

Submission To: Australian Federal Government Senate Inquiry Into
Children in Institutional Care 1920 -1970

22nd August 2004

My Brave Heart

When I was a child, 6 years of age, along with my brother, John 4yrs and my sister, Mavis 1yr, I was placed in Institutional Care. The following is a testament written in first person stating the extent and impact of long-term social and economic consequences of child abuse and neglect on myself and four generations of my family, living or now dead. In my Maternal family the two older generations were placed in care at Dalmar Methodist Children's Home, Carlingford NSW. Also, I will be writing to the extent and impact of long-term social and economic consequences of child abuse and neglect on Australian society as a whole, and the inadequacy of existing remedies and support mechanisms.

I take real time here, to write the following submission with the intention that I comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable.

We live in an addictive society. Be it addiction to power, money, relationships, food, rage, gambling, work, sex, violence, smoking, alcohol, or all of the above plus more. It's name is irrelevant. The goal of addiction is insanity or death. What's your poison? My primary dis-ease is relationship addiction, though I have been in recovery from this since 17/04/1985, when I learned that my then husband of 24years is an alcoholic, indeed he had long been an alcoholic when I married him.

I was most relieved to learn there was a very valid reason for the dilemmas in our very unhappy marriage. I learned too, that my role in the family disease was that of "enabler." There was hope for all of us, together we could turn our otherwise destructive, dysfunctional family into a nurturing family. At this point I immediately began to attend self awareness seminars and 12 step meetings like Al Anon and Co-Dependents Anonymous. I started reading all the recommended books. One of my first books had the title "Peoplemaking" by Virginia Satir. An eyes-wide-open read for me. I then understood the dynamics of - and rigid roles assigned to - each family member in order that the dysfunctional family system be maintained. All this of course, was the complete opposite of what happens in nurturing families. All my "How, Why, When and Which" questions were first answered in that one book. Then there was "Your Erroneous Zones by Dr Wayne W Dyer. This book had me naming and exploring my emotional life.

Damn it! Why weren't we taught this in school?

As my story unfolds, you will see how being in Care at Dalmar Methodist Children's Home nearly cost me my life, and the lives of my husband and our two children many times over. Two examples; for me to put our two children into the back seat of the family car, while their violent, raging, drunken Father was in the driver's seat then, myself get into the car seat beside my husband, and not think of the danger, the very real possibility of us all crashing into another car and all of us dying trapped in burning cars, is completely irresponsible.

Second Example; from their early childhood, I had always encouraged our children to be in their respective bedrooms when their father came home for the evening meal. I had long since acknowledged to myself that I was very scared of what my husband would say/do when he arrived home at end of day since - except on the very rare occasion beyond his control - his last stop before arriving home to us was always a few hours spent doing his daily top-up with alcohol at the closest pub or bar. In short, he was making himself insensible.

By the time he walked through our front door, if he didn't totally ignore us and focus on either opening a can of beer, or his lounge chair and the TV, he'd cast around and try to find fault. I always felt he really meant what he was saying, which always compelled me to protect/defend myself against his unjust attacks by staying silent and/or feeling shamed/guilty. Sometimes I tried to reason with him. Our children learned to behave the same way I did. My Husband knew from experience that he would always get one of the above reactions he wanted, which helped to ease his guilt feelings. Until I started to learn about the part denial plays in addictions, I hadn't realised that his rage attacks were really at himself and that he had to vent it on the nearest person.

While still in my naivety, the family dis-ease progressed and became ever more dangerous to every one of us. For me to keep repeating these and many other equally dysfunctional patterns of behavior - is not only irresponsible - but criminal. How then, did I get to this state of mind?

I'll take you back now, to my beginning. I will start by saying one of the defining moments determining the course of my life happened four years before I was born. My maternal grandmother, Lavinia Beatrice Mary died of stroke after surgery on varicose veins in her navel and legs. (Several decades later, I was to be told Grandfather had demanded sexual intercourse with Grandmother in the evening of the day she gave birth to their tenth daughter, Jean) Grandmother was survived by her Husband, William Henry, a WW1 British Army Veteran, and their Ten Girls. In order of birth, Irene Ivy Mary 18yrs, Elsie Beard 16yrs, Joan Olga 14yrs, Nora Esme 13yrs, Jessie 11yrs, Margaret Eileen 9yrs, Gloria 6yrs, Vera 5yrs, Elizabeth Betty 4yrs, and Jean aged one year.

If that wasn't enough family loss and grief for her surviving Husband and Ten Daughters, the fourth eldest daughter, Nora Esme, had already become a survivor of polio. I was told Nora Esme, the 4th eldest daughter - my future Mother - had spent time in an iron lung, then in calipers. I remember the calipers. Though she was able to walk again, one

of her legs had remained smaller and weaker than the other, and she still needed surgery on one ankle muscle.

Two of Nora Esme's older sisters, Irene Ivy Mary and Joan Olga had put their jobs on standby, and came back home from quite a distance to attend their mother's funeral. They stayed on for a while, grief struck, but still helping their eight sisters and their Dad in their grief. Soon, their Dad spoke to Irene, saying she will have to stay home now, and look after her sisters and himself. Being a perfectionist, he spelled out her duties. Irene was told in the cold light of day she was to replace her Mum now and begin sexual relations with him.

Irene quickly and quietly packed her belongings and left home.

Soon, their Dad spoke to Joan, saying she will have to stay home now, and look after her sisters and himself, he spelled out her duties. Joan was told in the cold light of day she was to replace her Mum now and begin sexual relations with him. Joan became hysterical, shouting and crying. She too, packed her belongings and left home. (Please note: Nearly four decades later, and one year after her husband died, Joan Olga suicided, leaving behind three adult children and the grandchildren. Sadly missed by me. When my Mum rang me to tell me, she chuckelled with pleasure for a while, then added "She couldn't take it")

Abandoned now, by two of her elder sisters, my Mum aged just 13yrs, was left with her older sister Elsie, who was mentally challenged, her six young sisters, and her father. Mum was in an overwhelmingly powerless position by anyone's measure of child abuse and neglect. She wasn't given choice. She gave up school to look after her sisters, and replaced her Mother and two older sisters, Irene and Joan in her Mother's bed. She began sexual relations with her Father.

Having adult responsibilities, without the rights and maturity to go with them, was to permanently arrest the emotional development of my Mother's full, and extraordinary potential as a human being.

Two years later my Grandfather died. The 10 Girls were orphaned. Because my grandparents and their first four girls, had emigrated out of England about eleven years earlier, they had no relatives in Australia, and in 1937 the six youngest girls were placed in Dalmar Methodist Children's Home, Carlingford NSW.

My Mother, being the fourth eldest child, and having just had her 15th birthday, ought to have gone to Dalmar with her six younger sisters; however, her eldest sister, Irene took her in to live with her and her betrothed. Very soon the betrothed raped my mother, caught in action by eldest sister, Irene.

My mother wanted to marry her rapist, and he wanted to marry her. This couple were to become my parents, but they had to go to court to get legal rights to marry since Mum was legally a child. Irene ripped up my mother's England Birth Certificate and said Mum was only 14 years of age. Irene said my future father was 29 years of age, and had already been to prison. At this point the two sisters, and eventually their respective children, and their respective grandchildren, were estranged.

My parents were permitted to marry, even though Mum and the Court believed she was only fourteen and a half years of age. Meanwhile, the two youngest of the 10 girls, Betty and Jean had been adopted out of Dalmar, and given to two separate families. (They weren't permitted to see each other or their eight sisters until they were each 21 years of age respectively). Two years after my parents married, I was born.

