

From: "Christine" <christine@careleavers.org.au>
To: "care leavers of australia" <careleavers@hotmail.com>
Subject: Re: WWW Form Submission
Date: Mon, 6 Sep 2004 21:18:46 +1000

My father died 6 years ago. He would never talk about his time in care. We only knew because my mother had a friend who knew the family and mentioned it. I have been able to ascertain he was put into West Meads Boys Home in Sydney in 1929, where he stayed until he was sent out to work at 16. The belief was he and his brother were put into another home early in the piece, when they were about 5 or 6.

I do know my father had no concept of family life and how to love, he only discovered this when he was about 70 and made a statement to me "I never knew what it meant to be a father until now and regret it". He was a great grand father, but a very absent and distant father to us. Fortunately, we had a mother who came from a loving home and provided such for us.

I would appreciate anything I can find out about him, as I believe families should know, so hopefully we all learn from the past.

From: care leavers of australia
Sent: Tuesday, September 07, 2004 8:09 AM
Subject: Re: WWW Form Submission

Dear Christine,

Thank you for your email. It sounds like St vincent's Boys Home in Westmead, the other home sounds like it could be St michael's at Baukham Hills or Waitara Foundling home at Waitara.

He may also have been a NSW state ward, and they may have a record of him. It's so very sad about your Dad and his lack of a concept of family life, but as a fellow homie I understand how he felt. It's tragic that you, our children have had to suffer the long term implications of our time in "care".

Christine, would you like to write and tell the Senate Inquiry your Dad's story in more detail. or would it be possible to forward them your email. that way you will also get a copy of the report called forgotten Australians. Let me know how you feel about this?

I need to speak to you about how to go about getting your Dad's info if it's still available!.

Best wishes
Leonie Sheedy.

From: "Christine"
To: "care leavers of australia" <careleavers@hotmail.com>
Subject: Re: WWW Form Submission
Date: Sun, 12 Sep 2004 20:04:17 +1000

I know for certain he was in St Vincents Boys Home, which was run by the Marist fathers. I have a letter which states they were admitted in september 1928. At that stage my Donald McLennan was 12 and his brother Duncan McLennan was 10. When Dad's parents married his father was 57 and his mother 23. The story goes the mother left the two boys with him. When they entered St Vincents Boys home, My grandfather was 69 and his mother 35....she had another child in 1930 and remarried in 1936 after my grandfather died. They were Catholics. My uncle Duncan never married and I remember him as a lovely, quiet, lonely man. Some of this could be attributed to the 2nd world war, as he was involved in action in the Middle East and New Guinea.

My father did have an obsession on modesty so that leads me to believe he may have been a victim of sexual abuse, or a witness. He was a man who found closeness hard to handle but loved it. I remember coming home from boarding school and giving him a kiss goodnight which I had witnessed other friends family did and at first found it very difficult but then looked for that affection. You must bear in mind I was my fathers favourite so therefore my memories of him are different to my siblings. My adult view of my father was he was an honest man who could analysis everyones else's problem, but could not apply to himself. I feel he had suffered abandonment, and had no ideal of family life, as he had never experienced it. I do have a photo of Dad and his brother at St Vincents. From what I can gather his mother used it like a boarding school and took the children home for holidays and thats it.

There is a story that St Vincents many years later had an open day and my grandmother took my uncle Duncan and Ernie (who never when into a home) to the open day. They got to the gates and Duncan would not go through. So obviously Duncan's experience there was pretty horrid. I regret that now that I did not question my uncle Duncan more, but I was only about 32 when he died and there were some things in life you did not push as the information was not forthcoming.

My father did have an obsession with his mother. My memories of her were- she was a witch (I know that seems hard). From my mothers account, she did not like girls only boys. I do know she tried very hard to stop my father and is brother from marrying. But then from my research, she had no family life either, so I assum she was bitter woman. My mother also told me of a fight she and Dad had once and she threaten to leave and put us all into a home (there were six of us). He pleaded with her never to do this to us, in fact me cried. My mother would never had done this, but I believe it was done out of frustration with him. Towards my mother my father was violent, which we never saw. We were aware he did have a temper, but we would just go away and hide when one of his fits hit.

I now work as a foster parent, as I believe children should be cherished, as they are the one gift in life you are giving for free, and yet so many people do not realize the gift they have been given.

Hope this helps the cause.