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SUBMISSION

MY STORY AS I REMEMBER.

I WAS ASKED THE OTHER DAY, WHAT WAS THE HAPPIEST TIME IN MY CHILDHOOD, AS I WAS ASKED THAT PARTICULAR QUESTION, IT MADE ME REALLY THINK HARD.

I WILL TRY AND TELL YOU ALL I CAN TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

I WAS BORN IN THE YEAR OF 1948, IN MILDURA, VICTORIA, THIS IS A PLACE THAT I REMEMBER AS SO PEACEFUL, AND THE SMELL OF ORANGES WAS ALWAYS HEAVY IN THE AIR, IN FACT THE SMELL WAS QUITE INTOXICATING, EVEN TO THIS DAY I SO ADORE THE SMELL, IT IS FUNNY HOW CERTAIN SMELLS TEND TO RECALL CERTAIN MEMORIES IN OUR MINDS.

I DON'T REMEMBER THAT MUCH ABOUT THAT TIME IN MY LIFE, BUT I DO REMEMBER MY GRANDPARENTS, MY GRANDMOTHER WAS A WONDERFUL PERSON, I REMEMBER THE HUGS AND THE KISSES I RECEIVED FROM HER, SHE HAD THE MOST BEAUTIFUL HAIR, I USED TO LOVE TO JUST SIT THERE AND WATCH HER BRUSH IT, IT WAS SO LONG, AND WAS THE COLOUR OF SILVER, SHE ALWAYS SMELT OF ROSES, I REMEMBER TELLING HER ONE DAY WHEN SHE WAS BRUSHING HER HAIR THAT I THOUGHT THAT SHE LOOKED LIKE AN WITCH, OF COURSE AT A SMALL AGE I NEVER REALIZED WHAT I WAS SAYING, TO ME ALL WITCHES WERE SO BEAUTIFUL AND THEIR HAIR SHONE LIKE GOLD OR SILVER, WHEN SHE LAUGHED AND SAID THANK YOU TO ME SHE ASKED ME IF SHE SHOULD HAVE A WORT ON HER NOSE TOO, THAT MADE ME LAUGH, I TOLD HER NOT TO BE A SILLY NAN, OH MY GOD I LOVED HER SO MUCH. AS FOR MY GRANDPA, HE WAS THE WORLD TO ME, HE USED TO PLAY THE PIANO EVERY DAY AND WE WOULD ALL SING THE SONGS THAT HE PLAYED, HE WAS A BIG MAN AS IN BUILD, AND HE ALSO HAD A BIG HEART. THE HOUSE THAT THEY LIVED IN BECAME OUR HOME FOR A SHORT WHILE, BUT AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE MYSELF AND MY BROTHERS DIDN'T KNOW ANY DIFFERENCE, WE NEVER ASKED WHY WERE WE BEING MOVED AROUND FROM PLACE TO PLACE, IT WAS LIKE A HOLIDAY TO US ALL. MY BROTHERS WERE, [REDACTED], HE WAS BORN ON THE [REDACTED] IN THE YEAR OF 1944, HE WAS BAPTIZED AT ST. JOHNS IN EAST MELBOURNE. THEN THERE WAS [REDACTED], HE WAS BORN IN ST. ARNAUD IN THE YEAR 1946, HE WAS BAPTIZED IN ST. ARNAUD. I WAS THE NEXT TO BE BORN IN 1948, I WAS BAPTIZED IN ST. ARNAUD ALSO. THEN THERE WAS MY BROTHER [REDACTED] HE WAS BORN IN MILDURA IN FEBRUARY, 1950, HE WAS BAPTIZED IN ST. ARNAUD, THEN THERE WAS MY BABY BROTHER, [REDACTED] HE WAS BORN IN 1952, HE WAS BAPTIZED IN MILDURA.

WE ALL LIVED SO HAPPILY IN GRAN AND GRANDPAS PLACE, IT WAS ONE OF THOSE HOUSES WITH A WIRE FENCE AT THE FRONT, THERE WAS GRAPE VINES RUNNING ALL OVER THE VERANDA, WE COULD JUST PICK THEM OFF ANY TIME WE WANTED TOO, I STILL TO THIS DAY LOVE GRAPES.

I LOVED THE SMELL OF THAT HOUSE, IT ALWAYS SMELT OF COOKING, EITHER COOKIES OR CAKES, OR A BIG ROAST, OF COURSE IN THOSE DAYS, THERE WERE NO ELECTRIC REFRIGERATORS, THE ICE MAN USED TO COME AND CARRY IN BIG BLOCKS OF ICE THAT WOULD FIT INTO THE ICE BOX, THAT WAS THE WAY IN WHICH FOOD WAS KEPT COLD. SO MANY THINGS THAT I COULD REMEMBER IN THOSE DAYS, YOU WOULD NOT THINK OF TODAY, EVEN TO DO THE WASHING, GRAN HAD TO PUT

WATER INTO A BIG COPPER, SHE THEN HAD TO MAKE SURE THAT THERE WAS SOME HOT WATER TO POUR INTO THE COPPER, SHE HAD A BIG PIECE OF BOARD WITH SOME SORT OF GLASS THAT WAS RIPPLED, YOU COULD RUB THE CLOTHES UP AND DOWN ON THIS THEN RUB IN A BAR OF SOAP THAT YOU COULD CUT AS BIG OR AS SMALL AS YOU NEEDED, THIS WAS THEN RUBBED ONTO THE CLOTHES TO MAKE THEM CLEAN, IT WAS VERY HARD FOR WOMEN IN THOSE DAYS, THE CLOTHES WERE THEN RINSED IN ANOTHER BOWL OF CLEAN WATER, THEN PUSHED THROUGH A RINGER THAT HAD A HANDLE TO TURN THE CLOTHES SO THAT THEY WOULD BE SQUEEZED THROUGH TO GET ALL THE WATER OUT , GRAN ALSO USED WHAT WAS CALLED A BLUEBAG, THAT WAS TO MAKE EVERYTHING WHITE, IT WAS ALSO USED ON BEE STINGS AND THINGS LIKE THAT, IT WAS JUST A SMALL BAG WITH SOME BLUE STUFF IN IT.

I REMEMBER THE WEATHER IN MILDURA WAS VERY HOT, MY GRANDPARENTS HAD A OLD DOG CALLED SOCKS, BECAUSE HE HAD WHITE SOCKS ON HIS FEET, AND WHEN IT WAS SO HOT, GRAN WOULD GET SOME OF THE WATER THAT HAD MELTED FROM THE ICE BOX AND SPONGED SOCKS WITH IT, SHE WOULD ALSO SPONGE US WITH SOME OF THE WATER AS WELL, IT WAS VERY SOOTHING AS I REMEMBER.

I USED TO LOVE MY GRAN TO BRUSH MY HAIR OF A NIGHT TIME, SHE WOULD SIT AND SING SOME SONGS TO ME, SHE HAD A BEAUTIFUL SINGING VOICE, SHE USED TO SING ABOUT A ONE EYED PURPLE PEOPLE EATER, AND THEN SHE WOULD PRETEND TO GOBBLE ME UP, I LOVED MY TIME WITH HER SO MUCH.

I REMEMBER THAT GRANDPA HAD SOME BIRD AVAIRYS OUT IN THE BACKYARD, HE LOVED THEM SO MUCH, THEY WERE HIS WORLD WE USED TO HELP HIM CLEAN THEM AND GIVE THEM FRESH FOOD AND SEED, THEY WERE HIS SPECIAL PRIDE AND JOY.

HE USED TO BREED THEM, ONE DAY I REMEMBER ONE OF GRANS FRIENDS CAME TO VISIT, SHE BOUGHT WITH HER SOME PEACOCK FEATHERS, SHE PUT THEM ON THE WALL AND WAS SO PROUD OF THEM, BUT LATER SHE WAS TOLD THAT THEY WOULD BRING BAD LUCK, OF COURSE GRAN DIDN'T TAKE MUCH NOTICE UNTIL THE NEXT DAY WHEN GRANDPA WENT OUT TO TEND HIS BIRDS AND THE WHOLE LOT WERE DEAD, HE WAS SO UPSET, I HAVE NEVER SEEN A MAN CRY UNTIL I SAW HIM SO DEVERSTATED. IT BROKE MY HEART TO SEE MY POP CRY .

