile frightened little angels - all they wanted was to be cuddled, & we weren't allowed to show any affection or comfort to them. None to each other.

Saturday mornings after the normal chores, & washing & polishing granite floors, & dusting every surface, (the place is huge) I had to go help in the laundry. It was hard, heavy, hot work. Especially for little kids like me, complained as

where would that get us? More verbal & physical abuse.

On Sundays, I had to help with the oldies. There were feeds - breakfast & lunch, & we had to <sup>quickly</sup> shovel the food into their poor old mouths. There were wet & soiled beds & bodies to clean up. We had no time to talk, & anyway we weren't allowed to talk to them, although I tried & very often got into trouble. Cuz we had to rush everything, we were rough on the poor old darlings, & I can't forgive myself for that cruelty I was forced to do to them. I didn't want to be like my role models, the nuns. I cried a lot over the cruelty - to all of us kids & old folks.

We weren't allowed to have personal belongings. Even ~~was~~ the underwear we wore were communal. All the washing for the whole place was done in the laundry, & on Saturdays, we got to wear clean clothes - whatever happened to cleanliness is next to godliness!

We did get to brush our teeth 3 times daily, but my own did ~~was~~ poor, our teeth became weak & decayed. The dentist's car only came once in the 12 years I was there. My head is full of fillings! They were filled teeth that didn't need it, just in case!

The years I spent in Nazareth House were the most abysmal, desolate & sad years in my short lifetime. I was ridiculed & told no one would ever want me & I would be a nothing, & I started to believe it. I could see no hope of a future.

I started to think how I could kill myself, & at

age of 12 I tried to cut my wrist. I tried again a year later, but as I was so young, I didn't even do that ~~right~~ right.

This one time when the nun Philomena caught me laughing & talking while I was meant to be scrubbing the bathroom, she went ballistic & half dragged & half pushed me into the storeroom, told me to hold out my hands, palms up, & started to whack me with a feather duster, (not the fluffy end!). However, coz she must have thought I had been laughing at her & she became increasingly violent with each stroke & the pain was so bad I crouched down onto the floor on my hands & knees, & she just kept coming at me & couldn't seem to stop & by now she was hitting my arms, legs & head & back, anywhere. Finally, silence & stillness. Her breath was ragged & fast. My mind must have separated from my body, coz I couldn't focus for several minutes, but as I came back, I seemed fascinated by the patterns on the floorboards, then the stubby feet of the wardrobe under which I was desperately trying to climb under. I looked up at her sweaty red face with spittle caked around her thin mean lips & the flare light glinting off those blue-tinted specs & I was truly afraid. If evil had form, it was standing in front of me. I began crying, huge wracking sobs from the pit of my soul. The pain of this episode has remained with me to today. But that wasn't the end of it. I was made to kneel & pray & hours later sent to bed without dinner. She told me to lower my eyes, not to ever speak to anyone about what had happened. I felt I was in the presence of evil.

My whole life has been changed. Some days I can't wake or walk or function normally. (What's normal?) Anyway my prayers were finally answered after 4 years & my father took me to Sydney to try to make a home for me with his first wife again. Nothing had changed. She still hated me & of course I had no feelings. (Although I missed my dog Paddy.) Looking back over all my childhood & adolescence, the one clear thing that sticks out is I was this unwanted, unloved, abandoned, neglected, but always hungry, hungry, hungry, skinny kid - hungry for food & hungry for love. I never got enough of anything, except for pain - that I got lashings of! [On with my tale - it was obvious the wicked stepmother was always going to reject me. She starved me too & I just wanted to die. No dog to love me or to turn to - no one. [So off we went again. Back to Warwick to re-enrol, but they also rejected me, said my father owed them too much money (generous, loving, gentle folk!). Also my dog was no longer alive. Apparently he left the premises, something he never did while I was there, he went out to look for me & having no road sense, he was killed by a car & died instantly. At the time, of course I didn't show any emotions coz I'd learned not to, however now, I cry for my Paddy always. Now I miss him. Now I can grieve for him. All these years later my heart is breaking into minuscule pieces, not only over Paddy, but for the little lost child I was! (An ill

