

Subject: Re: Time spent in Boy's Home  
Date: Sat, 1 Nov 2003 12:02:18 +1100

Greetings Leonie;

Yes; I was in "The Salvation Army's, Bexley Boy's Home" (For the training of Necessitous Boys - Meaning: Very Poor, Needy, Indigent, Destitute) in Sydney from Feb 1946 (Aged 6) till October 1950 (Aged 11). Why I was taken from the Home and placed back into the care of my Father by the then manager of Bexley; I am not sure, but feel it's because payments for my keep were not being made?

I then was taken to the "United Protestant Association's, Buena Vista (Meaning - "Beautiful Vision") Boy's Home" In Orange, in the Central West of New South Wales from February 1951 (Aged 11) till October 1954 (Aged 15); This home being run by a lovely Christian Couple who were like Mother and Father to us and are the reason I am, as I am today.

I was in both Boy's Home with a younger brother. The United Protestant Association had a Printing Works in Sydney and on Leaving School, I was employed there and boarded in another of the United Protestant Association's Boy's Homes at Pendle Hill for British Boys for a time. So, No; I had no family in Orange.

I guess; I like many of CLAN, have a story to tell, perhaps I was one of the lucky ones to survive and come out of as I did, ending up with a most wonderful wife and family.

I was placed in the care of both the Salvation Army and the United Protestant Association by my Father and so would take it that I wasn't a "State Ward"? Yes; I will do as you suggest; as it would be wonderful to again be in contact with former boys of both Bexley and Buena Vista.

I usually quickly read through the Newsletters, whilst my beloved goes through more thoroughly and is interested therein, knowing of my life and having visited both Boy's Home that I was in and meeting the Managers of Buena Vista on several occasions.

No; At the moment; I don't wish to borrow any books or tapes, as my beloved and I are preparing for another Coach Tour, leaving in a week for South Australia and home via Victoria and as you would imagine; we are very much looking forward to. When I can organise it; I will get the previous issues of the Newsletters from you; having 15 onwards, but this will possibly be when back from our gallivanting about, late this month? Great to hear from you.

Kindest Regards;  
Robert KEMSLEY

Subject: Re: Time spent in Boy's Home  
Date: Mon, 7 Jun 2004 22:05:25 +1000

Greetings Leonie

It's wonderful of you to think of me? I've not put in a submission to the Senate Inquiry, as I don't feel that I've anything to add to it, as although I feel that I was scarred somewhat from being in Bexley Boy's home; perhaps it was a better place from me to have been, rather than with a Father who really didn't care about me?

They were not cruel to us in Bexley (Although there was one Officer there who was cruel to the boy's, but it was nothing that you could really complain about? and I understand that he has since passed away?) it was the regimentation and how my time in Bexley has influenced my life thereafter?

The Boy's home at Orange was a totally different story; being run by a lovely Christian Couple, who treated us as one large family, but: Bexley still influence my life after the Boy's homes, in that I was ever so very shy, had no confidence in myself, feeling nobody loved me and nobody cared; being very unsure of myself and that everyone else was better than me; this only having changed over the last few years (I am 65 in August).

Some of the mannerisms etc; have remained with me until relatively recent times and by that I mean; in Bexley; when we got a piece of cake or a mandarin etc; you would break it into as many pieces as you could to savour it; Custard and Pudding at lunch; you would lick the custard off and wrap in a hankie to eat later; it was not unusual to go through the Garbage Bins at school, looking for scraps that other children had thrown away.

For punishment; I can only remember the cane and of having to stand at the foot of our beds (For an hour?) when all the other boy's had gone to sleep; I can recall waking on the bed and crawled into; only to have to do double the following night. Of a morning on waking; the first thing we had to do was to strip the bed and hold up to see who had wet the bed and then it was filing downstairs to undress in the locker room and through to the showers etc; going through a succession of and then having to line up afterwards for breakfast etc; after which it was line up and be marched to and from school next door, where on a hot day; you would stand barefooted on the hot bitumen, as I cannot ever recall wearing shoes other than of a Sunday morning when with Flags waving; Bugles playing; off we would march in columns to Church.

As a result of Boy's/Girl's Homes; I feel you come out either worse for or better for and I consider myself very fortunate that I came out the latter. I also consider myself very fortunate indeed in the selection of a mate for life, now having been very happily married for almost 42 years to a girl I adore and we've had 4 children.

As a result of my Boy's Home experience; I am very clingy to my wife and cannot get enough of her company. I think also; that the Senate Enquiry would do well to listen to the Partners of Home Kids; letting them; tell their stories also, as I went to a Boy's Home Re-Union at Orange some time back now; former boy's of; taking their partners and on sitting around and talking; the wives were asked what difference there was between a normal boy and a boy from the home and my wife got up and spoke and the other wives and partners were agreeing with what she had to say. Worth a thought?

"if not Would it be ok to forward to them this email you wrote to me sometime ago. I would love you to write a bit more about the feelings you had about being there, S.A. and UPA"

Go right ahead and this one as well if you like?

"How did you go getting info , to see if you were a State Ward?/ Have you contacted Steve Walkenen from UPA? re your records?"

I never pursued records re State Wards, as to the best of my knowledge; I never was; as my Father put me in both Bexley and Buena Vista Boy's Homes? Yes; Steve WALKENEN has been in touch with me. Through my request for information and to contact other boy's of both homes through the CLAN newsletter; a former Bexley Boy contacted me and although we had quite a chat and found we were both in at the same time; each couldn't recall the other; and there seems to be no desire to pursue further.

I am still seeking to find information re Bexley Boy's Home and although it's now The Salvation Army's Training College and they've an Archive on the property; there seems precious little on it's days as a Boy's Home, but: I am in touch with the then Manager's wife who is now 93 and living in Brisbane; she giving me the address of a couple of Salvation Army Officers who were there; one having made contact and we are to meet up with on return from our Cape York Peninsular Holiday in early August.  
Kindest Regards;  
Robert KEMSLEY