I was the first born child to the "Ten Girls," and not by coincidence was I named after my Grandmother, whose nickname was "Lilly." I had been born with a job to do, to fill the huge vacuum, to fix it all up for my young mother. I was given the task of being my Mother's Mother, and yes, for life, or until I found another way of being in the world.

My brother, John was born 20 months later. Dad was now working a pig farm in the foothills of the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. We lived in a house on the property, and after Aunt Margaret left Dalmar Children's home, aged 16 years, she came to live with us on the pig farm. Dad tried to have sex with her. My Mother gave birth to baby sister, Mavis, who was born 3 yrs 6 mths after my brother.

When baby Mavis was 7 mths old, I saw two black police cars parked in front of the house. I remember standing out in the middle of the dirt road with my brother and Mum, who was holding baby sister. We were there for such a long time, details of this day and many days both sides of this event, are burned into my memory. Most of them I have never dared gather and shape into words and utter to family. (Decades later, I was to learn that Dad had fled into the bush to escape the police - his arrest statement reads "Admitted living for years by stealing from goods trains en-route for country stores. Associate of criminals. When arrested he had an unlicensed pistol in his possession, also gelignite and detonators. Burnt his house to destroy the evidence contained therein")

I remember great trauma. Often. I remember Mum, driving us in a big old black (Buick running on power kerosene) car. (Mavis must have been sitting or laying next to Mum in the front seat) My brother was sitting to the left of me on the back seat, I was sitting behind our Mother. At the feet of both of us was a large viewing hole that Dad had previously cut into the floor of the car body, through which I could see the tail shaft spinning around in the differential. We were travelling on the road on top of a hill. I was scared and crying and Mum was driving fast and screaming out she wanted to kill herself and all us. A lot of the time we nearly went off the road and off the hill. Mum was wanting to take us over it to our deaths, but never completed the action.

The date was 21st January 1946. I was standing inside the entrance of a huge two story brick building and then I started to wander around. (This was Mum's fourth or fifth attempt to place us in Dalmar) When I looked back, Mum was not to be found, I panicked and screamed and started to run around the walls of Dalmar's huge dining room trying to take the bricks out of the walls. I kept screaming and crying "MUMMY, MUMMY, WHERE'S MY MUMMY? I WANT MY MUMMY" over and over and over again. I was being followed - a lady - in hot pursuit, but I kept running around and around screaming and crying anyway. I was desperately trying to get out of that building to find my Mummy.

That evening, my next memory is of me, upstairs in a large dormitory, standing close to a bed in junior girls, and trying to fold stiff, shrunken woolen jumpers into neat piles. This was difficult because I was dry-sobbing, loudly. Uncontrollably. I was 6yrs and 8mths of age and had never been to Kindergarten, School or Religious Instruction.

(A few years ago, our Aunt Margaret told me what happened next) - My brother, John would have heard all my dry-sobbing, because down the hall, he was taken out of junior boys, and I was taken out of junior girls. Together, we both ended up over at Dalmar's babies' home Vickery, with our baby Mavis, for the next three days. Our young Aunt Margaret was there too, because she had given up her job, and the day before our arrival at Dalmar had installed herself as a Sister working in the babies' home. Aunt Margaret, the eldest of the "6 Dalmar sisters" who had been placed in Dalmar when Grandmother died, had only got herself out of Dalmar four years earlier. One of her younger sisters, our Aunt Vera, was still in Dalmar's Newman, the senior girls' home. I have no memory of those three days in the babies' home) I do remember meeting my then teenaged Aunt Vera just once, and being introduced to her as my "Aunty Vera," it was quite a strange experience, since I was only nine years younger than her. She was alone, and sitting down looking totally beaten by life, slumped over herself and very sad, though she did look at me.

(This paragraph is also what Aunt Margaret told me a few years ago. Aunt Margaret, along with the sister-in-charge at Vickery was no sooner getting the hang of attending to upwards of 20 babies' needs, and precious little of their own needs, when the Vickery sister-in-charge took off on much needed leave. Aunt Margaret was there all by her motherless self for six or eight weeks!!! Now she broke down too, she had nervous exhaustion, just like us new Dally kids and our poor traumatised Mother. And too, Dalmar management were secretly docking Aunt Margaret's pay because, even though my Mum was now working as a machinist in a clothing factory she couldn't pay Dalmar the required money for our board. I'd have given anything to be with my sister Mavis and Aunt Margaret during that critical time. Helping and loving it. After all, I had been doing baby care for a long time at home. Dalmar Management would have been acutely aware of all that. Aunt Margaret had to be sent to a nursing home for two months and never went back to Dalmar)

Meanwhile, back in Junior girls, like so many other girls, I do remember I went back to wetting the bed for a while. My nightmares had begun, always the same, I would

suddenly wake in fear, re-living the memory of Mother almost completing the act of driving us children and herself off a hill to our deaths. I had that nightmare dozens of times in Dalmar, and was always told "It was just a silly dream, go back to sleep" Those nightmares stopped abruptly when we left Dalmar five years later.

One dark night, in the dormitory, a little girl, probably four/five years of age, asked me to get out of bed and lay on top of her on the floor. If I did, she said, she would give me some talcum powder. I told her it was silly, and refused. Today I realize that she was probably wanting to act out the only "love" and/or close contact she had ever had with another human being. Her incestuous father?

Another night, I was awake most of the night because for starters, immediately on the other side of the rather low wall/partition dividing junior boys from junior girls, I could hear urgent and frightened whispering voices, and directly overhead, on our common ceiling I could see reflected light from lamps. Next morning the voices were confirmed to be those of matron and a dormitory sister. My brother had taken (another) bad convulsion, they were frightened he would die. They had stayed at my brother's bedside all night. I was told, that by chance, I had been physically close to my brother, our bed heads separated only by the partition. "Why?" I wailed "Why wasn't I allowed to be at his bedside too?" It was at this point I knew I couldn't trust them. Keeping siblings away from each other, may have been easier for them but we were being deliberately treated with total contempt for our need to belong, our basic human instinct for survival. We got the divide and rule method of control without compassion, just like criminals.

(My brother had started taking big time convulsions when we were living at the pig farm. One day, when I was on the back verandah with my brother playing "cup of tea's" on top of a keroscene tin, my brother fell off his chair, and off the verandah, and onto the knife he was holding. It stuck into his forehead, into his skull. The Doctor said "Another 1/4 inch and he would have died." Once, I run into the house and stood still to show Mum all the "chook eggs" I had cupped inside my aprin, Mum looked inside the fold of my aprin, and screamed at me that they were snake eggs that I'd found in the bush. Left alone in the kitchen one day had me trying to make a cake for Mummy, I tipped all the contents of canisters into a heap on the floor and started to mix it up. This was during WW11. I'd seen disembowled dead pigs hanging from hooks in the "smoke room" and stood close to Daddy while he held the live and kicking pig's heads over a hole in the ground and cut their throats til they stopped all that squealing. I'd smelt such vile smells only much later life would force me back and bid me to name, for they were the smells of death. But nothing sent me, along with my parents, into full-on frantic panic until my brother fell into our water well. I don't remember who raised the alarm, but by the time my father had run to the well, my brother had sunk to the bottom, anyway, that's where Daddy found him, he having burst an eardrum in his frantic search for my brother. Of Mum? I don't remember any more of the day. And I've never asked. I've been busy enough, surviving all the known and unknown inter-generational trauma. I recall a blur of times when, in the middle of frantic hot mustard bathes and other probably useless methods, we all stopped breathing until my brother come out of yet another convulsion)

I started my very first day of school at Carlingford Public Primary School, and I hated it. There were children there who went home to a Mummy and a Daddy every day. I had nothing in common with them, even down to how we received our lunches (in a big box left on the headmaster's doorstep) not even what we ate for lunch. The best thing for me to do was not associate with them. Then there were the "Churchee's." Girls and Boys from the other Children's Home close to the School. They were, and we were always at war with each other. We were called "Dally Kids," or "Scabs." I kinda stayed away from all that too, and would rather sit around and play with a couple of Dally girls, doing a bit of craft, however primitive it was.