of the whole class, lift up my uniform & use a cane to whip me at the tops of my thighs so the welt couldn't be seen. I also commenced piano lessons that year, & she took over my lessons after the previous Music teacher took ill or something. Needless to say I lost complete interest in music after several cracks over the knuckles when I made mistakes doing the scales. I gave up. I gave up emotionally as well & became more withdrawn & alone. (Although I was an intelligent kid & loved all my other subjects, especially English & Science, I just gave up. They broke my spirit & it's only recently I've called my spirit back home, (& I'm 49 now). Anyway, time dragged on interminably & I had nothing to look forward to, although I had Paddy. I saw my father very seldom as he was a Ship's Master & was frequently overseas & busy impregnating women worldwide. Although he was irresponsible & often broke, I loved him in a way, & I do know he loved me. When I did see him, I had become so visceral I didn't want him to cuddle me or even to hold my hand. I didn't ever speak to him. I just had nothing to say to him. Everything I felt from the time I entered this convent till the last few years, I just pushed aside. My emotions were to be dormant in my subconscious till the mid-1990's, when out of the blue they started to seep through & now I'm unable to stop crying. My work was affected & I have inexplicable pain in joints & muscles. - (an umbrella term known as fibromyalgia)



up my uniform & used a huge ruler & whacked me. And it hurt more coz I was wet! I do hope that little boy forgave me eventually coz I almost had him convinced he'd done it. (Oh the Frisks!) I was forced to wear my wet knickers all day & I stank & was made to kneel in a corner with my hands on my head for the remainder of the day. I'll never get over the humiliation of that day & the other kids, thankfully, stopped teasing me - they were just glad it was me copping all the hidings & not them. I found that to be the same for the rest of my life in all the institutions I stayed in. I got punished & the other kids were secretly happy it was me & not them. All I can say is, thanks to my angels & that kind & thoughtful person who gave me Paddy, I was able to keep some semblance of sanity. Paddy was with me for 16 years & I think I got my quirky sense of humour & optimism from him. He was my best friend, my mother & father, my brother, my angel & my kindred spirit. I've never had a successful relationship since. I've never established or been able to maintain any relationship coz of the emotional & physical abuse I suffered as a kid. The closest I've got to it is with my own kids, & I've treated them with respect, honesty & as much love as I am capable of giving. I know too well the life I didn't want for them. The next year I ~~was~~ commenced grade 3, & it was to be more of a nightmare than previously experienced. I had this wicked nun teaching me my Maths. If I made a mistake with the timetables, she would bring me in front,

to mass. Strictly no talking. Kneeling on cold  
hard boards in the chapel for an hour praying  
to a God & a Christ & his Mother & a bouquet of  
various saints & martyrs I didn't believe in. So  
many horror stories, & a cruel & unforgiving God  
who never heard any prayer I ever prayed. I must  
have been born bad & evil as I was so often  
punished, & God had it in for me. I gave up on  
him eventually, as I thought he had me! No  
amount of praying was getting me ~~out~~ out of the  
mess I had created in my little life. (After mass  
we had to rush to the dining room for breakfast -  
more prayers, then stiff porridge & sweet tea. Then  
back upstairs after clearing up & re-setting tables  
for lunch. Make beds, brush teeth & hair (not  
simultaneously!) mop floors, clean sinks & toilets,  
then I had to walk a zillion miles to school, while  
the older girls stayed at the convent to be educated,  
so it was for secondary students. (The other girl,  
Irene, I mentioned, walked with me as she was in  
upper primary, which was next to the infants  
shed. So in school it was more bloody prayers  
or hour of catharsis & then normal stuff.  
Lever was at 10am & we had a short break,  
then prayers - well you can guess! Prayers,  
lessons, no talking, no laughing, don't bother  
to ask to go for as we coz you must hold it, no  
nothing! I will never be incontinent, coz my P.F.M.'s  
wouldn't dare release! One day I was bursting for  
wee, & the nun wouldn't let me out, & I was  
sitting next to a little boy, & I wet myself & blamed  
him coz I wasn't going to be belted if I could help it.  
Didn't work! In front of all the kids she lifted