THE NEXT DAY OLD SOCKS COLLAPSED AND DIED AT GRANS FEET, THAT WAS WHEN SHE SAID IT MUST BE THE PEACOCK FEATHERS, SHE PULLED THEM DOWN OFF THE WALL AND THREW THEM IN THE FIRE, SHE NEVER WANTED TO SEE ANOTHER FEATHER LIKE THAT AGAIN, IT REMAINED IN MY MIND SO HEAVILY, THAT TO THIS DAY I WILL NOT TOUCH A PEACOCK FEATHER, I ACTUALLY GET A REALLY FUNNY FEELING WHEN I SEE THEM LIKE I NEED TO RUN AWAY QUICKLY.

IT WAS NOT LONG AFTER THAT HAPPENED THAT WE WERE ALL MOVED AWAY TO LIVE WITH OUR UNCLE AND OUR AUNT, NOT FAR FROM MILDURA, AND THERE WERE LOTS OF ORANGE ORCHARDS AROUND.

MY AUNT [REDACTED] WAS MY DADS SISTER, AND HER HUSBAND WAS UNCLE [REDACTED], WE HAD A LOT OF FUN WITH THEM, BUT IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME THAT I DIDN'T HAVE MY PARENTS WITH US, I NEVER KNEW MY MOTHER AT ALL, MAYBE I DID, BUT I NEVER HAD A PICTURE IN MY MIND OF HER AT ALL.

THEN ONE DAY OUR WHOLE WORLD CHANGED, IT WAS THE YEAR 1953. ON FEBRUARY 22ND, MY BROTHERS WERE TOLD THAT THEY WERE GOING ON A LONG HOLIDAY, THEY HAD TO PACK WHAT THEY HAD, WHICH WASN'T THAT MUCH ANY WAY, I SAID GOODBYE TO THEM, AND THAT WAS THE LAST I WAS TO SEE OF THEM FOR SUCH A LONG TIME, I REMEMBER CRYING WHEN THEY LEFT, AS WE HAD ALWAYS BEEN TOGETHER UP UNTIL THEN.

THEN ON THE 25TH OF FEBRUARY, THE SAME YEAR, ONLY 3 DAYS LATER I WAS TAKEN AWAY, MY DAD TOOK ME FOR A TRAIN RIDE, UP TO A PLACE CALLED BALLARAT, I REMEMBER THAT WHEN WE GOT OFF THE TRAIN, HE BOUGHT ME SOME LUNCH AT THE STATION, IT WAS MASHED POTATOES WITH MINCE MEAT PIE, I LOVED IT AS PIES ARE MY FAVOURITE FOOD, AFTER WE HAD FINISHED, HE TOLD ME THAT I WAS GOING ON A HOLIDAY LIKE THE BOYS HAD, I ASKED HIM WAS I GOING TO SEE MY BROTHERS, HE TOLD ME NO THAT I WOULD BE WITH A LOT OF OTHER GIRLS, I STARTED TO CRY AND TOLD DAD THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO GO AND HE TOLD ME THAT I HAD TO GO.

WE SOON ARRIVED AT A BIG PLACE THAT LOOKED LIKE A BIG CASTLE, IT HAD GREAT BIG GATES THAT WE HAD TO GO THROUGH, ALSO IT HAD WIRE FENCES AROUND EVERYWHERE, AND THERE WERE A WHOLE LOT OF KIDS PLAYING OUTSIDE FURTHER DOWN, DAD SAID LOOK YOU WILL HAVE SO MANY KIDS TO PLAY WITH, HOW LUCKY YOU ARE, AND I WILL COME AND SEE YOU TOO.

HE RANG THE BELL OF A BIG WOODEN DOOR, IT WAS OPENED BY A WOMAN WHO LOOKED LIKE A PENGUIN SHE WAS DRESSED ALL IN BLACK AND WHITE AND SHE HAD A BIG BELT AROUND HER WAIST, A CROSS HUNG FROM THE BELT TOO, I WAS TO GET TO KNOW THAT BELT REALLY WELL IN THE FUTURE, BUT FOR NOW IT WAS SOMETHING TO JUST STARE AT.

I HEARD DAD TALKING TO HER BUT DIDN'T REALLY LISTEN TO WHAT HE WAS SAYING, I WAS FILLED WITH THIS FEELING OF DREAD, AS IF SOMETHING BAD WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME, I ASKED DAD COULD I GO HOME AND HE SAID NO YOU ARE GOING TO LIVE HERE NOW, I JUST FELT MY HEART BREAK, WHAT DOES DAD MEAN, I SHOULD BE LIVING WITH HIM, THAT WAS THE THOUGHT IN MY MIND, IT WAS TO TAKE ME A LONG TIME TO COME TO TERMS WITH THIS IF I EVER DID.

I WASN'T ALLOWED TO SAY GOODBYE TO THE MAN I ADORED, AS WE ALL DO WITH OUR FATHERS, THAT REALLY HURT ME.

A NUN CAME TO TAKE ME AWAY BEFORE I COULD SEE DAD LEAVE, I WAS TAKEN TO BE WITH ANOTHER GROUP OF GIRLS, I HAVE NEVER SEEN SO MANY GIRLS TOGETHER, THERE WERE GROUPS OF CHILDREN, YOU WERE TOLD WHERE TO STAND AND WITH WHO, AND THAT WAS TO BE YOUR GROUP UNTIL YOU WERE TOLD OTHERWISE, HOW WAS I GOING TO REMEMBER WHERE I WAS TO BE AND TO WHOM I WAS TO STAY WITH.

I WAS THEN TAKEN BY ONE OF THE OLDER GIRLS TO HAVE A LOOK AROUND WHAT WE ALL CALLED THE HOME, I WAS SHOWN PLACES WHERE WE COULD GO AND WHERE WE COULD NOT GO, THE FUNNY THING AT THAT STAGE WAS, THAT WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED THE PLACE LOOKED LIKE A HUGE CASTLE, I WILL PROBABLY MENTION

THIS A LOT AS I GO ALONG IN MY STORY, SO I'M SORRY IF I FORGET, BUT IT IS IMBEDDED IN MY MIND SO STRONG THAT IT IS AN IMAGE THAT I FIND HARD TO FORGET, AS I WENT AROUND LOOKING AT MY NEW HOME AS SUCH, THERE WAS AN

OVERWHELMING FEELING OF SADNESS AND DREAD, EVERYWHERE I WENT, EVEN AS SMALL AS I WAS I COULD FEEL IT ALL.

I THEN HEARD A BELL RINGING, I WAS TOLD THAT THIS WOULD RING EVERY TIME WE HAD TO GO TO MEALS, SO I WAS TO COME RUNNING WHEN I HEARD THE BELL, BECAUSE IF I DIDN'T I WOULD GET THE STRAP, I THEN SAID TO THE GIRL WITH ME, THEY CAN'T HIT ME, I WILL TELL MY DAD, SHE LAUGHED AND TOLD ME I WILL NOT EVEN SEE MY DAD, SO GET USED TO IT.