In Dalmar, I was expected to do "sport" at school once a week. We were playing Rounders, (like baseball) and while I stood still in the sports field, waiting for my turn at the bat or ball I kept getting dizzy and sick, it was no fun at all. I told the school teacher and the sister in junior girls but, as was the cultural practice, children were seen and not heard. So, once a week, on sports day, I would tell my dormitory sister I was sick, and I didn't have to go to school. Instead, I had to stay in bed all day, with nothing to do and no-one else to talk to in the huge dormitory, with all its empty neatly made-up beds and cots. I pulled the same trick three sports days in a row, and three times I didn't have to go to school. I hadn't fooled anyone. On the third sport day, soon after all the girls had gone to school, I marched sister with a medicine glass with fluid in it. She asked me to drink it. It was difficult, but I did. Then, to my horror it all came up again and sprayed out over my bed clothes. I had never experienced that smell or taste before?

It was castor oil. Sister was beside herself with rage towards me. She produced a large spoon and pulled me to the hand basin in the dormitory, she offered me a spoonful of pure castor oil. As much as I tried and tried to keep it down, it refused to stay put, and I vomited messily in the hand basin and all around, some of it was on sister's uniform. Sister wasn't to be defied. Out came another full spoon of castor oil. With both her arms folding me in a head-lock against her boobs, she used all her strength to slowly but surely force my mouth open. She got my teeth to part some, as I struggled for dear life. Sister's will prevailed. She got as much of that vile stuff in between my teeth and down my throat as she could. Involuntarily, it came up a third time, very little of it was in the hand basin. She stood back well satisfied, saying "Well anyway, enough would have stayed down."

I can't remember if she let me wash myself or the basin. I can't remember if there was soap on the side of the basin. I do remember I wasn't allowed out of bed all day, and I had to smell my vomited castor oily bed clothes all day. I never missed sport day again. It was only when other ex Dalmar children were talking about sun-stroke at Dalmar's 100th Year celebrations, that I became aware sun-stroke was a common occurrence when we were at Dalmar. No sun awareness or protection in those days, no understanding at all of the effects of the sun. "Only Mad dogs and Englishmen..." We were made play under the glaring sun for hours, inside the four walls of the veranda in junior girls. The veranda's floor surface was black tar that would melt in summer, we could shape it into pretty well anything, except remove one ounce of it. Slip, Slop, Slap or even Slurp of water was, in those days, unheard of :-)

We lined up for meals when the bell rang, only to arrive at table for prayers as I stared down a plate of cold hard semolina porridge, or neat squares of leathery tripe swimming in white sauce that wouldn't ever stay in my stomach, neither would it ever disappear off my plate, even if I was left to smell it and heave for an hour. Time and time again I remember staring blankly at my brother, who was seated amongst all the other boys, on the other side of the dining room and wondering what had I done so wrong. I always blamed myself for us three being in Dalmar. Mum used to say "If you be a good girl for Mummy I'll take you out one day."

I envied Matron and the sisters sitting at their fine table and chairs in the middle of the dining room. Spread as it was with different things, like stiff white Damask napkins, rolled inside silver napkin rings and lots of pure silver cutlery, serving dishes, jugs and tea pots, with Matron and sisters putting thick honey and cream on crisp wheat biscuits at breakfast. Surrounded as they were by us at long low tables, with long low benches to sit on. Staff Table arrangement changed while I was there, because, when I was at Newman I had my share of duties in the kitchen, and the quite small staff dining room. The lavish table settings hadn't changed, it was simply out of sight.

All us so called "Waifs and Strays from the streets and lanes of Sydney" could look at the big doll's house, on the big dining room stage, but never touch it. I remember the giant 18inch by 18inch books in the study area close to the front entrance of the big dining room, and their big "actual pictures" of heaven and hell.

I was moved to big girls Newman, and there I met my Dalmar Nemesis. Sister Croft was very sadistic and very focused on me to vent her angst at the world. I had a little more freedom there, though with it came bigger, tougher chores. I sneaked over to the babies' home (not knowing this would be the very last time I would dare to) and pulled a suddenly happy and eager baby sister Mavis out of her lonely cot, and walked around with her in my arms for ages, just hugging and holding her in my arms, combing her hair, and generally playing with her and the other little babies. I used to think I was going to die without these stolen hugs and cuddles from my siblings. Sister Croft found out.

I had to spend the whole weekend cleaning the Newman kitchen until it met with Sister Croft's approval. She hated me with a great passion. When it was my turn to keep the coke burning furnace alight 24/7, and before I walked to school, I'd ask Sister Croft if she would please shake the fire up and put the standby full scuttle of coke on top of the fire at lunchtime please? She never ever did. I spent many an hour morning and night, trying to light, and keep alight a furnace that was a blight on my little being. Loudly, Sister Croft would rave on and on that it was my fault everyone would have to take a cold bath tonight.

The living conditions of the babies in Vickery was revolting, the children, a sad and lonely lot. No stimulation or hugs for them. Just necessary handling and boredom. It was exactly like what you watch "live"(their living death) on TV today, in poverty stricken, so called "Third World Countries." You may even watch the behavior of these

babies, who have no sense of attachment to others. You may watch this misery from the comfort of a lounge chair in your living room. **Know that this emotionally sterile environment is still very common in Australian families today. Yet another generation of angry and scared young people is being dragged up deprived of love.**

On the only birthday I remember at Newman, my Mother brought me a double sponge cake with cream filling. It had eleven Birthday candles pushed into the icing on top, and an ornament saying "Happy Birthday." I proudly took it in to show everyone, and the plan was that after Tea, I would light all the candles and everyone would sing "Happy Birthday to You." I'd cut the cake, make a wish and give everyone in Newman a piece of cake. Within the hour, Sister Croft took the cake away from me, and hid it.

I looked everywhere for it. Finally I found it five full days later. I found it on a shelf in the old dis-used wood stove in Newman's kitchen. The cake was exactly as I had last seen it, Candles neatly standing up. The cake itself was stale, hard and inedible like Sister Croft. All the while it was her intent to cause me constant grief that I never understood. This time though, she had also deprived all the Newman girls of a rare treat.

Mum visited us every second Saturday afternoon, for a short time. (she was always very late) More stress, because it was the only time I had permission to be with my baby sister and my young brother. Mum wasn't into cuddling me. I'd lay on my stomach on the grass and try to will my Mother into sight as she came down the path from the bus. More often than not, I'd have to give my doll, "Susan" to Mum because the elastic holding her legs or arms on had snapped, or she would give me some more used baby clothes for my "babies." With celluloid Susan, my prized baby sized, sometimes "Bride Doll," and my other eight otherwise discarded dolls, (one was one inch tall) I used to wheel all "my family" around in a doll's pram that had no hood, while hugging and tending and talking to all "my babies." Today, the significance of this remembered scene is not lost on me, I know who those nine "babies" were. I was acting out my mother looking after the needs of her nine sisters.