although I'd like to say I never shut up from that day, unfortunately I was very withdrawn & aloof & still am today. <sup>(getting better now)</sup> There was no way I was letting anyone <sup>or is it?</sup> close enough to ever hurt me again (it didn't work!). The humiliation suffered by a 7yr old is more devastating than suffered by older people. I was branded a thief, a liar & never allowed to forget it. This is one of the reasons today I am unable to do the banking in any of my jobs, as a receptionist, (at the end of the day.) Some days I didn't leave the office till 8pm or 9pm, (unpaid of course) coz I had to count the money over & over, & sometimes if it was out, I'd put in the missing amount out of my own purse. It would eventually even out at the end of the month when I did the statements & bank balance. Lucky my employers understood my obsession with accuracy, & they always tried to reassure me that I was trusted. But I worried constantly, even at home after work. So I never got much sleep. (In the years since 1993 I've had 5 or 6 jobs with not so understanding employers. I felt I had to quit coz my worries & anxiety over "the banking" would drive them <sup>& me</sup> crazy. Can't say I blame them - they should have been in my shoes! So since 2001, I've not been able to work, or sleep. Of course the banking wasn't the only problem. (Anyway, life went on at Warwick. It was a cold, emotionless place, excused only by the coldness of the nuns, & the toffee-nosed boarders who thought they were better than me. The nuns had us up at 7am by ringing a bell loudly & pulling off warm blankets, making us kneel on cold floorboards for prayers, then lining up to go to the loo. One loo for 20 girls. Then brush teeth, get dressed &

what the hell money was, here I was accused of stealing it. The nuns harangued me, threats & whacked me around the legs & head, until I couldn't take anymore & I nodded my head to indicate I did steal it, & when asked what I done with it, I again indicated, by signing, I'd eaten it - bear in mind, I didn't know what money was! That stopped them in their tracks, at least temporarily; then I was forced to try to vomit it up & then to apologise to the girl who'd found the note I'd eaten! Thank God I can look back & see how pathetically funny <sup>& sad</sup> the incident was. Mind you, I was never allowed to forget either & among the other names I was given, now I was a little 4yr old thief! I can credit my sense of humour to the kind, big-hearted & open-minded person who donated a curly-coated retriever (brown) to me. Lucky the convent was in Warwick, a rural town out west of Brisbane, & it had acres of land around it, so they allowed me to keep the dog. Not only was I 'anglized' by them (I still didn't speak) but I was becoming 'Irishized' (my word!) as well, as there were many Irish Catholic families living there & many Irish nuns. So I named my dog Paddy, & he loved me unconditionally. He didn't edge me or beat me or push me away when I needed cuddles. We shared everything - he even licked my skinned knees, & looked after me when I was sick, or had been battered about by people. I learned so many good & positive qualities from Paddy, & from everyone else, all I learned was the ugly side of humans. Slowly, slowly, I got my speech back over several

I had to kneel for hours in the corner with my hands on my head, & after she had gone from the room, I laid down & fell into an exhausted sleep. Some time later, I heard that clip-clop of her shoes on granite, & I swore I believed she had down feet ~~on~~ & a tail under that habit! As I got back onto my knees, I could feel where the dress was stuck onto the welts on the back of my neck.

Another time Philomena made me eat black pudding. I vomited it up, & she made me eat that as well, & I just kept vomiting until I began to vomit up blood. I was sent to the Mater Hospital in an Ambulance for tests. I was in there for almost 2 weeks. They never found the cause, but they thought I must have had a burst blood vessel from all the vomiting. When it was time for me to go back to Naz House I cried & cried & begged the nurses to save me. They were so kind to me & I'm sure my stay in there, which was unnecessarily long, was due to their intervention & kindness. They knew what I was going back to.

Another time I was sent to Mater Hospital was due to that nun again. She made me push out from the wall to clear behind it, a glass-fronted library cupboard filled with books we were only allowed to take books from, when Social Workers come from the Dept. of Families. It was huge on an 11yr old to push & inevitably I lost control of it & it came crashing down on my right leg - pushed muscle & skin of my shin & ankle to the far right of my leg, where it remains today.

She just stood behind me & told me to shut my screaming up, & then she disappeared & another nurse & some of the girls helped me. Lucky for me there were no broken bones. However, I used crutches for 6 weeks & limped for months after.

