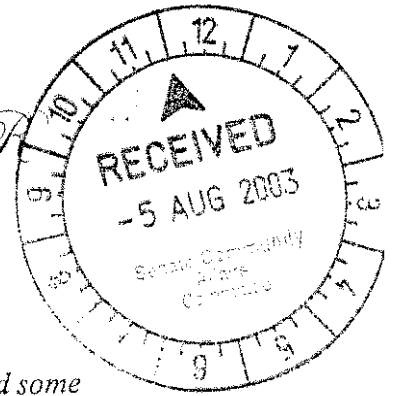


To the Senate Inquiry.

MARREY WALKER



10 June 2003

To my children

This letter is not to make any excuses. It is to give you an insight and some knowledge to my childhood and how your father grew up.

I was born in Miller's Point 7 Dalgety Terrace. We lived in a room approx 10 mtrs x 5 mtrs. When I was born there was my mother, father, Douglas, Laurel living in that room. ^{ARE} THE TWO LATER MY BROTHER + SISTER
My father used to be quite a good race caller and would sit on the balcony and call phantom races. The people in the area thought it was quite good and would ask for certain horses to win.

I lived in that room for the first 7-8 years of my life. my sister joined us when I was about 4 years old

Our kitchen was on the first floor and had no plumbing. We used to carry water up in buckets. The stove was either a couple of gas rings or a Metho stove.

We used pots (chambers) for our toilet and emptied them in the mornings. The house was a rooming house and on the second floor there was 4 rooms rented out to iterant workers, sailors and soldiers back from the war. A lot were drunks. The man in the room above us used to either urinate on the floor or just wet himself as urine used to drip from the roof into our room, it used to smell. The beds were full of bedbugs that would suck your blood until they were engorged then retire back to the springs in the bed base or the sticking of the mattress.

I spent a lot of time down stairs with who I called Nana. She was the landlord of the house and her kitchen was in the basement. I spent a lot of time with her and liked her a lot. I would sometimes have Sunday lunch with her and her girlfriend who lived on the ground floor next to Nana's and Nana's son David. Sunday lunch was a relic of Nana's English background as she was English and came to Australia during the First World War stopping in Egypt to act as a nurse until the end of the war. I always thought of her as being old but we got on very well and I would sing songs to her.

We would bath in the bath house out the back it was also the laundry. When everyone in the boarding house has finished their laundry we would put on the bath, that is light a fire under the copper that was used to boil the clothes. When it boiled we would ladle with the dipper the water into the bath tub.

I explored a lot around the wharves and wool stores that were all around the rocks area

Around 7-8 years we were given by the M>S>B who owned most of the houses at the "Point" a house at 132 York street North.

It was a very small terrace house, 2 bedrooms upstairs about 3m x 3m. Doug and I in one room, the front room above the entrance room that Mum and Dad slept in. It doubled as the lounge room, they would sleep on the night and day lounge that doubled as a lounge during the day. The other room upstairs was the girls room again 3m x 3m. Leslie Laurel and Marlene who came along at the time we arrived at the new house. Later that room was also to house Eric and Shannon. Downstairs was the front room, middle room and kitchen with the bathhouse and toilet out the back.

At this time my father was working 3 jobs a day, his main job was as a night watchman. After that shift he would go to the picture theatres around 4 to 5am and clean them. He then came home to bed. He would wake up at 2-3pm and go to work as a paper man at the corner of George and Grosvenor's Street in the city.

At this time Mum was drinking fairly heavily, she would buy sherry from the store at Circular Quay. Things started to get quite bad from then. I was 8 yrs old. When Mum got drunk she would become this "Demon Possessed" person and the fighting would start. Mum would start screaming and scratching and Dad would punch her and pull her hair out of her head in clumps. This became a regular occurrence to the stage that we would listen for any sound that indicated another fight, our bedroom was above theirs and for the next 30 years I would wake up startled thinking that another fight had started. The fighting would start in the bedroom and would go into the street waking the neighbours you could hear the screams for the length of the street.

One time I remembered Dad dragging Mum by the hair naked along the footpath with the neighbours screaming. It wasn't long before the police were called and became regulars to these fights.

I was in about 3rd -4th class at Fort Street Primary School Observatory Hill, the anxiety the fighting caused me to be taken to the doctors for my "Nerves" who gave me these tablets to take. I took them to school as I had to take them with lunch but the teacher would not give them to me as she said a child of my age should not be on nerve tablets. At times I would get upset at school and start crying about what was happening at home, in front of the class. Mr Dodds my teacher would sit me on his lap and turn me away from the class and look out over the toll gates on the bridge and tell me everything would work out ok after a time.

Maybe I was nine when the child welfare were called and told Dad and Mum that if the drinking and fighting continued that we would be taken away and charged with being neglected children.

That terrified me but the fighting kept up. When the fighting happened my brothers and sisters would also be screaming.

One night my mother and father went down to the Quay where a fight

I was in the sandpit one day with 2 beautiful boys about 6-7yrs old they were twins and one of them came over to me and said "will you kill us" I was trying to cope with what was happening to me but then to have them say that to me rocked me I said "why" one of the twins said "nobody wants us" This has never left me and I still have trouble coming to grips with that event.

At around the same time in the sandpit was the daughter of the manager she was about 3-4yrs old. I built a sandcastle for her. The manager came over and said get away from my daughter, and dragged me away I was only building a sandcastle for her.

