

Brian Hanrahan

September 6th 2007

My first visit to the Salvation Army Boys Home in Riverview was in December 1946; My Parents were farming a property at Withcott at the bottom of the range from Toowoomba. Apparently they were having a domestic problem and my brother and I were admitted to the Salvation Home in Riverview.

My second visit to the Home was court ordered in Jan 1952. My parents at this time were operating a night business up on 112 Petrie Terrace. The business opened at 7:30 pm and closed at 6:00 am seven days a week. As we were left to entertain our selves another child named _____ and I used to play over in the Roma Street railway yards opposite my parents business. We apparently stole some keys from the Railway yards, which were all returned, we were sent to court, made Wards of the State and sentenced to Riverview Boys Home till we were 18. On January 02 1952 we went to court and upon sentencing were removed the same day and taken to the Salvation Army Home at Riverview. I had just turned 11.

I was released from Riverview on 12/12/1952 and returned home to my parents. On probation and remained a Ward of the State till 6/9/58 during my stay at the home I was subjected to physical and mental abuse by most of our protectors. We were not allowed to wear shoes except to church. We were marched to the railway station daily mon-fri to catch the train to Dinmore School. The man in charge of overseeing that project was an ex English army officer called _____ who used to beat us with a thick leather strap if we got out of step or if our feet were hurting from the stones on that road to the train it was worse during the winter. This was a march of about a mile. We endured the same on our return in the afternoon.

We carried a suitcase with our lunches inside. It was always the same vegemite or peanut butter sandwiches. I was always hungry and I used to ask permission to go to the bathroom after we were in class after lunch and I would go down and search the bins for more food. The teachers at that school used to beat us with a meter long cane about the thickness of your finger. We were whipped on the legs and rear as often as they felt like it, there was always a homeboy getting whipped with no one to report it.

One Saturday morning about 10:30 am I was thirsty and went to the tank stand outside the recreation room for a drink. There used to be a tin cup there to drink from but on this day I could not find it so I cupped my hand under the tap and took a drink. That was when _____ appeared and asked me if I used a cup. I said I could not find it and that's when he smacked me with an open hand across the face. He was facing me and using his right hand he struck me on the left side of my head on my ear. I fell down on the ground. He grabbed me and pushed my head down into the water that was always under the tap in the ground from all the dripping over the years. I thought he was trying to drown me because I could only suck in water and my lips were busted and bleeding and two of my front teeth were cracked. I had blood trickling from my ear. I was ignored any medical attention and warned by _____ not to report it. Two years later a large piece of skin fell out of that ear. From the day I was beaten I have had a whooshing sound in that ear. I sought medical treatment over the years but there is no known cure and it has been given a name Tinnitus, the two cracked front teeth developed abyssees and were extracted in 1955.

One of the officers who resided at the home was a . He used to be in charge of overseeing any child who wet the bed. The child was taken down for a cold shower and forced to wash out their sheets as punishment. One of the kids who used to wet the bed came to me and told me that "stuck his dick in my bum". Another kid at the home who was named and I went to all the bed wetters and questioned them about . Without exception all told the same story. Another child there was He was from Scarborough and he also told us used to sodomize him on a regular basis. was about the same age as me but was mentally challenged. married another officer there that was in 1952.

One Saturday and I went over to house. He was the headman at Riverview. We told him about and gave him all the names of the kids concerned. To my knowledge there were never any changes in procedure pertaining to . I was released from the home shortly after. However about a year later I was in a department store in Ipswich with my Mother and there was shopping still in his uniform, I was informed recently from The Salvation Army that was terminated in 1960 for Sexual abuse, I was shocked to know he was left to his sick practice for eight more years after they were aware of this practice.

Another incident that still bothers me is the outbreak of what was called at the time Yellow Jaundice. One of the boys there was . He was of Chinese decent and one day we noticed the whites of his eyes were yellow. We thought it was from his heritage, however we also noticed a bunch of us had yellow where our whites should have been. I was admitted to Ipswich Hospital and remember eating boiled tomatoes on toast and that was all I was allowed to eat. I do remember a doctor there telling me that I should remember having had this disease as it may cause me other health problems later in my life. I do suffer with a couple of ailments that probably are associated with the hepatitis A. I developed the symptoms Of Asthma while still at the home and then Gout. During my stay at Riverview, they started to bring in 18-year-old boys from England and Europe who I guess had behavioral problems to work on the farm. When they saw the way the officers were treating us they started fighting with the officers and I know they used to deport them for trying to help us. One night the hay stack caught alight and we were made to rub Vaseline on our faces so we could get closer to the fire to throw buckets of water on the flames most of us kids looked like we were sun burned for days after, another time another kid and myself took a dip in the river. It was a hot day and we had been doing some brush clearing down there. Well when they saw that we were dripping wet we were taken later that night when everyone was in the dorms and we were stripped down in the doorway to the dorm. We had cold water poured over us and then beaten with a leather strap. There was always somebody being beaten for trivial things.

On arriving at Riverview, I was given a number which was 14 and that's how we were referred to. Some of the other boys there at the same time as me were, (who recently committed suicide) , the , were all witnesses to this abuse. Whenever the officers talked to us we were always ready for a bashing, and I don't remember the names of the officers but without exception they all participated

During my stay at the Salvation Army Boys Home at Riverview there was a fellow by the name of who apparently had a condition they referred to as shell shock. He used to

beat us up all the time. He was probably in his late 30s. He was there when I first went in 1946. He was a muscular individual with constant bloodshot eyes. If a car was coming up the driveway and someone said "there is a car coming up the drive", he would run over a bush that person. I never saw him admonished for this unusual behavior.