Life continued like this for another couple of years. The continual violence & emotional abuse Philomena kept saying I was lazy & useless & no one wanted me & even my father dumped me coz I was no good. My life was hopeless. There was nothing to look forward to, & each night I'd beg God to let me die, & each morning I'd awake with less faith. The emptiness stretched into infinity. I tried to cut my wrists on 2 separate occasions & once I tried to drown myself after school, but coz I was a good swimmer, my body took over & I failed ever at my attempts of suicide! Also I was scared of sharks - they could have helped me! Eventually I made plans to abscond, rather than have to put up another single second with the cruelty of Philomena. I talked a girl into coming with me, so we dressed as boys, & jumped out a window. My plan was to get out onto Wynnum Road & just hitchhike to Redcliff. (I had had some fun there at some stage)

So about 10pm we jumped from a window & walked right out of hall. The driveway went for about 50m or so & we felt like dead girls walking! It was the longest road in history - & if we were caught, one can imagine. But we made it, & started to hitchhike. Redcliff was picked up by

a man in a ute who just happened to be going to Redcliff. Whether he did it coz he was kind maybe realized we were runaways & not the boys we were pretending to be, I don't know, & maybe my Angels were caring for us, but we got to our destination, safely. We told that man so much crap! But he was kind to us & I hope good karma came his way.

We were so happy to have our freedom & lucky to be ~~for~~ safe & although we had no money for food or shelter for the week, we were fed by the kindness of strangers & slept on the beach or bus shelters.

The second last night we were there, we met 2 guys & hung out with them. They got drunk, & the guy I was with tried to force my hand on his penis & tried to tongue kiss me. I was so disgusted, I went off alone & slept in a bus shelter. I was only a kid, sex wasn't in my vocabulary yet. I just wasn't ready for all that stuff.

The other girl eventually found me in the early morning. I didn't ask her about her night coz I was too ashamed by what she might have done, so I just forgot it, till now. She could have been raped or murdered, & I just left her to it. I feel so guilty now, as I pride myself on my loyalty to people.

That day, we met a girl who lived nearby. She lived in the basement of her mother's house. She invited us to stay that night, & in the morning, regrettably, her Mum called the Police. Her Mum was sorry, but it was ~~for~~ <sup>in</sup> our

best interests. It was time anyway - even we realized that it was dangerous for 2 young kids to remain on the streets.

The Police arrived with a Social Worker in tow. We were taken to a Doctor to investigate if we were still virgins!!! I felt as if I had been violated - I'm still angry now. They thought I was a liar, but I had never had sex with anyone. I'm not sure about the other girl & I'm sorry to say, I never saw her again, & I didn't get to say goodbye to her. I was then admitted into St Ursula's for the night before being taken to Star of the Sea convent in Southport. Although it wasn't an orphanage, it was a cold regimental life (existence). It was prayers, punishment, priests, nuns, Mass, confessions, benedictions etc etc etc. The food was slightly better than Nazareth House, but there was grace to be said, no talking, clearing up tables & re-setting them again.

We had to scrub & polish the whole place - child labour. We wore uniforms & after school & on weekends, we had a different uniform. Blazers, gloves, hats - it was awful. No one spoke to me much, except to abuse me or tell me to work harder, faster & better. There was no encouragement, no smiling happy faces & no one gave me any affection. Nobody, apart from the few times I saw my Dad, had ever touched me or gave me a hug. Nothing. I imagine what I could have become if only someone had a few words of encouragement for me or love me



hugs or some form of positive input. But it was such a cold, negative raw experience. Once again I was singled out by the nuns. The Mother Superior was a nun I remembered from Warwick. I thought she'd be kind, but no. I seemed to be in her office more often than not. I had begun to be rebellious by this time, & like a normal teenager I was cheeky, I smirked, laughed at them, stuck out my tongue & swore. I pushed a nun one day after she smacked me across my head for nodding off in a class. The Mother Superior threatened me with expulsion. So I packed up & went to live with my friend who was a day scholar & lived in Nerang Road. She had a cruel Polish father & a wonderful mother & 2 great brothers. The father hated me & tried to shake me loose from his family. But the Mum wouldn't hear of it. She was the only adult who actually loved me & tried hard to help me. But by now I was too damaged & needy & hard to understand.