There were favored children, but I couldn't figure any of it out. I knew inside me that it was unfair, and still the only answer I ever had for all this was- it *must* be my fault. Mum kept telling me to be a good girl for her and she'll take me out one day. Religion kept telling me "Our Father who ar't..." is watching everything I do, so be good. What a sticky-beak he is! School was intent on instilling goodness, even Girl Guides, then Santa Clause got into the act and wanted to know "who's been naughty and who's been nice?" The fact that my father was absent, and we had to pray to our absent father who art in heaven really confused and stressed me. I wanted my Mummy. I wanted my brother and sister.

Unknown to me at the time, I lived shut down in a cocoon of constant fear and trauma. I was lonely. I was not old enough to comprehend this, I didn't have perspective. How could I know this was child abuse and neglect? How could I make choices about what to think, or look forward to better times, when I had experience only of one way of being in the world? I had no sense of belonging anywhere. I didn't matter. I didn't know that for

all my life before Dalmar the world was at war. I didn't know that my father was in gaol. Put there for committing many crimes against the community during WW11, which included him selling things on the black-market. My value and treatment in Dalmar was measured by my family's value and position in society. The few thugs in Dalmar knew all along, all the staff in Dalmar knew all along.

(On Dalmar's 100th Birthday in 1993, I was offered four pieces of paper, the sum total of my little family's record of being in Dalmar for five years) There was a letter from our Father's Solicitor addressed to the Superintendent of Dalmar Methodist Children's Home dated a year before we left Dalmar. It informed the Superintendent that my Father had made a motel booking for two weeks holiday for himself and his three children in Port Macquarrie, promising that he would return us to Dalmar immediately thereafter. The Super's reply said no. It was creepy to realize in hindsight, that Mum hadn't yet gone back to live with Dad, instead "Our Father who ar't..." was dreaming of grooming his first born daughter for incest)

Religion was not feeding my spirit in fact, under the great weight of ritual and dogma of organized religion, and forever being told what to do/not do, what to believe, my spirit was dying. Not for us "Dally kids" the recognition of the miracle of our birth, our intrinsic value, truth, wisdom, and gift of unconditional love to the world. We had to cover our spirit over and protect it, so we could survive one day at a time. You taught us blind obedience. Silent compliance. Everything was a sin (Self Inflicted Nonsense) According to you, we were even **born of sin**, and just HAD to be Christ-ened. Can you even begin to understand how very abusive that was? I sang my heart out with "...build your house upon the rock and not upon the sand." That made sense, but I was never given tools to build a nurturing relationship with myself, or others. I was carefully conditioned to be selfless.

I was bereft of resilliance. Bereft of hope and joy. Life was simply survival. On two separate occasions, when I wasn't asleep during dreary "Church" on Sundays, I had stomach cramps so bad, doubled up with pain, I had to creep outside Church and crouch down onto the grass with my back against the church wall, while I waited for the pain to subside. Where was "Jesus loves us...suffer the little children?" You're a naughty girl, you have to feel pity for Jesus because he was nailed to a cross, and blood spurted out. Who loved me? Where was "Our Father who ar't in..."If you tell me that is not child abuse and neglect, you are in deep denial. Systematic re-abuses, prolonged, unmet emotional, spiritual, social and nurturing needs of necessity express themselves in the physical body, and that took me several decades to learn.

I used to go to Girl Guides Group in Dalmar's Kindergarten building. No uniform or GG badges, but we learned some neat little songs, and the Girl Guide moto "Be Prepared." Girl Guides prepared me for a whole lot of nothing worthwhile in life, we needed a good measure of positive feedback. We needed to be children, to be heard, to be valued - accepted just the way we were.

Eventually, both Mum and Dad began visiting us separately, then together. They made a grand entrance, driving up the long tree lined driveway, sitting inside their huge second hand black Packard car, NSW Registration Plate No.108109. Our very own Mummy and Daddy (wait til I boast about all *that* at school!) Hugs from everyone to everyone. My heart began to sing. It felt like Xmas every single time. Then, on one occasion they brought Aunt Vera and her boyfriend, on another our Aunt Gloria and her first baby, Linda. We were getting out of Dalmar!!!!!!!!!!!!

At last the day arrived, two days before Xmas 1950. I was exactly 11yrs and 6mths old. We arrived at our new address, in a Sydney suburb. It was a well established, large and stately double brick and slate tile house on three blocks of land. The third block faced the back street, it was our driveway and Dad's sheet metal business. Dad produced a big wheelbarrow, and wheeled our Dalmar clothes, dolls "Susan" and "Dawn" and other things up to the back door of the house. Us kids eagerly inspected our big bedrooms, all with beautiful new furniture. I remember what we got for Xmas, Our parents spent a lot of money. I was starry eyed with the most pleasure I had ever experienced in my little life.

We started at a new school, and Mum kept reminding us to never talk about Dalmar, never ever, at home or at school. Never talk to anyone about anything that goes on in the house, never, ever. At school, we must have raised a lot of eyebrows, because the only thing I could find to talk about, was that I had a Mummy and a Daddy now, and we had our very own house and yard. The already seriously dumbed down were now under pressure to shut down entirely. Soon, Aunt Gloria, her husband and baby Linda moved in with us.

I will censor the following. There are a lot of male voyeurs at large. About 2 months to 6 months had passed since we'd left Dalmar. Anyway, it was when Mum was first in hospital for six weeks, she nearly died of infection in her uterus. Thankfully, Penicillian was then new on the market for us ordinary Australian folk, and Mum was pumped full of more than her fair share. Aunt Gloria and Uncle Cass had gone to the movies that night. My sister Mavis and I shared the same room. My father woke me up and made his first move on me. These days I know the word for his behavior. Incest. Incest is not about sex, it is about power, the abuse of power. He was grooming me. He told me there is nothing wrong with it, and to not tell my Mum. Sound sick and confusing? Double messages in one sentence? You bet! Communication like this is the diagnosis of a dysfunctional family.

The story as I heard it, was that Dad had found the pressure of having a brother-in-law who was a Navy Service Policeman - living under the same roof as we - just too much, just too uncomfortable. Dad asked Mum to ask them to leave. I missed them, especially baby Linda very, very much. I used to carry her around on my hip for hours.

One morning, I didn't have time to make my bed before school, Mum showed me all her teeth and tonsils and screamed and shouted at me, yelling into my face that she "only

went back to your father to get you kids out of Dalmar, so you had better do as you are buddy well told.” So it was official. I was responsible for keeping the family together.

Dad's last attempt found me home alone, and making a casserole for Tea. I was to then place it in the oven, and light the gas. I began with cutting the meat up on a wooden chopping board. Dad rushed in, I didn't even know he was home, he was across the small kitchen table from me.

I held the knife and looked at his large, menacing body, and black, evil, needy look. I dropped the knife and raced for the open door to my right, shot through it, shut it, and turned the huge key in the lock. Without considered thought I automatically checked the other laundry door was locked. For the moment, I was safe. I stood behind the first door, at the bottom of the stairs, frozen in time.

Both my little hands were out front of me, each of my fingers and thumbs was spread out real wide, and away from the other. I stared at my stiff little white fingers transfixed with terror, I couldn't move. I have no idea how long that lasted, but the spell was broken by my Father, I could hear a screwdriver turning a screw in the wood of the door, Dad was taking the solid wood, dark green door off to get at me! I tried to scream and not a sound came out!

Finally, I re-remembered the other locked laundry door, I fled out of it, down the back yard, out into the back street and up to the top of the old stone quarry where my brother and I used to play. I sat there shaking violently. Neither of us had said one word. My flesh was crawling with gross disgust at the very idea that his intention was to touch me again. I was pleased though, that at last I had had a reaction to this man who, even at the best of times didn't seem to notice we kids were there. My body reacted to another body's threat. As simple as that.