SHE TOOK ME INTO A HUGE ROOM FILLED WITH TABLES AND CHAIRS, I WAS TO GET USED TO THIS PLACE FOR A LONG TIME, WE WERE GIVEN BREAD THAT HAD BEEN DRIPPED IN DRIPPING, AND I WAS TOLD TO EAT IT, I NEARLY THREW UP AT THE FIRST BITE AS I HAD NEVER HAD ANY SUCH THING BEFORE, THE GIRLS TOLD ME TO EAT IT OR I WOULD GET INTO BIG TROUBLE, BUT I JUST COULDN' EVEN TOUCH IT, THE GIRLS TOOK IT AND THEY ALL HAD SOME OF IT, WE WERE GIVEN A SMALL GLASS BOTTLE OF MILK, THAT I FOUND OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT SUPPLIED IT TO ALL CHILDREN AT SCHOOLS AND ORPHANGES IN THOSE DAY'S, THE MILK WAS HOT, AS IT HAD BEEN SITTING OUT IN THE SUN, BUT WE HAD TO DRINK IT, THE GIRLS TOLD ME TO DRINK IT AS THAT IS ALL WE WILL GET UNTIL DINNERTIME WHICH IS TEATIME TO US NOW, OR MAYBE YOU CALL IT SUPPERTIME. I REALLY HAD TO FORCE IT DOWN I FELT LIKE I WANTED TO THROW IT UP, AS WHEN I HAD MILK BEFORE IT WAS ALWAYS NICE AND COLD, BUT WE WERE GIVEN THE MILK EVERY DAY, EITHER HOT OR COLD, I WAS TOLD TO BE GRATEFUL THAT I WAS EVEN GETTING THAT, AND THAT I HAVE NO RIGHT TO EVEN ASK FOR SOMETHING ELSE, AND WHO DID I THINK I WAS, WAS I SO SPECIAL THAT THEY WOULD GO AND GIVE ME SOMETHING SPECIAL, JUST BECAUSE I DIDN'T LIKE WHAT THE NUNS GAVE ME.

I STARTED TO REALLY CRY AND I WAS TOLD THAT IF I DIDN'T STOP I WOULD BE IN TROUBLE THIS WAS THE FIRST OF MANY, SHALL I CALL THEM DEBATES. THAT NIGHT WAS THE FIRST NIGHT THAT I SLEPT IN A DORMITORY, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THAT WAS, BUT I WAS SOON TO FIND OUT.

BECAUSE I HAD ONLY JUST TURNED 5 I HAD TO SLEEP IN A COT WITH ALL THE OTHER BABIES, WHEN I WAS PUT IN THERE I TRIED TO CLIMB OUT. BECAUSE I WASN'T A BABY, OR SO I TOLD THEM, THAT DESERVED A WHACK FROM ONE OF THE NUNS FOR ME NOT BEING GRATEFUL FOR WHAT THEY WERE DOING FOR ME.

I JUST WANTED MY DAD BACK SO I COULD LEAVE THIS PLACE.

THEY TOLD ME I WOULD BE STAYING WITH THEM FOR A VERY LONG TIME AND SO I SHOULD DO AS I WAS TOLD I WAS SO UPSET I STARTED CRYING, AND I WAS TOLD TO LIE DOWN AND GO TO SLEEP, I JUST LAY THERE AND SOBBED MYSELF TO SLEEP I HAVE NEVER FELT SO ALONE IN ALL MY LIFE, WHAT HAD I DONE TO MAKE ME A BAD GIRL TO SUFFER LIKE THIS, THIS WAS GOING TO BE A QUESTION I WAS TO ASK MYSELF SO MANY TIMES OVER THE FOLLOWING YEARS, EVEN TO THE PRESENT DAY.

I DIDN'T SEEM TO SLEEP FOR VERY LONG THAT NIGHT, YOU SEE I AM GOING BACK INTO MY SAFE WORLD THAT MY PSYCHOLOGIST HAS TAUGHT ME TO DO AND THIS IS HOW THINGS ARE OPENING THE DEEP CHASMS THAT ARE IN MY LIFE ALL THE WAY THROUGH LIKE SWISS CHEESE, SO MANY HOLES THAT I REGULARLY FALL THROUGH, SOME TIMES I AM SO AFRAID TO GO THERE BUT I NOW KNOW THAT I MUST IF I WANT TO WIN THIS BATTLE, I HAVE FOUGHT BATTLES BEFORE AND I AM A SURVIVOR, I AM A CANCER SURVIVER AND THAT TAUGHT ME THAT I MUST FIGHT MYSELF TO WIN, MIGHT SOUND STRANGE TO SOME OF YOU, BUT FOR THOSE OF YOU

WHO HAVE BEEN THROUGH THE FEAR AND BEATINGS, AND THE STORIES THAT ARE TOLD TO YOU DAY IN AND DAY OUT, LIKE YOU DON'T HAVE A MOTHER AND FATHER WHO DO NOT CARE FOR YOU ANYMORE, AND THAT I WAS A NAUGHTY GIRL, SO THAT IS WHY I AM IN HERE, SO THEREFORE I MUST GET USED TO IT SO AS TO MAKE IT BETTER FOR MYSELF, AT THE AGE I WAS, I DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE WHAT EVERYONE WAS TALKING ABOUT.

I WAS TO STAY IN THE BABIES WING UNTIL I WAS 6 AND THEN I WAS TO GO OVER TO THE BIG GER SCHOOL AND STAY WITH THE OTHER GIRLS, AND THERE I WAS TO STAY FOR NEAR ON 9 MORE YEARS.

WE WERE TOLD TO ANSWER TO ALL THE NUNS, YES SISTER OR NO SISTER WHEN WE WERE SPOKEN TO AND IF WE DIDN'T WE WOULD GET A SMACK, THE FIRST TIME THAT I WAS SMACKED REALLY OPENED MY EYES, AS I HAD NEVER BEEN HIT BEFORE, IT WAS ALWAYS LOTS OF HUGS AND KISSES, HERE IN THIS STRANGE WORLD NONE OF THIS WAS ALLOWED.

I ALSO REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I WAS CANED, THIS WAS A REGULAR OCCURRENCE, YOU GOT THE STRAP FOR SMILING WHEN YOU SHOULDN' HAVE, OR FOR HOLDING ONTO THE HAND OF ONE OF THE OTHER GIRLS, IF YOU DIDN'T ANSWER BACK TO THEM PROPERLY, THERE WERE OH SO MANY THINGS LIKE THIS DURING MY STAY THERE, A LITTLE BIT OPENS UP IN MY MIND EACH DAY AND NO MATTER HOW HARD IT GETS FOR ME I WILL NOT LET IT BEAT ME, THEY HAVE HAD TOO MANY YEARS OF MY LIFE ALREADY.

ANYWAY I MUST GET BACK TO THE HOME, AS IT WAS CALLED, I SUPPOSE TO SOME OF YOU I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL TO THE NUNS, AS I HAD SOMEWHERE TO LIVE, SOMEONE TO LOOK AFTER ME, AND I ALSO HAD SCHOOLING, ETC. I WILL SAY TO THOSE PEOPLE, YES I WAS LUCKY TO HAVE SCHOOLING, I ALSO LEARNT MUSIC, MARCHING, I WAS INVOLVED IN THE CHOIR, WE PLAYED BASKETBALL, NETBALL AND WE HAD TIME OUTSIDE TO PLAY, AND WE WERE FED EACH DAY, SO I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR ALL OF THAT, TO SOME EXTENT I AM AND IT HELPED ME TO LOOK FORWARD TO SOMETHINGS I ENJOYED IN THE TIME I WAS THERE.

I CAN SEE THE OUTLAY OF THAT HOME IN MY MIND, WE HAD OUR SCHOOLING DOWNSTAIRS, WE WENT FROM PREP TO GRADE 6, THEN WE WENT OUT TO DO GRADE 7 AND 8 AT ST. ALIPIES, IN BALLARAT EAST. WE THEN WENT TO THE SENIOR GRADES AT SCARED HEART COLLEGE, WHICH WAS ACROSS THE ROAD FROM ST. ALIPIES. I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO GO THERE, BUT THAT IS FURTHER ALONG IN MY STORY.

I WILL GO BACK AND TRY AND GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF WHAT A LOT OF US WENT THROUGH, THERE WERE A LOT OF GIRLS WHO DIDN'T SUFFER THE SAME TREATMENT AS SOME OF US DID, SO KEEP THAT IN MIND, THEY WILL EVEN GO AS FAR AS DENYING THAT ANYTHING LIKE THAT HAPPENED, THEY WERE THE FEW SPECIAL GIRLS WHO COULD LIVE THEIR LIVES WITHOUT ANY OF THE PROBLEMS THAT A LOT OF US HAD TO ENDURE EACH AND EVERY DAY.