My friend & I went into Southport State High & were there for almost 2 years, I think. I didn't do well & by exams time came round I left & so didn't get Grade 10 leaving.

By this time I was running wild & thought 'I knew everything!' All those years of institutionalization & I grew to hate myself & my life, & every person I met, I put my whole trust & love into, thinking they were going to be my saviors. Oh how wrong I was!

There was another defining moment I've just remembered from my days at Nazareth House.

I was about 13 & had just begun menstruating. Not knowing anything at all about the facts of life coz sex education was non-existent, I told a girl & she said I had to tell Str Philomena. I was so frightened of this nun & had good reasons. She shoved me into the storeroom & started berating me about how I was a nothing & would end up in the gutter & that I was nothing but a common slut & would be pregnant before I was 15 coz she saw me looking at the painter who had been painting the front area. I swear I didn't know what the hell she was going on about! She was fairly having another of those fits she often had when around me! Red face, spit caked in the corners of her lips & shaking wildly, My God talk about scary!

Anyway, heres the thing. I prayed every night to stop my periods & low & behold, they stopped & never returned till I turned 17! Maybe it was sheer terror or maybe it was coz I was so under-nourished or whatever, but it was only the second time in my life God listened to me. The first being to be taken out of the boarding school in Warwick. But, I am very careful about what I wish for these days - I went from Warwick to Nazareth House to boarding school in Southport, to another institution into which I willingly placed myself at 17 - the institution of marriage!! For 10 years! And I suffered the worse abuse imaginable. But those 10 years are another

story!

The impact of the abuse I received at the hands of the upright Catholic citizens I came into contact with throughout my childhood has been so traumatic as to affect every facet of my life.

I was unprepared for life outside the regimented institutions I lived in. I was unable to have a normal relationship with anyone. People found it hard to understand where I was coming from. They had no concept & knew no one coming from my background & hence couldn't imagine how damaged I was. I just drifted along from abuse to abuse all my life. I have allowed everyone to use me & walk all over me.

I changed my name when I married & changed the story of my life. No one knew my history & it's only been since October 2002 that I finally told my kids, who were horrified. They always knew I was unlike other Mums, but now they know why.

I had told everyone I came from a privileged background, & apart from the abuse I suffered, I suppose it sounded sort of like the truth.

I said I attended boarding schools all my life, after my Mother died. I came from Ralaul & my Mum was 1/4 caste Melanesian & my father was a Ship's Master, who decided to stay up here after fighting in WW2. I had ~~some~~ an exotic background, & I just filled in the spaces with white lies, which after years of fibs, I thought, or I imagined I could fool myself into

believing. But with the lies came a facade built of stone, cement & wrought iron. My body became a physical manifestation of that facade. I held everything behind it, & was always in a state of pent-up-ness. Now as I am re-living my life through these pages, my body is very slowly becoming relaxed & soft, but with that comes pain throughout my body. I am on a cocktail of medication to help me cope - anti-inflammatories, anti-depressants, pain killers etc. I suffer depression & suicidal & self-harming thoughts. I'd never top myself coz I couldn't do that to my kids or leave a mess for someone else to clean up. That's another effect of my childhood. Everything has to be spotless & in it's exact place. My poor little kids - I was so hard on them when they were growing up. Their beds had to have hospital corners & no creases anywhere else, & I'd make them re-do them if they went up to scratch. Their rooms had to be spotless. I wasn't a bad Mum, & I don't know if that constitutes child abuse, but in retrospect I think it was. They just laugh about stuff now, but I feel guilty about it. I never hit them or yelled at them, but I didn't know anything about how to relate to them either, but I knew I didn't want them to be physically abused. Their father hit them & so many times I'd get battered trying to shield my son from him. I divorced him in 1981 & I never re-married. I don't trust anyone & I'm unable to sustain a normal relationship with a man, or no-one for that matter. I've had a

couple of 2 year relationships, & one which lasted for 5 years, but now I prefer to live in ~~isolation~~ isolation. I'm afraid to go out, & I'm afraid to be friends with anyone. Only my kids. If I have to go anywhere or be somewhere, the night before I don't sleep soundly. I'm up till 3 or 4a when I do finally drift off it's time to get up, & then I'm so tired & twitchy I procrastinate & finally I cancel coz I can't go out my front door. Sometimes I get changed 3 times or more coz I think I look ugly & that people will stare at me. I am having counselling at the moment for many of the problems I'm faced with. Sometimes I stutter coz I can't get my thoughts in a straight line. I had to give up work coz I get confused easily & my body is in great pain - fibromyalgia.

