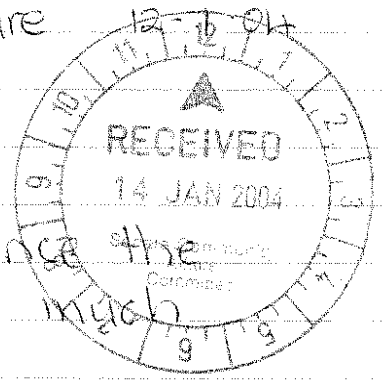


Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care

This is my story.



I was raised in institutions since the age of four, I don't remember much of the first home I was in.

When I was seven I was taken to a home in Brighton vic run by Church of England Nuns, they were very cruel, we were used for slave labour, we had to scrub floors on our hands and knees use heavy machinery to polish floors, peel spuds, wash and dry piles of dishes, if we did anything wrong, our punishment was locked in a cupboard most of the time we were locked in there all night. I can remember being so frightened I would cling to my pillow crouched in a corner to frightened to go to sleep. Sometimes we were locked in the chapel by ourselves, we had to pray to God and ask him to forgive our sins.

If we didn't eat everything on our plates we had to sit there until our plates were empty, if anything was spilt on the floor it was picked up and put back on our plates and were made to eat it, I spent a lot of time dry reaching over fat of meats and things I didn't like.

We went out to public schools the torment and ridicule of other

students who weren't in the home made it difficult to learn as we were branded "hommies",

When I was eleven I ran away from the home, the next day the Police brought us back, the nuns said I was bad so the police took me to Allambie, I wasn't there long until I ran away, then I was transferred to Pirra, Geelong, I ran away from there and was taken to Winlaton, I was 12 years old, they said I was a juvenile delinquent. I was there for about four weeks when I had my first encounter with Miss [REDACTED], she was the superintendant of Winlaton, we were eating our tea when she came in roaring like a bull, she singled me out, stood me against the wall yelled and screamed then for no reason she belted me across the face with a huge bunch of keys my head hit a brick wall, I started to cry she grabbed me by the hair pulling me along the corridor to the toilet, pushed my head in the bowl and pressed the button, she continued calling me names, while dragging me to Winlaton.

I was twelve years old the youngest ever to go in Winlaton, most of the girls where fourteen and over, my initiation was, held

down by a few of the older girls and sexually assaulted, I was also held down and tattooed, when the staff saw a new tattoo they held me down and scrubbed my arm with a nail brush, Salt and water, trying to get the tattoo out, you have no idea what they did to my arm I can still feel the pain when I think about it.

We were subject to constant beltings across the face and body, lifting heavy bag of spuds (sitting) scrubbing floors with toothbrushes, working in the laundry and kitchen never stopping.

The most degrading thing we had to do was, when we had our period we had to show staff our dirty pads, before we got a new one, it was disgusting to have to do that.

The ground guard would come around at night knocking on our windows sexually harassing even to the point of masturbating in front of us, he would hassle for sex or for a look at our tits, if you gave into his needs he would in return give smokes or on one occasion open the gate.

As a young child I love swimming it was my passion, one time unofficially I broke Dawn frazers world record but because of my situation, it was not recognized, I could not continue, because I was always locked away;

What I'm going to tell you has had a terrible impact on my life and my feelings, because we were the victims there has never been any thing said or done from that time until now, and I want answers to how this could ever been allowed to happen.

It was Christmas eve 1964 my friend and I had the opportunity to escape, we were given the keys by one of the staff, then we locked her in a room unharmed, we tried to escape over the fence but alarms went off and search lights came on and our attempt failed. We climbed up a very big popular tree, we stayed there until we were found, by that time there were detectives staff and dogs everywhere they saw us up the tree, when we wouldn't come down Mrs Somerset put the fire hose on us, the force of the water was so strong we gave up, when we climbed down nearly to the bottom, we were pulled by the legs and fell to the ground, Mrs [REDACTED] again belted us across the face with a bunch of keys, calling us dogs, the detectives carried us under the arms across the oval, the german shephard dogs biting at our feet, until they drew blood

once we got to geonah we were told to get on our hands and knees the detectives pinned us down, while Mrs [REDACTED] bashed us with a wet running shoe 46 each across the face and body, leaving bad bruises, we were stripped naked in front of everyone, left standing there until someone gave us a nightie to put on, we were made to take everything out of our rooms bed etc, and were locked in there with nothing.

The next morning was christmas day we had bread and water for christmas dinner,

Mrs [REDACTED] said we would never come out of our rooms.

We had bread and water for every meal for a week, then milk and water for a week, then slowly back to proper meals.

We weren't allowed out of our rooms for anything not even a shower or toilet, we were given a bucket of water for washes, we had to piss and shit on the floor and were given a rag and a bucket of water to clean that up. We didn't even have a blanket to sleep on just floor boards, our room was completely empty, after six weeks of isolation, I just didn't want

to be in this situation no more so I took about 45 tablets and swallowed the lot, these were tablets we were given by staff each day, but I had saved them I was taken to Box Hill hospital for a stomach pump.

When I woke the next morning there were police outside my door and a lady sitting by my bed.

She said her name was Miss [REDACTED] the new superintendant, and that [REDACTED] had been sacked for what she had done to us. Miss [REDACTED] told me to tell the police that I'd done that for a dare, otherwise they would certify me insane and take me away, that's what I did, that's the last I've heard about this cruel sadistic event.

I went back to winlaton I stayed there until I was 17 when I left winlaton, I had no education or experience to function normally, I worked in nightclubs, hotels, started drinking alcohol and taking drugs, I became an alcoholic by the time I reached 19, I was in a major car accident when I was 24, my injuries were on my face, I am still having surgery for this today. My partners and husbands have all been abusive towards me

Over the years I have suffered in silence of depression, anxiety, panic attacks, fear of the dark. I've been searching for years for some one to listen and support me with my ordeals from my past.

Because of the severity of the nature it takes some one of a special kind to understand us children from these institutions.

We suffered harsh physical and mental abuse, sexual harassment, slave labour.

I have just recently found out about the organization C.H.A.N. by accident on the internet, and was so pleased to find out about this inquiry I hope my story will help me and others like me.

yours Sincerely

John J. Lee

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