THE FIRST FEW YEARS WENT BY WITHOUT MUCH THOUGHT, I DON'T SEEM TO REMEMBER A LOT ABOUT THAT STAGE OF MY TIME IN THERE, EXCEPT FOR THE KNOWLEDGE THAT MY PARENTS DIDN'T WANT ME ANYMORE, AND AS I WAS TOLD SO MANY TIMES THAT I NOW BELONGED TO THE NUNS, THEY USED TO SAY, YOU ARE MINE AND YOU WILL DO AS YOU ARE TOLD, YOUR FATHER DOESN'T PAY FOR YOU TO STAY HERE, THEREFORE WE CAN DO AS WE LIKE WITH YOU.

DON'T GET ME WRONG THERE WERE SOME NUNS THAT DID TRY AND HELP YOU, BUT THEY WERE SCARED THAT IF THEY GOT CAUGHT TRYING TO HELP YOU AT ANY STAGE, THEY WOULD BE IN A LOT OF TROUBLE.

WE USED TO HAVE TO GET UP EACH MORNING, AND WE HAD TO MAKE OUR BEDS, BUT BEFORE WE MADE THEM, THEY WERE INSPECTED TO SEE WHO HAD WET THE BEDS, A LOT OF GIRLS DID DUE TO THE TRAUMA OF THEM BEING IN THE HOME, THEY WERE MADE TO STAND WITH THEIR WET SHEETS OVER THEIR HEADS, IN FRONT OF EVERYONE, I FELT SO BAD FOR THOSE GIRLS, BUT WE COULDN'T HELP ANY OF THEM OR IT WOULD BE ME WHO WOULD COPE THE HIDING FOR TRYING TO HELP THEM, THE PROBLEM WAS WE WERE GIVING OUR SHEETS AND NO EXTRA ONES, SO WE COULDN'T HIDE THEM ANYWAY.

THE SAME THING HAPPENED WITH OUR UNDERWEAR, IT WAS EXAMINED EACH DAY TO SEE WHAT STATE THEY WERE IN, I SOON LEARNT TO WASH MINE AT NIGHT, WHEN NO ONE COULD SEE WHAT YOU WERE DOING, YOU HAD TO ASK EACH TIME YOU WANTED TO GO TO THE BATHROOM, SO THAT WAS WHEN I WOULD WASH THEM BY MORNING THEY WERE DRY ENOUGH TO PUT ON. WE ALL LEARNT SNEAKY WAYS TO HELP US AS YOU WILL LEARN AS WE GO ALONG, I CALL IT, JUMPING THE GUN. MEANING I GOT IN FIRST, OH BOY I JUST REMEMBERED HOW GOOD THAT FELT, LIKE I CHEATED THE SYSTEM, YOU SEE AS I AM CONTINUING WRITING THIS IT IS LIKE A THERAPY FOR ME AND I SEEM TO OPEN UP LITTLE BITS OF INFORMATION HERE AND THERE.

MOST OF THE GIRLS SEEMED TO ACCEPT THEIR LOT, BUT FOR ME I WAS SO LONELY, I MISSED MY NAN AND POP, MY DAD AND MY AUNT AND MY UNCLE

I USED TO CRY A LOT, ACTUALLY I SOBBED TILL I THOUGHT MY HEART WOULD BREAK, THAT'S HOW BAD I FELT, BUT I WAS SOON TOLD TO STOP CRYING OR ELSE I WOULD RECEIVE SOMETHING TO REALLY MAKE ME CRY, I SOON LEARNT AFTER SO MANY HITS WITH THE CANE TO STOP, I REMEMBER ONE GIRL TELLING ME NOT TO GIVE THE NUNS A CHANCE TO MAKE ME CRY, IT WAS SO HARD, I LEARNT TO HAVE MY THOUGHTS WHEN WE WERE IN BED AT NIGHT.

WE WERE ALWAYS TOLD TO KEEP OUR HANDS UNDER THE BLANKETS AND CROSSED, BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN YOU WOULD PUT THEM ON TOP AND WE WOULD BE TOLD THAT IF WE DIDN'T DO WHAT WE WERE TOLD THE DEVIL'S DOGS WOULD GET US, I WAS SO SCARED THAT THEY WOULD GET ME, AS WERE SO MANY OTHER GIRLS, TO THIS VERY DAY, I HATE IT IF SOMEONE PUTS A BLANKET OVER MY HEAD, I FEEL AS IF I AM GOING TO DIE

I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I WOKE UP , AND IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I HAD MY MONTHLY VISIT, WE NEVER KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO US, AS WE WERE NEVER TOLD ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT, ALL THINGS TO DO WITH SEX WERE TABOO TO US, WE WEREN'T ALLOWED TO EVEN LOOK AT MAGAZINES, AS A MATTER OF FACT WE NEVER KNEW WHAT MAGAZINES WERE.

AS YOU CAN SEE I HAVE WANDERED OFF THE TRACK AGAIN, WHAT I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU WAS WHEN I WOKE UP IN THE MORNING I HAD BLOOD FROM ONE END OF MY BED TO THE OTHER, WHEN I SAW IT I SCREAMED THE PLACE DOWN, BECAUSE I THOUGHT THE DEVIL'S DOGS HAD COME AND GOT ME IN THE NIGHT, I WAS SO FRIGHTENED I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DIE, AND I MEAN THAT LITERALLY, BECAUSE I YELLED OUT SO MUCH I WAS GIVEN A HIDING AND TOLD TO STOP, THE NUNS MADE EVERYONE LEAVE THE DORMITORY AND I WAS TOLD TO

STAY THERE, I COULDN'T STOP CRYING, I FELT SO BAD AND I KEPT ASKING WHAT DID I DO WRONG TO DESERVE THIS, THE NUNS TOOK ME INTO THE BATHROOM AND TOLD ME TO WASH MYSELF OFF UNTIL I WAS CLEAN, THEY GAVE ME A LARGE PIECE OF MATERIAL THAT I HAD TO ATTACH TO A THING THAT LOOKED LIKE A SLINGSHOT, I WAS SOON TO LEARN THAT WAS WHAT WOMEN USED WHEN IT WAS THAT TIME OF THE MONTH, I WAS TOLD THAT IT WOULD HAPPEN TO ME EVERY MONTH, I WAS TO COME AND SEE THEM AT THE SAME TIME EVERY MONTH, THEY WOULD GIVE US THINGS TO USE WHEN WE NEEDED THEM. THE THING THAT WE USED TO USE HAD PINS ON IT THAT WE HAD TO PIN THE THING TO IT IT WAS SO UNCOMFORTABLE THE PINS USED TO COME UNDONE AND STICK INTO OUR SKIN, I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT AGE I WAS WHEN THIS HAPPENED, WHICH IS A SHAME AS I COULDN'T TELL MY GIRLS AT WHAT AGE I STARTED, ALL I REMEMBER IS THE TRAUMA THAT I HAD, IT WAS TO LIVE WITH ME FOR A LONG TIME, ACTUALLY IT IS STILL VERY HARD NOT TO THINK OF IT.