I watched while Dad drove his very distinctive large black Packard car round and round the many streets below me, I laid very still and low on the rock, because I thought he might kill me if he cornered me. A couple of hours I suppose, and it was getting quite dark, I went home because I knew Mum must have arrived home, better I face the unbridled fury of my Mother minus her casserole than to deal with Dad's menacing body. I didn't say anything. Years of lessons on don't talk, don't trust, don't feel were taking their toll on my ability to communicate, especially under stress. I was too violated and scared and confused to try. With hindsight, I knew at that point I couldn't trust my Mother. She didn't give a dam about me, and I still had a year to go in primary school. I was as lonely as hell.

One time, when I was permitted regular visits to my Aunt Vera's home, at 13yrs of age, I got up the words to tell her what Dad had done to me. Aunt Vera rang and told Mum. I was in the sun-room when her phone call came through, I could tell by her words and body language Mum was fit to spit hot wood chips that I hadn't told her. I was in big trouble. That night, after my brother and sister were long since tucked up in bed and their solid wood bedroom doors were closed on them, Mum shut every other door in the

house, including the one that divided the bedrooms from the rest of the house. Was this the way it was for my Mother when she was 13 Years of age? Silenced by her Dad? Because this stuff too, is generational.

Would a Mother who loved me, isolate me from family so I had no support? People who have nothing to hide, hide nothing. She sat me on a chair in the middle of the dining room and started grilling me about what I had been saying to my Aunt. Without any hint from her that she really wanted to know, I told her what I told her sister. The truth was not what this was all about. Not for one moment was she interested in hearing my words, she was only interested in imposing her will on me. She was intent on intimidating me with the considerable power she had over my life.

She went quietly up to the front bedroom to talk to Dad, then back and forth she went. Every time she came back she took more of my reality away, she was so furious, she showed me most of her teeth, and her tonsils, she was bent over menacingly into my face, there was never one moment of grace. No safe place for me to fall in this world. No protection. (I believe Dalmar management came out and measured the size of the bedrooms we were to move into as part of releasing us kids, but they never took the measure of the worthiness of our parents)

My Mother was not interested in the truth, only in silencing me on this forever, she ended up telling me I'm "a trouble maker, and do you want to go back to Dalmar again, do you want your brother and sister to go back to Dalmar again because of you?" (I knew this was blackmail, even if there was no word for it.) Mum wanted it to be all my fault again, she wanted me to fix it up for her again, to be her Mummy. I simply had to shut up, sit down and keep quiet to fix it all up for my Mummy. Mum pulled me up the hall by holding either my hair or one ear, she stood me at the door of their bedroom and demanded of me "Look at your Father, (he was laying face down across their double bed) you have made him cry!" I had become the enemy within.

At this moment I believed my life was over, with my life not yet spent. From that day on, my every non-verbal reaction to Dad must have screamed incest to Mum. However, Mum rules!!! One very traumatising day I had to get into their bed with Dad. Both of us had a stomach wog. "To save me extra walking with my gammy leg" said she. (Lazy pedarists are clever, they only predate on the children the Mother doesn't like)

Mum always felt threatened by all that I knew. All that I'd seen. At the time I didn't know this, I didn't know Mum had all the power in our relationship. I didn't know she could/would/did act out of her own self interest - I was a child who trusted that my Mummy always knew what was best for me. That was not so. I had simply given her my power, silence, in exchange for permission to breath. The evidence is there though, that my intuition was fully aware of the situation I was in, and I was automatically doing everything necessary to ensure my survival. I must say the big word now, Betrayal. Mother certainly had University PHD's in manipulation, devious, secrets and lies, she would have killed me rather than reveal the long term plans she had for my Father and

myself. She hoped simply to enable it. JUST LIKE HER TWO ELDER SISTERS HAD ENABLED THEIR FATHER TO INCEST HER.

Of course, my continued silence only served to protect and further empower Mum. And Dad. Mum was the “Enabler” in my dysfunctional family. Unconsciously I learned the art of Enabling from my Mother. My Aunt Vera went off and in her words “...had a nervous breakdown for four years” and the huge house didn't see visitors. Mum was teaching me absolute silence.

I was still only 13yrs old. When, and in the middle of our inter-generational incestuous family Mum gave birth to another baby. My youngest sister Margaret Ruth. I was besotted by her, absolutely besotted, but no-one was allowed near her for many months, she was “Mum's Angel” and her's only. I was very aware that there were two families in the house now. Mum, on one side of the dining room playing “Mummy's and dolly's” with new baby sister. On the other side of the dining room I was the responsible one in the role of “Mother” to my two younger siblings and Mum. Mum always hated Dad with a great passion.

Crying was forbidden. Forbidden absolutely. Mum would sooner threaten to give me **“a good clip over the ears to really give you something to cry about if you don't stop all that blubbering! Stop looking at me like that - what a sad-sack you turned out to be! I know what you are on about, you know too much for your own good! Who do you think you are? Lady Buddy Muck? I'm sick and tired of looking at you, get out of my sight. It makes me sick just to look at you. I'm sick at the sight of you.....who'd have kids?”** Sometimes, when I put clothes on that perhaps didn't match she'd follow through with a sneer and holla **“...you look like a Dally kid.”**

Most of the time Mum acted out of a child's basic needs and impulses. Her bottomless pit of unresolved abuse and neglect, grief and loss would often erupt into a rage fit to instantly wither any and all the hapless souls unfortunate to be near her - then in a blink - she would become the placid, sweet child again.

Meanwhile, I went further into my shattered self. I began suffering frequent and debilitating migraine headaches. I started to sleep walk. The first time, I walked out to Mum in the dining room, stood in front of her, and started speaking, but couldn't make myself understood. Mum shouted into my face “get back to bed” and I woke fully and did as I was shouted to do. The other time, I was trying to get out the front door, with blanket and pillow under my arm, only I couldn't figure how to unlock the door. I made such a racket Mum got out of her bed, spotted me, and shouted “get back to bed” and I woke fully and did as I was shouted to do. My inner knowing was telling me to get out of this family, but it was not yet time.

Dad cooled it for a while, then he incested my sister, Mavis, only to be interrupted by Mother and I returning from the movies. Our brother also incested Mavis, only to be interrupted by me. Mavis has also been incested by a girl cousin. Later, Dad would try to have sex with Marg, who was boarding with the family.

(Two years after Dad had died, Mum rang me on my 53rd Birthday and told me Dad's addiction to sex with his children started when he was a child. He was abducted by some unknown man in the street. Dad was held hostage for 3 or 4 months in a locked room in a house. He was sodomised at will by the man. Dad had never been served such fine food, and so much food in his little life. However, at first opportunity, my Dad made good his escape and went back to his parents and siblings. Dad's father, who is my paternal Grandfather was a violent alcoholic. My Dad grew up in a house full of mayhem. While Grandmother was pregnant with their fifth child, Grandfather kicked Grandmother up a flight of stairs in order to have sexual intercourse with her in their bedroom. This kicking resulted in baby Mary Letitia being born brain damaged. Not long after my grandparents were delivered of their ninth and last child, Lucy Victoria, baby Lucy Victoria died.

