

My story, "Why do I hate Authority?"

My name is Steve and I was a State Ward in the Salvation Army Box Hill Boys Home Victoria.

I've started this submission with the following question I have been asked on several occasions.

"Why do I hate Authority?"

After many years the answer is finally clear to me,

"It's not that I hate authority, only those that abuse it".

My life as a Ward of the State of Victoria started at the early age of 18 months, after been sent from New South Wales by an uncle, together with my mother, two older sisters, and my older bother, away from an abusive, violent, drunken father.

I was sent to Kardina a home for the young, I don't remember much about the home there as I was only 18 months old, only seeing my sisters and brother one time while riding on a small train around the grounds.

When I was old enough I was sent to the Salvation Army Boys Home located at 310 Elgar Road Box Hill Victoria, there I was placed in a section of the home with boys around my age till I progressed into other sections as I grew older. My brother was in another section of the home with older boys, and I didn't see much of him till I became old enough to be placed in the same section.

The abuse started at an earlier age, I still remember the way we were treated when we wet the bed, having to carry the wet bedding outside and being hosed down with cold water and made to stand for ages in the open weather, even in the middle of winter.

Abuse of another kind started when I was being bathed, I wondered at why the person washing me took a lot of time washing my "private parts" explaining to me that it was to stop infection as I was not circumcised, and at times the routine of washing became very painful due to excessive rough handling.

I was glad when I became old enough to shower, and those episodes were placed and blocked in the back of my mind.

While in the No1 Home for the older boys I noticed things changing, boys would be taken from their beds late at night returning sometime later, on climbing into their beds I would often hear them crying. I would ask them the next day why they were crying, but they wouldn't say.

It wasn't till later on that I found out why, as it was my turn to be taken in the middle of the night, the things that were done to me, still remain in my mind, but I try to block them out, I didn't tell my brother as I so scared at what I was told would happen to me if I told anyone, no one would believe me as I was only a child and they were trusted officers.

I remember well the beatings with leather straps and the constant hard hit across the ears with an open hand when we did anything that was considered wrong, I even retaliated at one time and kicked the person really hard in the shins, only to receive a more severe beating, then being locked in a cupboard.

Even the head master of the school in the “home” had a special strap made up with a wooden handle which made it easier for him to apply the so called punishment; if we pulled our hands away while being “strapped” we would receive extra beatings with the leather strap.

I remember well the old woman dentist that would come with her old peddle drill, often her foot would slip off the peddle and damage was done to my gums, she would exam our teeth and extract them if she considered they were baby teeth, removing six of my baby teeth at one time while grinning, showing her most foul yellow teeth, it certainly gave me a real hatred towards dentist that I still have to this day.

There was the time that I was sent to Mildura as a guest of the Apex Club, I was placed with a family who had a boy the same age as me, I will never forget the embarrassment as their boy was at least a foot taller and weighed about 28 lbs heavier, he sure let me know who was the superior boy in the house, it was then I realized I was certainly an under developed boy for my age.

While in the “home” we had very few visits from our mother, a few times we got to see my two sisters when she would bring them with her.

When it came time for my brother and I to leave the home, we were taken into an office where we met our mother and stepfather and were taken to live in a house in Richmond Victoria with my sisters and two step sisters. I didn't stay long with my “family” as I have never know the meaning of love of a family and wanted to be out on my own.

I was a skinny boy standing four feet eleven inches and weighing 84 lbs, very small for my age, it wasn't till around seventeen years of age that I started to fill out and get taller, and this was due to a healthier lifestyle and a friendly Gym Owner.

My life has been one long struggle, but I have had some good times as I joined the local area NSW Police Citizens Boys Club where I became an instructor and a committee member for 17 years, 12 years of which I was the Senior Vice President, helping the local youths so they didn't end up in places like the one where I spent my childhood.

I remember well one youth waking me up at 2.30 AM one morning, he was crying and asked me to accompany him back to his home where his father was beating his mother; you can well imagine what I felt, as his father was a member of the local council.

I went to his home and warned his father that legal action would be taken against him, if there were any further incidents of abuse, and that he should seek help in the way of counseling, I heard later that fortunately there were no more incidents

To this day, my past always haunts me, and affects my working life.

My fear of being in small enclosed rooms, caused by being locked in cupboards, almost got me fired from a Government job, and recently I was hounded out of another Government job due to my stand against people in authority, who I knew were abusing their positions of trust and the manner in which they recorded the use public monies.

The Government Department, in which I was employed, even sent me to a psychiatrist who recommended that due to what had occurred at the job, and the past incidents which had occurred at the Salvation Army Home still appearing to be have a strong impact on my life, that I be transferred to another section, and receive specialist treatment from someone qualified in that field.

After two weeks had passed and not knowing the outcome of his report which added to the ongoing stress, I resigned from the job, but found out later that poor communication between the psychiatrist office and the Government Department meant that his report wasn't received till many weeks later, thereby denying me the opportunity to continue in fulltime employment and receive the treatment that I much needed.

Now due to lack of funds and the ability to get fulltime employment, I am unable to receive such treatment and I have been on anti depression medication for over 18 months, and my health and quality of life only seemed to get worse.

Recently I met up with Ken Carter and a few of the boys from The Salvation Army Box Hill Boys Home and the wonderful people of CLAN, I have read the stories of others like me and know that now I'm no longer alone, and maybe at last something maybe done.

I sat and listened to the horrific stories which brought back many bad memories to me, as tears rolled down my face I watched the other people in the room also crying, I thought how can society and the Government allow things like this to happen and then turn a blind eye to it.

Just as I close this letter, again I have been sent to see a psychiatrist last Friday, due to stress caused by harassment at another job, and lack of support by Management, that I have now left.

In closing I want you to know that like many other wards of the state, or those in homes being care for by so called Christians and Charities , we have never know the laughter, the joy the love and care of a family in the way many others have known it.

I haven't married.

I don't believe in religion.

I don't like Christmas as it reminds me of the terrible past.

Yes, many times suicide had crossed my mind.

I've come to trust very few people in authority; this is caused especially by those in my past that have abused it.