THE OTHER THINGS THAT STAYED WITH ME IS THE SMACKS WE GOT, IT WAS AT LEAST EVERY DAY, BUT I LEARNT TO HOLD MY HEAD HIGH, AS I THINK IT USED TO UPSET SOME OF THE NUNS WHEN WE DIDN'T CRY, THE NEXT TIME THEY WOULD USE SOMETHING THAT WOULD REALLY HURT, WE NEVER GOT A CUDDLE OR A HUG FROM ANY OF THE NUNS

I REMEMBER NOT LONG AFTER I HAD BEEN AT THE HOME, I FOUND WHAT I CALL MY SAFE REFUGE, THERE USED TO BE AN OLD GROUP OF STABLES, THEY WERE SITUATED AT THE FAR END OF THE HOME, THE SMELL OF THE PLACE USED TO HAUNT ME A LOT, WHEN I WAS HAVING A BAD DAY I WOULD RUN THERE AND HIDE, ONE DAY I WAS IN TROUBLE FOR SOMETHING THAT I HAD DONE, I THINK IT WAS A FIGHT OVER SOMEONE SAYING THAT I WAS NO GOOD FOR ANYONE AND THAT REALLY UPSET ME, I RAN OFF AND HID IN MY SPECIAL PLACE, MIND YOU IT HAD SPIDER WEBS EVERYWHERE, BUT TO ME AT THAT STAGE IT DIDN'T REALLY MATTER TO ME, ANYWAY I WAS SO UPSET THAT DAY THAT I STAYED WHERE I WAS AND IN MY MISERY I CRIED MYSELF TO SLEEP, I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I WAS THERE FOR BUT THE NEXT THING I KNEW WAS I WAS BEING DRAGGED UP AND HIT SO HARD BY ONE OF THE NUNS, THAT I GOT SUCH A FRIGHT OVER WHAT WAS HAPPENING I WET MYSELF, THAT MADE IT ALL THE WORSE FOR ME, I WAS TOLD TO GO UP TO THE DORMITORY AND CHANGE INTO MY NIGHT CLOTHES, WHICH WERE LONG NIGHTDRESS MADE OF GINGHAM MATERIAL, IT WAS SO HARD THAT MATERIAL THAT YOUR SKIN WOULD COME UP IN A RASH, WHEN I HAD CHANGED I HAD KNEEL DOWN AND PUT MY HANDS ONTOP OF MY HEAD, I HAD TO STAY LIKE THAT ALL NIGHT, IF I GOT TIRED AND MY HANDS STARTED TO SLIP I WOULD GET A SMACK FROM WHOEVER WAS LOOKING AFTER ME, THE NUNS TOOK IT IN TURNS TO WATCH OVER US AS THEY WOULD SAY, I WAS TO HAVE THIS TREATMENT MANY MANY TIMES DURING MY STAY THERE.

I HADN'T BEEN AT THE HOME FOR VERY LONG WHEN I WAS TO HAVE SOME SORT OF OPERATION, I TO THIS DAY DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS FOR, BUT I CAN TELL YOU ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE AS I REMEMBER IT, I KNOW THAT THE MORNING THAT I WAS TO HAVE THE OPERATION, I WAS STILL IN THE JUNIOR PART OF THE HOME, SO I MUST HAVE BEEN ABOUT 5 MAYBE GOING ON 6, I REMEMBER BEING LAID DOWN ONTO A TABLE, THERE WERE A COUPLE OF NUNS THERE AND A MAN WITH GLASSES, WHO TOLD ME THAT I WOULD BE GOING TO SLEEP SOON, A

SQUARE PIECE OF CLOTH,[SIMILAR TO COTTON WOOL] WITH A WHOLE IN THE MIDDLE WAS PUT OVER MY FACE, I COULD STILL SEE WHO WAS WITH ME AT THAT STAGE, THEN ANOTHER FULL SQUARE PIECE OF CLOTH WAS PUT OVER MY FACE IT HAD A REALLY STRONG SMELL, IT WAS SO STRONG THAT I TRIED TO FIGHT THEM PUTTING IT ON ME, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, I MUST HAVE GONE TO SLEEP, I WAS TOLD YEARS LATER THAT IT WAS SOMETHING CALLED ETHER, THAT IS WHAT THEY USED TO USE IN THOSE EARLY DAYS.

I WOKE UP IN THE BABIES DORMITORY IN A COT, I TRIED TO GET OUT OF THE COT, AND WAS IMMEDIATELY PUT BACK DOWN, I WAS TOLD NOT TO MOVE AS I HAD JUST HAD A BIG OPERATION, I WAS BANDAGED OVER MY NOSE, AND THE NUNS CAME AND CHECKED ME EVERY SO OFTEN, I FOUND THAT I COULDN'T CRY OR TOUCH MY NOSE, I WASN'T ALLOWED TO EAT EITHER, I REMEMBER, BEING GIVEN A HORRIBLE SMELLING MEDICINE THAT I HAD TO TAKE IT WAS HARD TO SWALLOW AS WELL, I USED TO GO TO SLEEP AFTER I HAD THIS MEDICINE, I REMEMBER WAKING UP ON DAY AFTER THE OPERATION AND SEEING A BIG SPIDER ABOVE MY COT, I TRIED TO YELL AND TELL SOMEONE THAT A SPIDER WAS THERE, NO ONE CAME TO SEE ME FOR OH SO LONG, I WAS SO SCARED THAT THE SPIDER WAS GOING TO CLIMB DOWN ON ME, THAT TO THIS DAY I HAVE A PHOBEA OF SPIDERS, IT SEEMED TO BE FOR EVER AND EVER THAT THE SPIDER WAS THERE, I CAN STILL FEEL THE FEAR TODAY OF THAT EXPERIENCE. I MADE MYSELF SO SICK WITH WORRY OF THE SPIDER THAT I WAS SICK, WHEN SOMEONE DID COME IN TO SEE ME I WAS IN AN AWFUL MESS, I GOT A HIDING FOR BEING SUCH A BAD GIRL. THE SPIDER WAS LEFT THERE, I THINK IT MUST HAVE CRAWLED AWAY AT SOME STAGE, BUT WHILE IT WAS THERE I WOULDN'T GO TO SLEEP, I MUST HAVE BEEN SO EXHAUSTED FROM CRYING THAT I DID GO TO SLEEP, WHEN I WOKE UP IT WAS GONE. I WAS TO SPEND QUITE A FEW DAYS IN THAT COT, TO THIS DAY I'M NOT SURE WHAT I HAD DONE TO ME.

A LOT OF US GIRLS HAVE TRIED TO FIND OUR MEDICAL RECORDS FROM OUR TIME IN THE HOME BUT THERE WERE NO RECORDS KEPT, SO I HAVE BEEN LED TO BELIEVE, IT MAKES IT SO HARD AT OUR AGES NOW, BECAUSE WE DON'T KNOW WHAT NEEDLES WE HAVE HAD OR WHAT ILLNESS'S ANY OF US HAVE HAD.

ONCE WE STARTED SCHOOL IN THE HOME, WE WERE GIVEN JOBS TO DO EACH AND EVERY DAY, IT WOULD BE PEELING POTATOES IN THE KITCHEN, SCRUBBING AND POLISHING FLOORS, WHICH WE DID ON OUR KNEES, IT WAS HARD WORK, BUT WE HAD TO DO IT IN SILENCE AND WE REALLY DID WORK HARD, NO MATTER WHERE WE WERE PUT, WE ALSO WORKED IN THE LAUNDRY, THAT WAS HOT WORK AS THERE WERE BIG BOILERS ETC., WE USED TO HAVE TO SCRUB SOME OF THE CLOTHES BY HAND, OUR HANDS BY THE END OF THE DAY WERE SO RED AND SORE, BUT IT DID US NO GOOD TO COMPLAIN, AS WE ALL DID THE HARD WORK OR WE WOULD GET INTO TERRIBLE TROUBLE, WE WERE TOLD THAT WE HAD TO EARN OUR KEEP, WE ALSO HAD TO CLEAN OUT THE TOILETS, BATHROOM ALSO, AFTER EACH MEAL WE HAD TO DO THE DISHES AND DRY AND PUT THEM ALL AWAY.

