

Memories of a state ward

I was just cruising the Internet and fell in here after visiting the Melbourne orphanage site. I was in the Melbourne Orphanage for its final years, I guess I was about 5 or 6 or 7 when I was dumped or acquired by the state for the first time.

I was born in December 1951 but my memories still tell me of the times when we were taken by the police to somewhere where we cried all night and was upset for days, then given new clothes to stay in a strange place.

I am the second of seven siblings (GBGBBBB) that were taken by police from our parents for the state of Victoria and then returned to the parents after a while, only to be 'captured' and interned by the state again and again when 'the parents could not cope with an increasing family and charity tired of lending a helping hand to a lost cause. This happened several times as I can remember, each time probably more traumatic for us than before (some of my siblings were born and became part of the cycle between sessions of state guardianship) prior to inevitably becoming wards of the state.

I don't know at what stage of progression we were made state wards but I remember times in Royal park or a place in Turana (not 'the bad boys home' but another section so they say) while waiting for deployment to a home, some places we were sent to I cannot remember but I remember the Burwood boys home and of course the Melbourne Orphanage. I have many memories from here ranging from all the beds in the giant ward at junior boys, the smell of the food in the big vats and the outside play yard (about an acre of gravel with an old car in the middle).

I remember we went through the wire fence to the state school from the locker room a few at a time because you didn't want to be alone when you met 'the others' (the non-homies) we were the homies. We didn't get physical abuse from the others but I guess it was more the rejection that we felt from the other children that hurt the most.

Initially I remember the Christian upbringing in a rigid institution, but I look now and consider this as a necessary part of the foundling upbringing. This in my mind was to build a secure base for the child, but now I look back and see the lack of other emotional needs that weren't provided for. I still wonder what it would have been like to grow up and know that you were loved and wanted rather than to be a just a number and someone that 'should' be cared for.

When we (my family) left the Melbourne Orphanage (when it was pulled down) my family of 7 along with 2 sisters from another family and a single boy who were all residents of the orphanage, were moved to a double-story house in Syndal quite a bit classier looking from the dull old and institution like orphanage. We had cottage mothers that were previously cottage mothers at the orphanage or at least the main one was. It was a very strict childhood that maintained the regimental upbringing we were used too, I guess. Probably the regiments run style of the orphanage just on a smaller scale.

Kids always find out news and it wasn't long before we were once again tagged as 'homies' or more often than that 'the homos' from the home...I didn't know of any different meaning for the nametag, and I wonder now if anybody else knew what that meant at the time, we just accepted it as insulting. I don't know if being from a home created a child that was a repelling person but there were never any friends that would stand by you. Never would you have a schoolmate that would go home with you or invite to visit them. I would spend a lot of time as a child praying (if there was a god) to save me and put me somewhere else or just kill to me.

I ran away from Dunscombe Avenue when I was fifteen years old to live with my mother (who had just come back on the scene after living in Sydney it seems). I had heard that when someone is 16 years they could do what they wanted, I only had about 4 months to go. I went to her house but was told I had to get a job and help with the rent for her new

partner, so I did get a job and moved into my own flat. I was working in a large department store and got \$15 a week. With this princely sum I rented a room and gave myself a life, or so I believed. I remember the home got in touch with me and said that I could come back if I wanted but I had for too many years been kept in a box, (to use an analogy) and I had no choice but to be free.

Everybody always asks me if there was any sexual abuse while I was at these places 'as a ward of the state'...**nowadays** everybody knows this 'sex abuse' as a crime against society. When you're a child in the fifties and sixties you don't know much about this type of stuff. As I said I have memories and can tell certain things if I feel that I should, but I wonder what really happened and how much is fabricated as in a dream or in the mind because society says it must have happened. I really don't think I'm that sure of details and specifics of another life and time or at least not sure enough to state a fact without fear of error.

I hear a lot about the aboriginal stolen children.... to give them a good life, is this relevant?

If I had a chance to start over again?.....sorry but no thanks. if that was life I've been there