

The Secretary.

Senate Community Affairs Reference References Committee.

Suite SI59.

Canberra. A.C.T. 2600.

Dear Sir, Madame,

It is a difficult and painful process to turn ones mind back to the early years of my life. I will try to the best of my ability to present the information simply and honestly.

My date of birth, 24.2.42. Parents married. Mother sixteen on my birth certificate. Father in Army. Mother left when I was approximately eighteen months old. Father placed me with people . Told thirty years later, was tired to a chair or cot all day, not cleaned Father then took me to his parents home. During the next three and a half years I was phycially , mentally and sexually abused. My Grandfather died 1947 and I was placed in N.S.W. Prostestant Federation Girls Home, Garnet St, Dulwich.

The memories are of a cruel harsh regimepral environment.

I did not cope well. A thin sickly child, with asthma. There is no documental evidence, no admission, no discharge dates, so it all remains unknowable. I found a photo of myself taken in a group, at the institution in a box at Canterbury Library. I was taken out after my mother remarried. In retrospect, believe myself to be emotionally seriously damaged at this stage. Did not respond well. The relationship with mother was very poor. Stepfather was a sexual deviant and gave brutal beatings. After a short while was placed

in another home. This was a privately run girls home, called Bexley Ladies College. Here only one teacher was employed, from kindergarten to sixth form. It was asessed that I was not intelligent, and so was taken from the classroom to be used as unpaid servant. I was fourteen before being sent to high school, and left at end of that year, 1956.

There was no one who cared for me, or about me. There was never support or encouragement. All my days were alone and frightening times which is not conducive to being able to learn and grow in a wholeistic way. My self concept being constantly undermined by those who ruled my life. I was told constanly that I was a troublesome nuisance. It is no wonder that negative statements were repeated over and over. I was filled with a sence of shame, dirty, unwanted, there was no one who was in any way, anyone showed support.

I left school 1956, working as a shop assistant factory work cleaning and as a nurses aid. Worked at M.G.F. as a clerk and at

night went to Sydney Technical Colledge, Marcus Clark Building A at Central. Obtained the Certificate Entrance stage 1 and 2.

I married in 1968. It was a very dysfuncional relationship, ended in a divorce. Fifteen years later married again, and do not have a healthy, happy relationship. Which is a sad and regretable period.

Growing up from multiple issues of abandonment has had a profound affect on me. Low self worth, inability to form close relationships a lack of trust. My only experiences have ~~been~~ ^{been} a repeat of abandonment, betrayal, falshoods, physical violance and total violation of my rights or needs. I have been subjected to intimidation, belittling, demeaning and shaming. A callas and cruel disregard towards me.

It is appropriate to acknowledge that a child is not able to reason or question the validity about those who hold power are in fact, these are the wrongdoers, in this action. When a child, SPIRIT IS BROKEN, one just survives.

I have chosen not to have a child, lacking confidence in my ability, believing myself unable to love and nurture unconditionally. This remains a deep sadness. I have sought psychiatric counselling for many years, and still have a weekly session. In this way have gained some insight about my dysfunctional behavior and thinking and though progress, but a long term of childhood abuse is very hard to erase, perhaps even impossible.

I have tried my best to come to terms with the past.

I have involved myself in regular volunteer work. I am on The Human Research Ethics Committee at University of Sydney.

So it seems I am not stupid. I have a great deal of satisfaction to be doing volunteer work.

Only one simple thing am sure of, can do nothing about the past, but I can make a difference now about how I make choices bring about a better way of thinking, my actions, and what I say.

My life is not as I would want, but I do the best I can today.

Yours sincerely,
(Mrs) Elaine Herman
ELAINE HERMAN