THE HARDEST PART FOR A LOT OF US WAS WHEN SOME GIRLS HAD THEIR FAMILY COME AND TAKE THEM OUT FOR THE WEEKEND, IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANY ONE COME TO VISIT YOU IT WAS SO LONELY, QUITE A FEW OF US DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE WERE SO DIFFERENT, AND WHY NO ONE WANTED TO COME AND SEE US. MY BROTHERS AND MYSELF NEVER GOT TO SEE OUR FATHER MUCH, MAYBE ONCE EVERY 2 YEARS, IF THAT. WE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY HE DIDN'T

COME TO SEE US, SO I GOT IT INTO MY MIND THAT I HAD TO MAKE SURE MY BROTHERS WERE OK, AS EVERY TIME I ASKED THE NUNS COULD I GO AND SEE THEM I WAS TOLD NO THEY NO LONGER WANT TO SEE YOU, SO I WAITED MY TIME AND I DECIDED THAT I WAS GOING TO SEE THEM SOME HOW, I WAITED FOR A WEEKEND WHEN THERE DIDN'T SEEM TO BE SO MANY NUNS AROUND, I CLIMBED THE BIG TREE IN THE BACK YARD, CLIMBED OVER THE FENCE AND RAN AS FAST AS I COULD, I REALLY DIDN'T KNOW WHERE I WAS GOING, I JUST RAN AND RAN, I KNEW IN WHAT DIRECTION THE BOY'S HOME WAS IN SO I JUST KEPT GOING THAT WAY, I MUST HAVE GOT ABOUT HALF WAY WHEN A POLICE CAR PULLED UP NEXT TO ME AND ASKED ME WHERE I WAS GOING, I TOLD THEM I WAS GOING TO SEE MY BROTHERS AT ST JOSEPH'S BABIES HOME, THEY ASKED ME HOW WAS I GOING TO GET THERE, I TOLD THEM I WAS RUNNING THERE, THEN THEY WANTED TO KNOW WHERE I HAD COME FROM I TOLD THEM I WAS LIVING AT NAZARETH HOUSE, BECAUSE NO ONE WANTED ME, THEY TOLD ME TO HOP INTO THE CAR AND THEY WOULD GIVE ME A RIDE, THEY TOOK ME STRAIGHT BACK TO THE HOME, I GOT THE BIGGEST BELTING OF MY LIFE, I HAVE NEVER CRIED SO MUCH, THE MORE I SCREAMED THE MORE I COPPED THE HIDING, THAT WAS ANOTHER TIME THAT I HAD TO KNEEL UP ALL NIGHT, I WAS TO GET USED TO THIS TYPE OF TREATMENT, AS I TOOK PLENTY OF RISKS TO GO AND SEE MY BROTHERS, I MADE IT ABOUT TWICE TO ACTUALLY GET TO SEE THEM, BUT I WAS ALWAYS SENT BACK AND GOT THE HIDINGS OVER AND OVER, I LEARNT TO TRY AND BLOCK MY MIND OFF FROM THE BEATINGS, AND I SUPPOSE SOON ENOUGH I REALISED I WAS ONLY HURTING MYSELF, SO I STOPPED RUNNING AWAY MIND YOU IT TOOK ABOUT 3 YEARS FOR ME TO STOP, I REALISED THAT THERE WAS ONLY ME AND NO ONE ELSE WANTED ME SO I HAD TO TRY FOR MYSELF TO MAKE THINGS BETTER FOR MYSELF. WE EACH MADE OUR CLOSE GROUP OF FRIENDS, BUT MOST OF THE TIME A LOT OF THE GIRLS WERE VERY CRUEL AND CALLED US SOME TERRIBLE NAMES AND DID SOME TERRIBLE THINGS TO THE GROUP OF US WHO HAD NO ONE, YOU SEE SOME OF THE GIRLS STILL HAD FAMILY THEY COULD GO TO FOR HOLIDAYS OR WEEKENDS, WHERE WE HAD TO STAY THERE PERMANTELTY. I WAS ALLOWED TO GO HOME TO SEE DAD NOW AND AGAIN, THAT WOULD BE WHEN I SAW MY BROTHERS, WE ALL CHANGED IN OURSELVES, THERE WAS NO MORE HAPPINESS AND JOY LIKE IT WAS BEFORE WE WERE SO CRUELLY RIPPED APART, MIND YOU WE STILL LOVED EACH OTHER, BUT WE COULD FEEL THE GROWING APART FROM WHAT WE HAD BEFORE. NOT ONE OF US WANTED TO TALK ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE HOMES, I ALWAYS THOUGHT THE BOYS WERE LUCKY BECAUSE THEY HAD EACH OTHER, BUT I KNOW NOW THAT EACH ONE OF THEM WENT THROUGH THERE OWN HELL, IN DIFFERENT WAYS, IT IS A TOPIC THAT NONE OF US WISH TO TALK ABOUT TO EACH OTHER, AS IT MAKES ME FEEL DIRTY AND NOT ATTACHED, WHAT I AM TRYING TO SAY, IT IS AS IF I AM READING A BOOK ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE, BUT ALL OF THESE THINGS DID HAPPEN TO ME PLUS A LOT MORE ALSO. I NOW KNOW THAT I AM NOT TO BLAME MYSELF LIKE I HAVE BEEN DOING FOR SO LONG YOU SEE YOU TEND TO BLAME YOURSELF FOR ALL THAT GOES ON WITH YOU, BUT AS I HAVE HAD TO AND I AM STILL DOING YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME, I KEEP SAYING I AM SO SORRY ALL THE TIME TO DIFFERENT THINGS IN MY LIFE I AM NO LONGER ALLOWED TO SAY THOSE WORDS, IT IS SO HARD AFTER SAYING IT FOR SO LONG. I AM ALSO BEING TAUGHT TO THINK ABOUT MYSELF A LOT MORE, I FIND THIS VERY STRANGE AS I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT OF OTHER PEOPLE IN MY LIFE FIRST ALWAYS.

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YOU KNOW WE WERE LUCKY TO HAVE HAD SOME GOOD TIMES WHILE WE WERE IN THE HOME, I WAS TAUGHT TO LEARN A NUMBER OF MUSICAL THINGS DURING MY STAY THERE, SO WERE THE BOYS, I WAS TAUGHT THE VIOLIN, THE CELLO, ALSO I WAS IN THE CHOIR, I ALSO DID SOLO SINGING, WE COMPETED IN THE SOUTH STREET COMPETITIONS, EACH YEAR, THE CHOIR ACTUALLY WON A FEW TIMES, I CAME THIRD IN THE SOLO SINGING, WE ALSO COMPETED IN SPORTS AGAINST OTHER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, THE MARCHING TEAM OF WHICH I WAS ALSO INVOLVED PERFORMED AT VARIOUS PLACES IN BALLARAT, THEY WERE FUN TIMES FOR ALL OF US, WE USED TO HAVE OUR HAIR PUT INTO PLATES MADE WITH STRIPS OF CLOTH AND TIED UP TO HOLD THEM INTO PLACE, WHEN THEY WERE TAKEN OUT OF THE STRIPS WE ENDED UP WITH CURLS, SOME OF THE GIRLS LOOKED SO SPECIAL, BECAUSE IT WASN'T OFTEN WE WERE MADE TO FEEL SPECIAL IN OUR CHILDHOOD, ACTUALLY WE NEVER REALLY HAD WHAT YOU CALL A CHILDHOOD IT WAS ALWAYS PRAYING OR WORKING, WE GOT SOME TIME OUTSIDE TO PLAY, BUT A LOT OF US WOULD JUST SIT AROUND ON THE GROUND AND TALK TO EACH OTHER, THERE WERE SPECIAL GROUPS THAT YOU NEVER WENT NEAR, OR IF YOU GOT IN SOME ONE ELSE'S PLACE TO SIT OR STAND THEN YOU WOULD COP IT OF THOSE GIRLS IN THAT GROUP, SO BESIDES THE NUNS YOU ALSO HAD TO PUT UP WITH THE BULLIES, I HAD MY HAIR PULLED MANY A TIME AND OF COURSE IF I RESPONDED BACK IT ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE ME WHO WAS IN THE WRONG AND IF YOU TRIED TO TELL THE TRUTH IT WAS MORE PUNISHMENT FOR YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO ANSWER BACK TO THE NUNS. IT WAS AT TIMES LIKE THESE THAT I WENT INTO MY OWN SAFE WORLD, THERE WERE TIMES WHEN I WOULDN'T TALK TO ANYONE FOR DAYS, MAINLY BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT ANY OF THE OTHER GIRLS TO GET INTO TROUBLE FOR TALKING OR HELPING ME IN ANY WAY. WE NEVER HAD DOLLS OR TOYS THAT WE COULD EVEN CUDDLE INTO, I THINK IF WE DID WE WOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE THINGS A LOT BETTER EVEN NOW, I KNOW THAT I HAD TO LEARN HOW TO LOVE AND CARE ABOUT OTHERS ALL OVER AGAIN, WE WERE TO FRIGHTENED TO EVEN HOLD SOMEONES HAND IN THE HOME IF WE WERE CAUGHT WE WOULD GET INTO TROUBLE, THE FEELING OF BEING ALONE IS SO BAD, IT IS HARD TO DESCRIBE EXACTLY WHAT IT IS LIKE, YOU SOMETIMES FEEL LIKE YOU ARE THE ONLY PERSON ALIVE, BUT THEN AS I LOOK AROUND THERE ARE A LOT OF GIRLS WHO WEAR THE SAME LOOK AS I DO, IT IS THEN YOU KNOW YOU ARE NOT ALONE, MANY TIMES OVER THE YEARS I GO THROUGH THE SAME DECLINE, SOMETIMES DAY IN AND DAY OUT, OF COURSE AT THE TIME YOU DON'T REALISE WHAT IS HAPPENING TO YOU, BUT TODAY I KNOW IT IS DEPRESSION, HOW MANY OF US SUFFERED LIKE THIS WE MAY NEVER KNOW, HOW MANY TIMES A DAY DID WE GO THROUGH THIS WE MAY NEVER KNOW.