As time went by I was told that my case was going to court, for me to be charged or not. The day of the court case I did not go to court. The manager called me into his office and said to me "you are going home" I was so happy. Then all of a sudden his face changed and he said "I was only joking get out of here" When he told me he was only joking about me going home my heart went through the floor that man was evil. Later that day the welfare officers came and picked me up.

I was taken home on the proviso that the welfare officer would call once or twice a week randomly.

My parents fighting went on, they were always physical my father's face was always covered in scratches and my mother had black eyes and bruising with clumps of bald spots in her hair from where dad would rip clumps.

On my tenth birthday my mother said she would have a little cake for me. I came home from school excited, I opened the door and saw mum on the floor drunk. She had wet herself and was lying in her own urine. She was swearing and talking incoherently. I said "mum you said you would have a cake for me" she said "well this will teach you to be independent" I cried.

At times when mum got drunk she would go down to where dad was selling papers in George Street, all the office people would be going home. Mum saw a pretty blonde girl buying a paper from dad and she attacked her saying she was a slut and that dad was having an affair with her. She did the same to a barmaid in the Brooklyn Hotel across the road where dad would go to sell papers of an afternoon. Dad's only crime was to sell papers to them.

Bed bugs were a constant problem. I would go into the girls room in the middle of the night, turn on the light and pull the covers of the girls and babies, underneath their faces would be about 10-20 bed bugs and under their bodies the sheets would be half covered in blood from the bugs that I would squash. Something I found embarrassing was bugs crawling out of my clothes when I was at School.

The house was very small and with 7 children and 2 adults it was very untidy. My mother had a morning job cleaning at the AMP building at the Quay. I would clean the house of a morning so the house would be

tidy in case a welfare officer came around and mum was drunk. She would drink on payday maybe a half a large bottle of vodka. She came home at 10 to 9 in the morning. I would wait for her to see if she had bought the vodka or sherry, if she had I knew she would be drunk by 10-11 in the morning and there was the chance of the welfare officer coming I thought if the place was clean maybe we would not be taken away. The thought of going back to the home terrified me.

I sat for the next 3-4 years in the class rooms 5th and 6th class then year 7 and 8 looking out the class room window at the headmasters office looking at who was entering there, that it maybe the welfare coming to take me away again to that home.

Our neighbours became very upset about what was happening and we would beg them not to call the police or welfare.

From when I was 11 years old my mother went out on Friday night and would come home at 3-4am drunk.

I would sit up all night with dad being nice and trying to keep him calm. He said "mum was having an affair" but I said that mum wouldn't do that. She was out with here girlfriend Pat. Pat turned out to be a man, I found out years later. (who by the way is Shannon's father) But when mum got home the fighting would start.

With mum coming home during the week at nearly 9am and me checking her bag for alcohol when she went to the toilet, it became a real problem, as when I started high school Cleveland street Boys, I was constantly late as the train left the Quay at 7 minutes to 9. I would run flat out to the station then run to school as it started at 9.15am. I was always in trouble for being late.

My life at high school was wishing away the days and with enormous anxiety at times at school I would be so nervous that the teachers would get me to lay down to recover as I would become dizzy and nearly faint.

At 14 and half years old I got an exemption from school to go to work. I got job straight away earning \$13 a week. I packed my bags on my 1st pay day got bus to tailors square, went to a real estate office and rented a room in Darlinghurst with a gas ring for cooking in the hallway.

I put my name down at the seaman's pickup to go to sea then I got a job as a assistant to the window dresser at "Peapes" menswear store at Wynyard in George Street an exclusive upmarket shop.

At 16 I was called to the Union Steamship Company and told I was to be in the first seaman's training school to be started in Australia. I spent 6 weeks in Newcastle steering tugs around the harbour, learning knots, splices, everything to do with the sea. I qualified for a helmsman certificate (I later was able to be at the helm of the ship for many hours) and also a lifeboat certificate to be in charge of a lifeboat with up to 50-60 people in it.

This is a small vision of my childhood, my brothers and sisters have at least the same plus much more to tell of their stories which were worse than what

I went through.

We have not been a close family, possibly because of our childhoods. I feel a great deal for what we went through after I left home mum went off with Pat and left the children with Dad. I became the mother to take care of the three children. I know little of this time except to say a barely 12 year old to shoulder that burden plus much more that she needs to tell.

who had a horrendous time, dad being blamed by mum that he was looking at her breasts. I saw mum ripping at them when was only 12-13yrs, saying horrible things that weren't true. This happened to a stage that she strapped her breasts down so they would not be seen by mum. She was charged when she was about 15 with being in moral danger and was sent to Parramatta girls home. She also has her own story that needs to be told.

was resigned to the situation, being the eldest. One day he popped his head over the double bunk and said "I'm leaving" he was maybe 17-18yrs. He drove to Darwin got on a boat and went to Europe. He has a certain philosophy on life that is a little different to others.

is a beautiful little girl who shared and cared for other people. Was charged with being in moral danger and spent years in Parramatta girls home where she later escaped.

and spent much of their young lives in an institution because a year or so after mum leaving, the two boys were taken by welfare and put in children's homes. The boys spent around 8-10 years in them.

On my 21st birthday my mother was drunk, she told me that my father was not really my father and that my father was some French sailor that she had had an affair with.

Wamen Walker.

NSW.