I have tried to better myself over the years since I left my ex-husband. I got my TEE in 1982 & enrolled in Curtin Uni to do my Diploma of Applied Science for Registered <sup>(only did one year of this course)</sup> Nursing, but, as with most things I start, I sabotage myself, coz all my life I was told I was too stupid & I would never amount to anything & I would end up in the gutter and although I've never ended up there, I have never felt worthy & always undervalued myself. I have a central core of pride which never allowed me to beg, & I was so determined my kids would become confident, productive & valued citizens of the community, which I'm proud to say happened. It wasn't an easy task & I never denied them the normal things kids have.

I've worked in bars & I've worked in offices & in  
~~the~~ Nursing Homes, as a physio aide & in between  
times I've been on the dole, but always my kids  
came first & if ~~it~~ I'd never had them I would  
be pushing up daisies as I speak! Every thing I've  
ever achieved has been for them.

And now after so many years of keeping my body  
& soul locked up tight & thinking all the memories  
were locked safely away, everything is coming apart  
in ways so unexpected & so sudden. Last October  
2002, 60 minutes had a segment ~~was~~ showing 2  
women who had been in Nazareth House in  
Brisbane & who had suffered physical, sexual  
& emotional abuse at the hands of nuns & priests  
while wards of the State. I couldn't believe my  
reaction after watching it. I cried for 2 weeks  
after & went into a deep depression & felt I was  
never coming out of it & I truly felt like I wanted  
to die. I started pulling my hair out & had real  
thoughts of wanting to cut myself & watch my  
life draining out of me. I was unable to afford  
any counselling, but the doctor put me on anti-  
depressants immediately, which helped, but took  
a few weeks to kick in & made me sleepy all day.  
The nightmares & night sweats began & I was up  
& manic one minute, & in the abysmal depths  
of despair the next. Things were looking desperate,  
& one of my girlfriends & her husband sent me  
a ticket to go to Victoria (she lives there) & they  
took me to the snow for a week & the solitude  
& beauty of the place soothed me & I was able  
to let the memories & poison out & gradually  
I began to think a bit clearer. Since then the

Doctor has managed to find me affordable counselling & we have tried different combinations of anti-depressants to help me cope with the depression & the pain in my body. It helps a bit.

I still feel fear, sadness, anger, shame & guilt, but hopefully in the future after more counselling I will learn how to trust & love the correct way. It's a long road, but I can see how renewal comes from destruction. I only have to see the results from the bush-fires which swept through Mt Hotham, where only ~~weeks~~<sup>months</sup> before I was crying into the snow. There is hope for me & I am a good person, no one will ever make me feel unworthy again & hopefully I'll be able to go out in the future without feeling apprehensive every time I go to leave my house. I love my life of splendid isolation right now, but I hope to be able to rejoin the human race one day, & more importantly, to forgive.

The Legacy -

self-loathing - low self esteem & lack of confidence,  
depression, obsessiveness & perfectionism

social anxiety phobia

insomnia & nightmares & night sweats

teeth grinding - tension headaches

chronic muscle pain - fibromyalgia

suicidal thoughts & self-harm

fear & distrust,

anger, shame & confusion - occasional stutter

Because of being constantly told I was  
nothing & would end up in the gutter &  
no one wanted me or ever would, ~~so~~ the  
core negative beliefs I have are my reality.  
They are the deepest most profound assumptions  
& expectations I have of myself, & therefore  
I find it hard to function as a "normal"  
human being, beyond my frontdoor. This is  
- just "the way life" is to me now, & these  
negative core beliefs continue to govern my life  
& reality.