WE LIVED OUR LIVES ON A SET OF RULES DAY IN AND DAY OUT, IF WE DID NOT FOLLOW THESE RULES THEN WE WOULD HAVE TO FACE OUR PUNISHMENT.

ALL ANY OF US WANTED WAS SOMEONE TO LOVE US FOR WHAT WE WERE, WE NEVER LEARNT ABOUT LOVE AND HOW TO LOVE, AS FROM DAY ONE IT WAS INSTALLED IN US TO DO AS YOU ARE TOLD, DO NOT ASK ANY QUESTIONS, DO NOT CRY, AS THIS WOULD GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO GIVE YOU A HIDING, EVEN IF WE DIDN'T DESERVE ONE, SOME OF US WOULD COMFORT THE OTHER GIRLS IF WE SAW THAT THEY WERE HAVING A HARD TIME OF THINGS, BUT WE WOULD ALWAYS HAVE SOMEONE ON WATCH SO AS TO TELL US IF THE NUNS WERE COMING.

IT WAS JUST SO HARD FOR MOST OF US TO ACCEPT THAT WE WEREN'T WANTED BY OUR FAMILIES, THE QUESTION EACH AND EVERY DAY WE WOULD ASK OURSELVES WAS WHY WAS I BOUGHT HERE WHY AM I SO BAD THAT NO ONE WANTS ME, WHAT DID I DO THAT WAS SO WRONG, WHY CAN'T I SEE MY FAMILY, AS SO MANY OF THE OTHER GIRLS DID, STILL TO THIS DAY THOSE THOUGHTS HAUNT ME, IT IS ONLY THROUGH MY HUSBAND AND FAMILY THAT I CAN REALLY FEEL LOVED AND WANTED.

I FEEL THOUGH THAT I AM LETTING THEM ALL DOWN, BECAUSE OF THE FEELINGS THAT SNEAK UP ON ME AT DIFFERENT TIMES AND SEND ME DOWN THAT PATH OF DESTRUCTION AGAIN, IT IS STILL SO EASY FOR ME TO GO THERE, I TRY SO HARD AGAINST THAT FEELING, BUT SOMETIMES I FIND IT EASIER TO GO THERE THAN TO FIGHT IT, BUT I KNOW THAT I MUST, OR ELSE THE NUNS WIN AGAIN, AND THEY HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF MY LIFE ALREADY.

I ALSO REMEMBER THE LONG LONELY NIGHTS, EVEN WITH ALL THE GIRLS THAT SLEPT IN THE SAME DORMITORY AS ME, I THINK WE ALL SUFFERED AT NIGHT, BECAUSE YOU COULD HEAR DIFFERENT ONES CRYING, MIND YOU IT WAS AFTER THE NUNS HAD GONE TO BED, BECAUSE IT WOULD GIVE THEM GREAT SATISFACTION TO HEAR US CRYING, BECAUSE THEN THEY COULD HUMILIATE YOU IN FRONT OF THE OTHERS BY CALLING YOU A MISERABLE BRAT, OR WORSE.

IT WAS THE EMOTIONS OF THE NIGHT THAT GOT TO ME THE MOST, YOU WOULD FIND IT HARD TO BREATHE SOME TIMES, AND IT FELT LIKE YOUR HEART WOULD BREAK INTO A MILLION PIECES, THE PAIN WAS SO BAD, I WOULD SOB MYSELF TO SLEEP NIGHT AFTER NIGHT AND YEAR AFTER YEAR.

AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, SOME OF THE GIRLS DID NOT HAVE THE SUFERING THAT WE HAD, AS THEY COULD GO AND SEE THEIR FAMILIES IF THEY LIVED AROUND NEAR THE HOME, I OFTEN WONDER WHAT WERE THEY DOING IN THERE IF THEY HAD SOMEONE TO CARE FOR THEM. ONE OF THE HARDEST DAYS IN THE HOME WAS WHEN I WAS TOLD THAT MY DARLING GRANDMOTHER HAD DIED, I NEVER GOT A HUG OR A DECENT WORD SAID TO ME, I REMEMBER CRYING SO HARD, AND ALL I WAS TOLD TO STOP BEING A BABY, AND TO GET OVER IT, IT WAS A HUGE LOSS FOR ME, BECAUSE I KNEW THEN THAT I WOULD NEVER EVER SEE HER AGAIN. I WAS GIVEN A SOLID GOLD CROSS THAT SHE LEFT TO ME, I WAS ALOUD TO WEAR IT FOR ONE DAY, AND THEN IT WAS TAKEN OFF ME, I KICKED THE NUN THAT TRIED TO TAKE IT FROM ME, AND WAS GIVEN SUCH A HIDING FOR DARING TO ATTACK A HOLY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH, I WAS TOLD THAT THE DEVIL WOULD GET ME FOR THE HORRIBLE WRONG THAT I HAD DONE, I NEVER EVER SAW THAT CROSS AGAIN.

I THINK THE REAL HATRED GOT EVEN MORE BUILT UP IN ME FROM THEN ON.

I TRIED TO LOOK AFTER ANY NEW GIRLS WHO CAME INTO THE HOME AFTER THAT, BY TELLING THEM NOT TO CRY AS THEY WOULD ONLY GET A BEATING , I FELT SO SORRY FOR THEM, SOME OF THEM WERE SO TINY, WE WERE ALL INNOCENTS AND REALLY KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO US OR WHY IT WAS HAPPENING.

EVERY DAY WYHOUT FAIL WE WOULD HAVE TO KNEEL DOWN AND PRAY, FOR WHAT I NEVER EVER REALLY FIGGERED OUT, IT GOT TO THE STAGE WHERE I HATED CHURCH, HATED THE PRIESTS, WE ALWAYS HAD TO SMILE WHENEVER THEY WERE AROUND, WE HAD TO STAND ASIDE AND LET THEM PASS LIKE THEY WERE LORD AND MASTER, WHATEVER THEY SAID SEEMED TO BE THE WAY EVERYTHING WENT.

AS I GREW OLDER I WAS GIVEN THE CHANCE TO DO WHAT WAS CALLED THE TEA TRAYS FOR THE VISITING PRIEST, THEY WOULD COME AROUND NOW AND AGAIN, AND SPEND SOME TIME IN THE BIG GIRLS CLASS ROOM, I NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHY ALL THE BLINDS WERE ALWAYS PULLED DOWN, YOU SEE I WOULD HAVE TO KNOCK ON THE CLASSROOM DOOR AND TAKE THE TRAY IN WHEN THE DOOR WAS FINALLY OPENED, THEN I WOULD HAVE TO TAKE IT AWAY WHEN IT WAS FINISHED WITH, I HAD TO THEN CLEAN UP AND PUT ALL OF THE DISHES AND ANY BISCUITS OR CAKES ETC BACK IN THER CONTAINERS IN A SPECIAL CUPBOARD THAT THEY WERE KEPT IN, I WAS LATER TO FIND OUT ALL OF THE GOODIES THAT WERE KEPT IN THERE, THE NUNS USED TO GET BIG TINS OF BOILED LOLLIES, BIG TINS OF BISCUITS, AND CAKES ETC, I DON'T KNOW HOW COME NONE OF US EVER GOT THEM WE NEVER SAW ANY SUCH THING, WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT LOLLIES WERE LIKE, WE NEVER SAW MAGAZINES OR NEWSPAPERS, ETC, ALL WE SAW WERE CATHOLIC ITEMS, SUCH AS THE LIVES AND STRUGGLES OF THE SAINTS, I FOUND THEM VERY SCARY ACTUALLY HOW GRUESOME WERE SOME OF THEIR DEATHS, YET WE WERE EXPECTED TO READ THEM AND COMMENT ON THEM.

