



### Report 040607

1. In the month of January 1950, at the age of 7, I was placed in the care of the Salvation Army girls home at Fullarton South, along with my sisters Patricia 11 and Julia 9. My younger sister Elizabeth 3 and my twin brother Bernard were taken by an aunty Florrie and uncle Sid in Broken Hill, so that my father could go to work to support us all. Our mother had walked out on us all.
2. I was quite sickly when I was young, but my brother Bernard was quite strong and used to look after me. Because I was quite frail, I used to be called "Dolly".
3. The Salvation Army home was run like any institution, rigid rules, lining up, and marching to meals, bathing, bed time. Also, I was sharing a dormitory with about 30 other girls. As we had come from the country where we had always been very free and happy, it was a great shock. But at least those running the home treated the girls fairly and it was wonderful to get out and go to Parkside School. But I pined for my Bernard when I was 7 as I missed him so much.
4. I remember enjoying the beautiful gardens along the way, as at home we had never seen any gardens or flowers, and we had each other.
5. About February, Patricia was suddenly rushed to hospital. Like many children at that time, she was struck down with polio. We never saw her for many months after that day.
6. In March of that year, Matron called Julia and I into her office and informed us our father had been killed at work. Julia and I became hysterical and I collapsed. His letters every week said he was coming soon to see us. I think we had both experienced enough by then.
7. September of that year our mother made an appearance and took us, Pat included to the Goodwood orphanage. I didn't see her for another 11 years.
8. Arriving at the orphanage, we were taken to a room and given clothes to wear like all the other girls. Julia and Patricia had their hair cut and their hair was then washed in kerosene. As I had very fine white hair and white skin I was given a

straw hat as we had to stay outside in the playground, excepting meals, sleeping and school. My complexion made me look like I was albino which I wasn't. We were also given numbers which we would be known by. I still remember mine.

9. We settled down to the rigid life of another institution. This time it wasn't just lining up and marching, it was the daily grind of religious rituals as well. We were always on our knees like miniature nuns with prayers, mass, rosary beads, benedictions, stations of the cross and confession. The day started with a daily mass at 7am. We weren't Catholics when we went there, but we were soon made good Catholic girls.
10. What was most hard to bear was that schooling was done on the premises. The Sister who taught the young girls was Sister Owen. She also minded us out of school. She was a very placid nun who I grew to like. She was never harsh on any of the girls and did her best. Also, as Elizabeth was in the home when we arrived, I took a big interest in looking after her. This also helped me as Pat and Julia were on the seniors side and weren't always around.
11. One day we went to the John Martin's pageant. After that we went to the Town Hall for a concert. All of the children's homes had their kids there sitting in the various blocks. Just as the lights were to go down I looked over and saw Bernard with his group from the Largs Bay boys home. When the lights went down, I remember crawling along my row and round the auditorium until I could tap Bernard on the leg. He came out back with me, and we just hugged each other and caught up on each other's news.
12. For two years six months I was on the junior side, but on reaching grade 4 I was sent to the senior's side. Patricia had left to become a domestic like most of the girls who turned 14. Julia was still there.
13. My first encounter with Sister Clare, the nun in charge of the senior girls, was to see her belting and screaming at a row of girls for their misdeeds. If they cried or flinched she would belt them more.

14. I was 10 years old by this time. Life had been very hard for my sisters and I, but I had never been smacked, let alone belted. I was shocked to see this violent and cruel woman in action that day, but learned very quickly that this was her daily behaviour towards the girls.
15. It wasn't long before I came under her sadistic treatment. I remember it well to this day. I heard my number called. I went to where she was standing and received 6 whacks with a feather duster. My crime was that my flannel was crooked on the hook. Her treatment of me broke my heart.
16. Every day from 6am when she would sort out the girls who wet their beds with a flogging and tie their sheets around them, to belting girls who's bed was not up to scratch, shoes not shined enough, chores not perfect, lockers untidy, going too fast or too slow, talking. It seems she would find fault just because we were there. She hated us.
17. I remember being in the dining room one evening. The sister said we were to see what happened when girls didn't behave themselves. The door was opened and the girls were brought in. Their hair had been hacked off with shears. It was in a tin bowl which each of them carried in front of them. They were paraded around the dining room and made to stand at the end. Then the girls who wet their beds were brought in. They each had their wet bed sheets tied around their heads. They too were made to parade around and stand at the end of the room on chairs.
18. I remember Mother Michael would parade around the room carrying a stick like a truncheon. It was flexible, and covered with what looked like leopard skin. As she walked around she would just whack the girls on the head for whatever she thought to be wrong.
19. At least for the first two years she wasn't my teacher. But when she became my teacher in grade 6, my worst nightmare began. In school it was the back of the ruler on your knuckles or legs for not sitting straight, smudged work (we used pen and ink). We did sums on the board, and we tried our best to make our loops neat, but we would get a whack every time a digit was wrong or not done neatly enough, which was often. As we were supposed to be learning, I spent many

unhappy hours at the board. She also had us learn by heart 10 words a night and a paragraph of dictation. It was an impossible task for us, as we were also staying in after school for corrections. This was all to be done along with darning our socks. Doing the strings for the tags for the meat marks, was another great punishment she inflicted upon us.

20. One of the cruellest and sadistic acts she inflicted upon the girls, who probably had a little more spirit, was to lock them in rooms on the third floor or in the darkened attic. There were no seats, just a window to look out of. Sometimes, when the girls were flogged too hard and were badly bruised she would send them to bed for days.
21. I repeated year 7 as I was too young the first time. At the age of 14 I went to work in the kitchen, which a handful of girls were made to do. By this time (1957) the girls normally went to St Thomas parish school. Mother Barbara, who ran the orphanage, looked after us girls who worked around the orphanage.
22. My 3 years working around the orphanage were very hard. We started at 6.30am and finished around 6.30pm. However, my main work for two years and six months was to work washing in the laundry. This would start at 5am and go on to 5pm two days a week. It would be from 6.30am other days. Mother Barbara treated us fairly and was a good person. But even though we worked hard and long hours, we never received a single penny. I so wanted a new pair of shoes.
23. In January 1961, I walked out of Goodwood orphanage with Elizabeth. We had an old suitcase and a ticket to Melbourne, where at last I was to be united with my beloved Bernard. We were to live with a relative.
24. I had wished and prayed for years for this day. But as I sat on the train, I felt so unhappy and scared. I guess I had become institutionalised. I was still wearing my number. I ended up living in Melbourne for 30 years.
25. When I was attending a doctor for acute anxiety he sent me to a specialist with regard to my hair. The doctor explained, after examining me, and talking to me, that what I suffered from was alopecia. He said this would have been caused by

all the shock and stress I had endured as a young girl. I still suffer from it to this day.

26. I have often thought that many of the girls from the home went to mental hospitals such as Glenside and Hillcrest. There they would have told the doctors about the abuse that they had suffered. Yet instead of informing the authorities about the abuse, the girls were given electric shock treatment and medicated. It seems that instead of the government being informed of the abuse that the girls had been subjected to, the girls were abused by the system all over again.

27. My Bernard died of cancer some years ago at the age of 50. His treatment and depression had caused him to smoke a lot. He had been a fireman for 28 years and through this he had been exposed to asbestos.

*Please find my submission to the,  
The Secretary,  
Senate Community Affairs  
Reference Committee,*