Now suffering from deep grief and depression, and with no understanding of the family dynamics ruled by the cruel whip of alcoholism, my Grandmother was Institutionalized for the remaining decades of her very long life. Travelling interstate, and having arrived at his Mother's graveside, Dad was just in time to see his dead Mother's body being tipped out of her coffin and into her grave. I cannot know the depth of his feelings of horror, powerlessness or grief at that scene before him. Mum had told me about that at the time, but hadn't gone further, she didn't tell me that both Dad's Mother and his brain damaged sister, Mary Letitia had been Institutionalised for decades. I was never permitted to see my paternal Grandmother. She died in 1952 at Castlemaine Benevolent Home in Victoria. I have stood and cried by both my Grandmother's graves, their collective fears, terrors and unresolved issues, abuse and neglect, grief and loss unmeasured by me. I never laid eyes on either)

After the four years, Aunt Vera returned briefly, when yet again, Mum was in hospital. Aunt Vera started force feeding my four year old sister with peas in her mash, and our family was respectful of baby sister's intolerance of greens. Little sister started to heave her tonsils out, and Aunt just increased the force. I rushed over to them and said you can't do that to her, and Aunt said she must have greens in her food. I was sufficiently verbally forceful myself about the issue so she stopped. I went back to the sink to do whatever, and Margie was heaving her tonsils out again, Aunt Vera was force-feeding baby sister so determinedly that she pushed all my buttons, and I found myself fighting the heaves myself. This was big flash-back to all my heaving days in Dalmar.

I was just like Mum now! I shouted and screamed at favorite Aunt. I tried to push or pull her away from Margie, and she wouldn't budge. She was nine years older than me but that didn't concern me at all. Now *I really put my foot down*. I just kept yelling and shouting, and showing her all my teeth and tonsils close up and personal, over, and over, and over. Finally she backed away and went outside and to the rotary hoist. I took up Mum's tall stance as best I could. It was done. She relaxed and stood there. I went inside the laundry door and she started to rush in behind me, I locked the fly wire door, then I locked and bolted the wooden door on it. I rushed around to the main back entrance and locked that door on her too! She ended up telling Dad, and Aunt packed up

and left our home. I looked after my three siblings and gave Dad and them their meals for the next eight days. We had fried sausages and boiled vegetables every night. I wasn't very experienced with gas stoves.

At last I turned 18 years of age, and was legally able to leave home. I fled. Like so many adult children of dysfunctional families, I had joined the Australian Defense Forces. The rigid roles of hierarchy and blind obedience was familiar. There, I met and married my husband. We had two children together. I was still suffering debilitating migraine headaches.

As I've already said, it was 17th April 1985, when I accidentally learned the words that described what ailed my little family. My then husband of 24 years, and the Father of our two children, is a violent alcoholic. On that very same day, and after a total of 33 and one half years of migraines, they stopped in their tracks :-)

I rang my then boss at work, and told him the situation, and he suggested I take a course at "Holyoake" Family Drug and Alcohol Treatment Center, Perth. I paid my \$200 to Holyoake, and started attending the seminars and group therapy three nights a week after work. They gave me the most important piece of paper I have yet seen in my entire life. It listed numerous rights I had as a responsible person. I found a whole new world of words, the power contained in those words opened my awareness of a thousand and one understandings in one day. Heading the list was; As a Responsible Person: You have a right to say "NO." I was never the same again.

For the very first time in my miserable life I felt safe, I felt safe in Holyoake. Fleeting, I felt safe in this world. I felt safe to feel. Immediately threatened by my new understandings and my emotional growing up process, something quiet evil and deadly serious came over my husband. He insisted they must be injecting drugs into me. When I kept attending Holyoake, he threatened to "...go in and tear it apart brick by bloody brick!" I kept attending, but couldn't stop all my crying, I cried buckets. At the very same time I felt frightened/ing anger that came welling up unbidden from inside me. I was completely overwhelmed by both the crying and anger for about four months, as I worked through decades of denied and repressed memories of loss and grief for myself, my husband and our two precious children.

I kept getting vivid and shocking flash-backs to my childhood memories of abuse and neglect. I could remember all the smells, tastes, colours, people, I got total recall of whole conversations, which I had never felt safe to remember and feel till then. I thought I was going to die from all that suddenly outed, raw emotional pain that came up with my remembering. I was all over the place with my thinking, feelings and behavior trying to find a new center for myself, new boundaries, and a new place for me in the world. I was trying to find my real self under all that lifelong loss and grief, abuse and neglect. For months - what felt like decades - calm serenity illuded me.

Also - during this trying time - and after I did a Holyoake "Intervention" on my husband, he stopped drinking and joined me at Holyoake, He was now a dry alcoholic getting

frightening flashbacks to his own childhood abuse and neglect. As a direct result of this, and later, Holyoake suggested that, for my protection, I carry one of my husband's golf stick's round with me all the time at home, because he was obviously becoming more violent (dry drinking). I also enlisted a large wooden coat hanger, and put it in a large handbag-to-go, for the same purpose. I followed another of Holyoake's useful suggestions. In the boot of my car I always had a suitcase packed for a couple of nights emergency stayover in hotels, this came in handy five times.

My husband had not been physically violent with me before we married, though he had been so with many others. He would get into drunken brawls, I knew this because during our eighteen months of courtship, we had most of our Saturday dates sitting in the lounge of a pub with his mates, for many hours. While they drank beer, recounted past bully-boy fighting prowess, drinking history and football, I'd 'sit on' a lemon squash, and literally on his knees. With hindsight, I had rarely seen him clear eyed and sober.

In her book "Women Who Love Too Much" Robin Norwood writes:

"Chapter Seven

Beauty and the Beast

"There are many men," said Beauty, "who make worse monsters than you, and I prefer you notwithstanding your looks..." - 'Beauty and the Beast'

In the stories from the two previous chapters, the women uniformly expressed a need to be of service, to help the men with whom they became involved. Indeed, the opportunity to be of help to these men was the main ingredient in the attraction they felt. The men, correspondingly, indicated that they had been searching for someone who could help them, who could control their behavior, make them feel safe, or "save" them---who would be, in the words of one of my male clients, the "woman in white".

We were perfectly matched to create our very own dysfunctional family. So, with the emotional naivete of the children we were, we took some of our respective parent's addictions into the marriage with us, and created some more addictions of our own. I was almost 22years old, and he was almost 27years old.

In her book "Marriage on the Rocks" Janet Geringer Woititz, Ed.D. writes:

" Grandiosity

I Once heard an alcoholic defined as an ego maniac with an inferiority complex. As the alcoholic drinks, this insecure person becomes more and more flamboyant. He goes from Harry to Mr. Harry to Sir Harry to the ruler of the universe. His grandiosity is limitless. He is the king. And don't you forget it. He is also living in a fantasy world....I'm not so sure that the alcoholic knows he is playing a game. The chemical changes the character, and lo and behold--as one alcoholic described himself--KING BABY!...

You cannot live with active alcoholism without being profoundly affected. Any human being who is bombarded with what you've been bombarded with is to be commended for sheer survival. You deserve a medal for the mere fact that you're around to tell the story. I know it has not been easy. You don't know from day to day--even hour to hour--what to expect. You imagine all kinds of terrible things and, as often as not, you are right. You

become obsessed with what will happen when he gets home (if he gets home). Your day is spent in emotional turmoil. Your head keeps spinning. You can't sleep. You don't eat properly. You look terrible. You withdraw from your friends. You snap at your children. You're sick. You have developed a disease which we call near-alcoholism, which is every bit as damaging as alcoholism itself. Like alcoholism it has its own symptoms...The following are the symptoms of near-alcoholism: denial, protectiveness, pity-concern about the drinker: embarrassment, avoiding drinking occasions; shift in relationship; guilt; obsession; continual worry; fear; lying; false hope; disappointment; euphoria; confusion; sex problems; anger; lethargy; hopelessness, self pity, remorse and despair... denial is your biggest enemy. It seems impossible to believe that you are involved with an alcoholic. It simply cannot be true. If it cannot be true, it isn't true. You believe what you want to believe....What about the children? They are the most vulnerable of all. They are victims and they are powerless. They are dependent and defenseless. They know no other way of life. You are the most important people in their world. You are the ones they turn to to know that they are loved, that they are worthy, and that no harm will come to them...You feel their pain but don't know how to take it away."