I really believe that the entire culture of the Riverview Boys Home at the time I was there was corrupting. There were farm boys having sex with farm animals. The brutality of the officers was like a concentration camp with the beatings, the threats, and the constant intimidation. Whenever we went outside of the home we were loaded into the back of farm trucks and driven through town like animals. There was never any acknowledgement of birthdays, any nurturing, any medical care, bad food, and weevils in our porridge every day and kerosene poured over our heads for lice. We were made to drink all kinds of liquids under the guise of medication. We were treated with less dignity than the livestock. There was no hope and no one to tell. We were threatened if you told your parents when they visited you. You would not be allowed any more visits. The leaders of the farm turned a blind eye to the abuse when it was reported.

THE IMPACT OF THESE EXPERIENCES ON MY LIFE:

I have always tried to push the memories of these experiences out of my mind, but looking back I know that I bear the deep scars of the mental and physical abuse that I experienced during my time at Riverview. Now that I am 65 years old I am finding I am having a hard time with this past experience and am just trying to come to grips with the abuse that occurred to those poor little kids, and the sad part is that I am one of those poor little kids

I have not been able to establish a lasting relationship and I find it hard to trust anyone. I do not even have time for my own children. Apparently this is a common problem with survivors of these Facilities

I have never donated a penny to any Salvation Army solicitation and every time I see an officer or any reference to the Salvation Army I relive my entire experience at their hands.

They say time heals all things; however there is one thing that has not healed. I realize we should take responsibility for our actions but the time I suffered at the Salvation Army Home at Riverview has not gone away and I am sorry to say that experience has affected my whole life, my relationships, my decisions, my hang ups, the whole way I relate to life. I am sorry to say that was my foundation for my life journey and I would not wish it on anyone especially an eleven-year-old kid.

I know it is hard for anyone to relate to this disgusting behavior or to even conceive the Salvation Army being involved in this type of bullying to oppressed, unwanted, unloved, beautiful little children. I think the name given to these victims, "Forgotten Australians", is not strong enough. For us who endured this torture, cannot forget how it has shaped our lives. I always wondered when I asked my mother (May she rest in peace) to explain my time in the home, why she used to burst into tears.

I feel my whole life was ruined by this brutal experience and I continue to suffer more now that I have enough experience to be able to evaluate the trauma that has shaped my life and understand why I have become the person that I am.

Sometimes when I have a bad dream about the Home, I still wake up in a sweat and realize that was over 50 years ago. And I wonder why it is still there. I ponder whatever happened to _____ and hope he is still alive so he can finally be punished for his serial sexual abuse, and the lives of those poor little kids he has eternally ruined. I just know God in his infinite wisdom will handle it in his own good time.

June 2, 2010

Now on to recent events, having participated in the Redress scheme and dealing with the Salvation Army with the assistance of the Esther centre, and running the emotional roller coaster, then reflecting on the entire process over a period of four years I appreciate the opportunity to contribute for your consideration my humble opinion with suggestions included.

Let's cover the redress scheme from inception, and yes naturally the angle will be on a financial slant as that was it's intention, a hundred million dollars is not chump change so I have to firstly applaud the consideration, now starts the process.

A five hundred dollar fee was paid for each claimant who was forced to go to a solicitor which was provided to each claimant, which I have to commend as this is a Government program and with the possibility of a class action suite should some one decide they were up to organizing a huge voting group survivors and extended family and really getting all the horror out on the table, so it was critical for signatures to be in place regarding future legal action.

Now comes the who gets what, after attending a very nice information brunch at the Holiday inn at Roma Street and observing the entire event and speaking with a variety of Homies during the break, I thought it was a nice touch to provide Mental Counseling during the event as a considerable amount were visibly distressed during the event.

Questions were asked about the Selection Committee and how it was to be organized, with the unexpected amount of claimants over loading the hundred million dollars, so now who gets what?

Unfortunately, a panel expert insulted the entire group and a lot of questions went unanswered.

After the dust settled apparently anyone who admitted to being sexually abused was considered to be a financial priority, I am a little curious how this was the motivating force over mental and physical abuse with long ranging financial effects, my suggestion in any future schemes more attention be given to such a delicate issue and the selection process must be scrutinized.

I feel like I am one of the lucky ones, as I attend all Riverview events Reunions etc and observe the lives of my brother survivors, I always leave with a heavy heart, when I think of some of the lives destroyed by these institutions tears flow freely down my cheeks. I feel the same ordeal we endured years ago is still occurring, unfortunately some people should not be in charge of other human beings and some have an agenda which propels them to seek those positions, I think the hiring process requires more scrutinizing.

In closing I wish you wisdom in any decisions you make regarding future consideration for assistance for any Homie who endured Hell and survived, most were Australians who were deprived of their childhoods, now are senior citizens who need assistance because they were deprived of their God Given Rights deprived of an education, beaten and abused made to distrust, discarded, unloved, used for slave labor, when they turned eighteen after spending their entire lives in institutions were walked off the property at midnight and cut loose into society, no money nowhere to go with no one to turn too.

Where do you think they ended up? If female, pregnant, if male in jail, what chance did they have? Now there are lots who really need to know their lives were not in vain as this was a life created by circumstance and a process of the time, not by desire or intent, thank you for the opportunity to tell my story and share my emotional mindset.

Yours sincerely

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Home Boy #14