

I was a state ward at Lynwood Hall child welfare home for girls at Guildford for nearly three years in the early 1950's. Both my parents were alcoholics.

One pitch dark night, (there was a blackout, so there were no lights, only one candle.) a woman and man appeared in my home and said they were taking me away to a home. Frightened, I ran and they chased me. I was terrified as I didn't know these people and had no idea what was going on. Obviously my mother knew.

I was taken to Auburn police station, and then to the metropolitan girls shelter at Glebe. This is where my nightmare began. It was very securely locked, and when the bell was rung, this very cranky cruel looking woman appeared. She had a chain type belt around her waist with a large bunch of keys hanging from it. She took me to a room where I put on a nightgown and was taken to the dormitory. There were no lights on as by now it was quite late.

The fear I felt when she locked the door behind me, and I saw by the street lighting that there were bars on the windows was something I will never forget. I felt I was in prison. For what? I hadn't committed any crime. The next morning I was shown to the shower and wondered why I had to put on a gown. I was led into a room and told to wait, as I had to see the doctor. What happened next has stayed with me all of my life. This male doctor examined me internally. I just wanted to die, I didn't even know of this examination.

I cannot bring myself to have pap smears because of this

horror experience.

The principal of Lynwood Hall was the cruelist woman I have ever known. I was beaten by her, humiliated by her, screamed at by her, locked in solitary confinement by her and degraded by her.

One of the most humiliating things she would do to us was make us show her our soiled pants for inspection. We only had one laundry day a week each, so we always had some soiled clothing in our laundry bag. We had to turn our pants inside out and lay the crotch flat on our hand and show her. The humiliation was unbearable.

One day she grabbed me by the scruff of the neck and ran me into a sharp side edge of a large kitchen cupboard. I nearly lost consciousness and a huge lump and cut appeared on the left side of my forehead. She locked me in solitary for a week until it improved. She said she didn't want anyone to see it. She would bring me ice to put on it to make the lump go down.

When she took a day off, many times she would come home around midnight and she would flick the dormitory lights on and scream at the top of her voice for us all to get out of bed, she would then make us go down to the bucket stand (where the buckets and scrubbing brushes were kept.) and get a bucket and scrubbing brush and make us scrub floors for hours in the freezing cold, all the time she would be screaming abuse at us, you cannot describe the fear.

I ran away twice and went home to my parents, only to be taken back. The first time the police came on a motor-like and sidecar and he made me get in the sidecar and then he buttoned the cover down over me. I just wanted to die.

I was warned about running away again, as they said they would send me to Parramatta girls' home and I would be locked in like a jail. We had all heard of Parramatta being worse than Lywood Hall.

This same principal was from Parramatta so that must have been why she was so brutal.

We were only allowed visitors every fourth Sunday in the month from 2.30 P.M. till 4.00 P.M. so when there was five Sundays in the month we only had visitors every five weeks. She would always make sure she made us do more chores so it cut into our visiting hours.

I have suffered depression and anxiety for most of my life. When I was in my late 20's I was sent to a Maguane Street specialist who diagnosed depression. He said it was one of the worst cases he had seen and wanted to put me into hospital but I refused. I was too ashamed to tell him I was a state ward when he asked me about my childhood. He asked about my parents whether they were divorced or alcoholics so I had to answer these questions. I didn't leave my home for over two years when I was in my 30's because I had agoraphobia traced back to my childhood.

Some years ago this principal contacted me by phone. She had traced me through my two brother's names in the phone book. I had since married so my name had changed. She invited me to have afternoon tea at her place. She later told me she feared there would be a Royal Commission into the way state wards were treated and because "I beat you girls."

Another bad incident was when she was beating me, and because I was screaming and struggling she threw a bucket of water over me drenching me and my clothes. She then tore my clothes off and bundled me into solitary confinement where I stayed naked.

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and freezing all night.

I was taken out of a bad home situation and put into a far more brutal environment. My parents never hit or beat me. They said terrible things to me and didn't care about me, but they never belted me.

I have always suffered very low self esteem and always thought I was not as good as anyone else. I hate the sound of jangling keys as it reminds me solitary confinement. I have always closed my hand over my car and house keys, so they don't jangle.

I went to my doctor because I can't sleep. (I've always had trouble sleeping) he wouldn't give me any medication as he diagnosed anxiety and referred me to Central Coast Mental Health for therapy. I had two 10 week courses of therapy which helps me deal with my problem and understand better why I'm like I am.

As a state ward I had no rights. When I got access to my files I noticed everything written about me was done by other people. I was never asked a question or allowed to say what was happening to me. Whilst at Lynwood Hall I was taken to a child psychiatrist. I was never told why or given any feed back. Why wouldn't I have psychological problems after such terrible trauma. I live with the memories of the treatment I received, no matter what I do or how hard I try it never leaves me it's always just under the surface.