As mentioned above, there was a shift in our relationship. I would call it an immediate violent shift, from the moment we started living together. We were married and travelling to the Gold Coast. By the dawn of the fourth day of our honeymoon, my love was trembling something awful, and in serious and painful withdrawal from alcohol. He had decided on only one beer since our wedding day.

I was three months pregnant with our son, and as we drove two or three miles away from the motel in Raymond Terrace NSW, he swerved to avoid a guide post and rolled us in the borrowed pale Blue Holden Utility. We landed upside down in the middle of the road. My new husband said I should hurry and climb out of the ute through the now broken, little rear window. I did this while he switched the engine off and then he quickly followed me through the little rear window. Our belongings were scattered far and wide.

When I started to come out of shock I realised I was in awful back pain and couldn't stand up. During the violent role of the ute, my portable radio had been flung off the hat rest behind us and hit me in the lower back. I sat down on one of our suitcases, I could hardly walk to it. My husband told me to tell the police that I had been driving when we rolled, because he "didn't have a driver's licence." I didn't have to lie to the police, because two people had been travelling behind us in their car and gave their statements to the police before we did. They also told the police they had been expecting trouble because my husband had been steering the car rather irrationally long before we rolled. We completed our journey to Surfer's Paradise by public transport.

I could hardly walk for two weeks. I spent most of our long honeymoon in pain on a bed. My husband spent most afternoons propping up a local pub's bar.

Six months after our marriage we were parents. I gave birth to our son. When he was six weeks old, my husband gave him a right hook (closed fist) to his right temple, because

our son's crying prevented him from having sex with me in the shower. We got dressed and took our son to the late night chemist. It was plain from the shape of the black and blue bruise, it was done with my husband's closed fist, and he was still drunk and looking like a moron so the male chemist wasn't going to state the obvious. He told us that if our son starts to bleed from the ear, take him to hospital. This was 1961, we were new arrivals in Darwin and isolated from friends and family. We went home with our battered and bruised baby.

Women's and children's rights hadn't come to our part of the world. Though in 1871, the R.S.P.C.A, for protection of animals had. This of course (and like his violent alcoholic father before him) is why my husband felt entitled to vent his angst on us, so he did!! He would do things to us that he wouldn't do if someone was watching. So, on that first occasion, when I didn't go to the police, or leave him, little did I know, I had trained him that he could do it again!!! Such simple logic, but I didn't grab the concept. I had long since been programmed into silence and learned helplessness - accept the unacceptable - and it was all always my fault anyway. I had no money and I was stuck with KING BABY, just like the book says. He was always jealous of our children, it was "Look at Me, Me, Me, Me" for the whole of the long 30+ years I knew him. Sadly, having him suddenly throw 2year old violent temper tandrums anywhere any time, became "normal" to everyone.

In my Oxford Dictionary, hugger-mugger is discribed as secrecy; confusion; conceal; hush; proceed in secret or muddled fashion - that suit fits all alcoholics.

When I finally left him, I went into serious withdrawal. For many weeks my body shook violently from withdrawal symptoms of my obsession with him. Enabling the disease of alcoholism. I started crying again, so as I thought I wouldn't ever stop. I left him so reluctantly, even when I knew it was to save my life. What life? MY disease, of dysfunctional emotional attachment, still wanted me to stay and fix him up or let him strangle me. His hands had been trembling with rage as he closed in on my neck, though this scene was not unfamiliar, it was the first time I heard what I was saying, "You might as well, "it" (meaning me) doesn't matter any more."

Our property settlement was an extention of the marriage. His will be done. With the grandiosity of King Baby, shamelessly and with breathtaking speed, my husband repeatedly violated all the rules of decency, truth and justice. He applied his well honed huggamugga tools of lies, smiles, confusion, charm, deceit, poor me & more poor me, devious, fear, withholding and intimidation. He played everyone off against everyone else with cold indifference. To each he could look deep into our eyes and give a different account of every event. With bloody-minded greed, and yet without a conscience, he used and abused all on his way. He walked away with more than three quarters of our assets. He - like his father before him - used money and violence to hold his hapless family hostage to the disease of Alcoholism.

In her book "The Language Of Letting Go" Melody Beattie writes;

“Often when we begin taking care of ourselves, family members will reverberate with overt and covert attempts to pull us back into the old system and roles. We do not have to go. Their attempts to pull us back are their issues, taking care of ourselves and becoming healthy and happy does not mean we do not love them. It means we're addressing our issues. We do not have to judge them because they have issues; nor do we have to allow them to do anything they would like to us just because they are family. We are free now, free to take care of ourselves with family members. Our freedom starts when we stop denying their issues, and politely, but assertively, hand their stuff back to them - where it belongs - and deal with our own issues....

There's a good trick that people in dysfunctional relationships use,” said one recovering woman. “The other person does something inappropriate or wrong, then stands there until you feel guilty and end up apologizing.”We don't have to let others count on the fact that we'll always feel guilty...we don't have to allow ourselves to be controlled by guilt - earned or unearned! We can break through the barrier of guilt that holds us back from self-care. Push. Push harder. We are not at fault, crazy, or wrong. We have a right to set boundaries and to insist on appropriate treatment.”

My Husband came from an equally dysfunctional family, the obvious dysfunctions being male generational addiction to alcohol, rage and violence. His sister Ruth would testify to that. At age 16years, she had to travel to Sydney to see a Psychiatrist. She was so disturbed by her Father's drunken violence. The Psychiatrist told her to never marry. She didn't. Their eldest brother and their father died in separate, tragic circumstances. My husband had been placed in an Institution for Boy's after being charged with truancy. His mother, my Mother-in-law having been instrumental in his truancy coming to light, caused him to hate his mother for the rest of her life.

I had quite a lot to do with Kitty. I learned that, sadly, she was emotionally unavailable to herself or anyone else. She had barely survived her own childhood traumas, including seeing her sister burn to death. I was the only one who ever understood that part of her. In her last years I chose to avoid her. What is not felt, dealt and healed is inherited by the next generation.

My husband's father, Frederick, had been in the Army, fighting in Belgium during WW1, this young man had seen his own brother die there, when he returned to Australia without his brother, he soon become an alcoholic. He married, he and Kitty had nine children together. He was physically violent to his wife and children. Both my husband's parents experienced stolen childhood's - in turn - they emotionally neglected their own children. Their second youngest son became my husband.

My now, exHusband doesn't like it that I know he knows he is an alcoholic. He feels extremely threatened that I know all the many and varied true depths of evil to which his disease took him, myself and our children. It still takes him there. He knows he lost much time alive because he suffered alcoholic blackouts, sometimes lasting for weeks at a time. He knows he pissed many years of hard earned wages up against a tree. More than once, he has gone to sleep at the steering wheel of a vehicle; Too many times, he has hung out so bad for alcohol, that if one hair had moved on my body, or on the body

of either of our children, he would have felt justified to vent & cheerfully murder us. I know because he tried to. It is a well respected truth, learned the hard way by recovering members of Alcoholics Anonymous that the goal of Alcoholism is insanity or death.

My deepest regret in life, is that I wasn't able to be emotionally available to my children. My most precious creations. I failed them. I have made deep and sincere amends to each of them, as much as each of them could deal with. They know I can hear and understand them now, and that I remain willing and able to talk with each, and reason things out. Above all, they know that I love them. Unconditionally. All three of us missed out on priceless love and relationship.

