

22 June 2012

This is my submission to the family and community development committee.

This all happened 75 years ago, and if too much time has passed that is my loss. I am hoping that by bringing this out into the open I might have some sort of catharsis, maybe a little peace from what was done to me before I die. Here goes.

I was sent to a catholic school in 1935, [REDACTED] I turned 5 just after the school year began. Unless my memory is completely faulty, and I am sure it is not, the nuns who taught us belonged to the Order of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart and I am sure that fact will upset some people. Those nuns terrorised and abused us.

One of them used to whip us before lessons started for the day to get one in for the sins we were going to commit during the day.

I have had painfully damaged hands all my life because one of the nuns had a big heavy wooden ruler, she would order a child to "put your hands on the desk" palms down, she would then turn the ruler on edge and repeatedly hit the backs of the hands.

One nun really terrified us. I have seen little boys wet themselves in fright when she went towards them. One of her pet punishments was "open your mouth and put your tongue out," she would put one hand under your chin, the other on the top of your head, then snap your teeth together on your tongue.

We were told to lie to our parents should they discover any marks on us because if we told them anything the punishment would be terrible. They taught us through fear yet some of the things they taught us were ridiculous.

I was a particular target because I learnt ballet , I was stood in front of the whole school humiliated , derided called a harlot and other names none of which I understood, made to perform in the school concert, then punished for it.

It all came to a head when school was breaking up for the school holidays at the end of third grade.

We were told to bring a bucket, scrubbing brush and a cake of sandsoap to school the next day to scrub out the school My mother refused and I was sent to school without them, I was punished and sent home for them , sent back again without them , punished and sent home again for them . It was a long walk; I was exhausted and couldn't help crying. My mother discovered the weals on my back and I was removed from the school that day. But I don't think anything was done as at that time the church absolutely ruled their parishioners.

It wasn't long before the priest, [REDACTED] [I think I have remembered his name correctly] started coming around to our house. He convinced my parents that I should be confirmed and as I was no longer a pupil at the school I should go to the priest, at his house, for private tuition to get ready to be confirmed. So every Saturday afternoon I was sent to him, there was never anyone else around and he had unlimited opportunity to do what he did to me. I was too afraid to say anything and have lived with the horror all my life. It has adversely affected me and my family and to this day most men repel me.

I can still see that priest in my waking nightmares, me sitting on his knee, with his hand up my dress, his steel grey hair and all the dandruff on his shoulders and back, it still makes me sick to my stomach.

It is too late to make any of those people pay for what they did but maybe there is a special place in hell for them, I hope so.

I have written down some of my most vivid memories from that time, there are more but hopefully this is enough.

I don't know if anything happens now but I can answer questions if necessary.

Everything I have said here is the truth.

Yours Truly,

[REDACTED]

Valda M Lang

[REDACTED]

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