In her book "Struggle for Intimacy" Janet G. Woititz wrote;
"Our mothers have let us all down because they have all lived with impossible and crippling expectations about their role"

Today, and after all his secrets and lies, all the years of abuse and neglect he visited upon us, he would rather die slowly, in a pot of boiling oil, than get honest and to say sorry to me, or our children, for all his physical, verbal, emotional, social, spiritual, psychological and financial violence towards us. His worst nightmare is that he will be found out, found to be a human being, with a deadly disease. He has a new enabler - our son.

Accountability and integrity have never been up on my ex husband's radar screen. He tells still more lies and thinks it funny that his son doesn't know his secrets. He talks, walks, smiles and eats with our son, knowing that I know he is treating our son with contempt. The father of our children is still proudly King Baby. He has always been an angry and scared little boy. I am the only person who has ever asked him to step up to the mark, and grow up.

I believe he will never give himself permission to claim maturity, to feel humble enough, willing enough, to trust himself enough to let go of his false pride to survive an "I'm sorry." Instead, he would have everyone - except me - continue to massage his sycophant ego. Why? He is afraid of a fate worse than death. He is afraid people will laugh at him.

I have always loved each member of my family of origin. I always will. I love them enough to have long since let them go in order that they be who they need to be. None of them want to even talk about Dalmar. Neither will any one of them look at the generations of family abuse and neglect. The inherited unresolved issues and trauma. Our Father who was 82 years of age when he died in 1990. He died 36 hours after reading my little letter of forgiveness of him. And my wishes of peace for him for the rest of his days. I told him I love him. I had struggled for decades to come to true forgiveness of what he did. I believe he struggled through decades of numerous heart attacks because he couldn't die in peace. When he read my letter he could let go at last.

At the same time, my letter to him had freed me of judging him. Though now there was a brand new problem. Mum wouldn't let me go to Dad's funeral. She was frightened

ridgid of an outbreak of love for Dad and/or me or from family and/or me. There might even have been an outbreak of truth. Ever the Mistress of Control - with my youngest sister's help - she held up Dad's funeral until my brother and his wife could fly out of Darwin. They joined my two sisters and my Mother for a very, very, private funeral service and cremation. Not one of Dad's relatives or friends knew he had died. Not one of Mum's many sisters or their families and friends knew, for at least three weeks. Too bad for everybody else that we all had children, cousins, aunts, uncles, neices, nephews, second cousins and grandchildren we hadn't met indeed; I didn't know were alive/married/dead/born.

Two years later, and I was not able to let go of Dad. So I decided to hold my own funeral and cremation of Dad. I gathered information and willingness from the same funeral directors and the Crematorium. It was a first re-enactment for all of them, including the minister of religion. In fact, for all of them, it was a first re-enactment heard of! I paid and made firm bookings. To simulate the only flowers at Dad's first funeral - one dozen red roses with babys' tears fern, I had a florist prepare one red rose with babys' tears fern. The night before his funeral, I took real time to write an obituary for my Father, which was a roast and a toast to his life. I packed my camera and a few photos of Dad.

Next day, along with Dianne, a good friend of mine, we travelled interstate by train, then caught a taxi directly to the Pine Grove Crematorium Chapel. It is near Penrith where my parents had lived. We arrived in the nick of time. Everyone was waiting for us. I was asked if I would like a "coffin" with some of Dad's scattered ashes inside it. Yes please thank you :-). A genuine ashes box the size of a brick was slowly, respectfully placed on a little velvet covered table. I placed the flowers and photos of Our Father who art around his little coffin. When the recorded music began, we sat down and the service began.

I got to gave Dad's obituary and soon the service was over. I cried so as my face was swollen, I took every hug and kind word offered me. My friend helped get me outside and I took photos of, and left my flowers at my Dad's remembrance plaque. I cannot speak more highly of everyone's love and acceptance, those who each in a very practical way helped me properly grieve the loss of my Dad, through his second funeral.

My Mother died in 2001. I went to her funeral and went numb at first contact with the expensive props, collective cold false grief, my brother-in-law Bill's old game of mugging and maulling me, and the emotionless ritual of it all. Except for myself and one other. My late Aunt Joan's first born son, Cousin David, who gave Mum's obituary. He was very moved by the experience. Six weeks later, my dearly beloved Aunt Margaret died. From Cousin Max, I was pleased to receive a personal request to attend his Mother's funeral. I think it was very moving for all in attendance. Afterwards, and when he kindly drove me back to the railway station, I revealed to him that I was letting go of the family, because I had no wish to be in contact with my siblings. My siblings know that if they want to talk to me they have to be honest. They have to stop being children and grow up.

They won't take as much as a peek at the big picture, and risk seeing what I see - a dysfunctional family system - where many enablers have given up their truth and reality - their discarded personal power gathered strength and further empowers the new Mistress of Control, my youngest sister Margaret. She ruthlessly dictates the very same agenda as that of my late Mother. The rules for belonging are all too familiar and clear. Don't talk, don't trust, don't feel. Don't anyone - ever dare - put up their little hand and complain about being the victim of their parent's abuse and neglect.

There is always a pay-off for being the enabler - otherwise what is the point of not developing one's moral integrity. To begin with, one automatically belongs, then there is the matter of financial and/or material pay-off as well. When Dad died, Mum had full financial control for the first time in her life. It bought Mum absolute power and influence over the whole extended family. In particular, she had each of my sibling's full and close attention. We all know power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. As you already know - straight away - I had nasty lessons from Mum and my siblings warning me to never even think of trying to get between my siblings and my fair share of my parents' rather large inheritance. By her own poor example, my Mother taught the children of all her sisters, and all the children of my three siblings, that they have to suck-up-big to their respective parents - for life - or be written out of their own parents' Wills. There is an elephant in the lounge-room of my family, but each member walks around it saying "What elephant?"

In Conclusion, and in the light of my own experience of climbing out of the dark slippery slop of an addiction that nearly took my life, and staying out, one day at a time, I've learned a little about the human condition. I know I've come a long way in self knowledge, self acceptance and self esteem. Consequently, I have more understanding of others. That is a very good thing! There is much more I wish to learn.

Already, I've expanded my mud-map of understanding the disease of addiction to have insight into the fact that like my large extended family; many, many families, institutions, clubs, organisations, work places in general are dysfunctional. I've become aware of some of them. One addicted person - who clearly - hasn't yet developed a conscience; therefore has no integrity or empathy - can quickly turn any family and democratic social structure into a dictatorship. But, there's always hope. The good news is, the disease of addiction cannot survive without at least one enabler. More often than not, there are many such enablers who give up their personal power in order to belong. This knowledge is power. Please teach it!

I have a very deep and abiding spirituality. I have a power greater than myself. I am in humble awe of the great mystery, wonder and beauty of the life force.

Then too, there is religion. By now, we all know that thousands of years ago, women were worshipped as Goddesses, because they are fertile, and give birth to living babies. Put simply, many power hungry men got jealous. They wanted all the power, they wanted all the control. They wanted to be worshipped and obeyed. Even feared. They

wanted to be Gods. So man created God in his own image. The only thing that such men won't own is their bad behavior, so they blame their created God, women and children.

***Look at Peter Hollingworth, he still dosen't get it! He is still so into denial and Grandiosity!**

*Patriarchy's greatest psychological weapon is simply its universality and longevity.

*If equality exists in a relationship, then the notion of violence can never be entertained.

*Teach the dynamics of dysfunctional verses nurturing families at school.

*In pre-school raise the emotional intellegance of pupils, by regulary bringing both mother and baby into class. Through them, help the pupils to **actually identify and name feelings.**

Thank you for the opportunity to break my silence.

Thank you for listening to my brave Heart