As I was telling you previously, the pain of being not wanted by everyone was overwhelming, of a nighttime there were a lot of us who would virtually cry or even sob ourselves to sleep, as the hurt was just too strong to bear. It felt like your heart would break, and you couldn't breathe for the pain, it felt like there was a great big lump inside you that wouldn't let you go.

This was to happen a lot over the next ten years of my life.

I am to learn just lately that this was a panic attack, as I now or maybe I always had acute chronic stress disorder, and I now know that the fear feeds on fear, pity I didn't know this at the time, as it would have helped a lot of us, but then the nuns seemed to revel in our torture.

A lot of people say that we should be grateful for all that was done for us, and it is so bad of us that we are blaming other people for our misfortune, but they did not have to go through what we did.

I am grateful, as I have said before for the bed that I had each night, the food that I was able to eat sometimes, the education that was given to me, the marching, dancing, sports, and the choir, these all were great times and they took your mind off the bad things, but each and everyday, we fronted the evil of the things that were done to us over the years.

Until you front something like that yourselves, no one and I mean no one has the right to tell myself or any of the girls that we should be grateful for all that was given to us and for all that was done for us, as we were the ones who were given the beatings and the mental abuse for the whole time that we were in there.

Mind you there were a lot of girls who never ever had any of the bad things anywhere near them, as they will tell you today that that never even happened, and I will tell them no not to you, as you were one of the lucky ones, and they could come and go as they pleased, they weren't told each and every day, that they were no good and that their parents didn't want them, as so many of us were told.

They were allowed to go to their parents houses, and when the weekends came they were so excited because they knew they would be seeing their parents or relatives, we used to sit around hoping that we were going to be the lucky ones, but for me that never happened, it was disappointment after disappointment, I had to learn how to mask the feelings I was feeling at the time as I was to find out that some of the nuns actually liked it when they saw that you were hurting so bad, there was never any comfort, or anything like that, I began to think that they were like robots, up each day do what they had to do and that was that.

A few of us used to look after each other, as they were in the same boat as I was, with no one to care about them either, we would try and keep each other

happy, but then again if we were seen with the same person for too long we would be moved away from that person, it was so cruel, I learnt that the only way to defeat this was to try and keep to myself so that no one else would get into trouble, because of me.

I also learnt not to let the nuns know that I was hurting at any time, there were only a few who would treat us like this, but they were the ones who seemed to always be in charge of you.

As I was to stay there for such a long time, I soon learnt that I would try and learn as much as I could, I loved the choir, so singing was a big part of my time, we would sing for church sermons, we would compete in the south street competitions, each and every year, and that was so good, especially when we won a few times, I was to do solo singing, I came third, and felt so proud of myself.

I was also taught to play the violin, the cello, and the double bass, but the one I played the most was the violin.

I would have loved to be able to play the piano as that reminded me of grandma and grandpa, and of the good times we used to have with them, all singing together and having a wonderful time, I often would daydream about those times, but they were well and truly gone for me.

I often wondered how the boys were doing, and every time I asked about them I was told not to worry about them as they didn't want to see me, I was told this so many times that I hatched a plan, of when I would try to run away and go and see them for myself.

I had to try and find out where they were exactly, so that I could work out when and what I would do.

Some of the girls had brothers staying at the boys home in seabastople, ballarat so I asked them to help me find out if my brothers were there, I told them if they didn't want to tell me then I would understand, as I didn't want to get them into trouble, for nothing. It took along time for me to get any news at all, and it was only when we had a combined sports day out in ballarat that I was to actually see my brothers, as all the schools gathered together on the one big oval for the sports, they were with st. Joseph's boys home, and they were competing.

I couldn't believe my luck.

We all sat on the grass as the different teams competed against each other, as soon as I saw the boys I was determined to see them today no matter what, I slowly moved towards the end of the rows where we were sitting as they were close enough to us that I could talk to them and hope that I wouldn't get into trouble.

I asked them how to get there and see them, they told me how to get there, and I copied it down on my events book, I had to try nad hide it so that it wasn't found by the nuns.

MY STORY AS I REMEMBER, 2

AS I HAVE TOLD YOU BEFORE THE TIMES SPENT IN THE HOME WERE SO BAD , EVEN TODAY I STILL HAVE TROUBLE WITH THE MEMORIES OF THE PAIN AND OF HAVING NO ONE TO LOVE YOU OR TO TELL YOU THAT THEY CARE ABOUT YOU WAS SO HARD TO TAKE.

WE WERE NEVER TOLD THAT WE WOULD MEAN ANYTHING TO ANYONE , THEN THAT FEELING COMES AGAIN OF BEING A FAILURE AGAIN.

EACH AND EVERYONE OF US WOULD FACE THIS TIME AND TIME AGAIN.

THERE WERE NOT MANY OF US WHO HAD FAMILY AS SUCH, WHO WOULD COME AND VISIT THEM, SOME OF US WERE SENT TO FOSTER HOMES, SOME WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO FIND A FAMILY WHO WOULD WELCOME THEM INTO THEIR HOME, BUT THEN THERE WAS THE OTHER SIDE OF SOME OF THESE HOMES, SOME OF US WERE USED AS SLAVES, SOME WERE USED AS SEXUAL THINGS, AND WHOEVER TRIED TO TELL ANYONE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED, THEN THAT PERSON WOULD BE DISCIPLINED BY BEING TOLD THEY WERE A LIAR, OR SOMETHING OF THE SORT, WE WERE NEVER BELIEVED.

ALOT OF US FOUND IT EASIER TO SAY NOTHING TO THE NUNS AS THEY WOULDN'T BELIEVE ANY OF US ANYWAY.

WE WOULD OFTEN HEAR OF SOMETHING THAT WAS DONE TO SOMEONE THERE AND WE WOULD OFTEN HEAR THAT PARTICULAR PERSON CRYING OF A NIGHTTIME, SOME WOULDN'T TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED, THEY TRIED TO BLOCK IT ALL OUT.

THE THING WAS THAT ALOT OF THEM WERE SENT BACK TO THAT PLACE TIME AND TIME AGAIN. YOU SEE THESE PEOPLE OFTEN WOULD DONATE MONEY TO THE HOME AND THEREFORE THEY MUST HAVE BEEN GOOD PEOPLE.

I KNOW ALOT OF THINGS WERE DONATED TO THE HOME , SUCH AS FOOD ETC. WE NEVER REALLY GOT TO SEE ANYTHING THAT WAS DONATED AS IT WAS ALL LOCKED UP IN A CUPBOARD.

WE HAD A MENU THAT WAS FOLLOWED , BY THAT I MEAN WE COULD TELL WHAT DAY IT WAS BY THE WHAT WAS TO EAT THAT DAY. ALOT OF THE TIME THE MEALS WERE UNEDIBLE, SO MANY TIMES THE FOOD WAS ROTTEN, BUT WE HAD TO EAT IT ANYWAY.

WHEN I WAS GOING TO THE BIGGER CLASSES AS WE CALLED THEM I WAS SO HUNGRY I USED TO PINCH FLOWERS FROM PEOPLES GARDENS AND EAT THEM. I NEVER KNEW IF THEY WERE ANY GOOD OR NOT.

WHEN WE CAME HOME FROM THE SCHOOL THAT WE ATTENDED WE WOULD GET A PIECE OF BREAD, AND SOME HOT MILK THAT THE GOVERNMENT SUPPLIED TO US IN THOSE DAYS, IT WAS ALWAYS HOT, AS IT WAS LEFT OUT IN THE SUN ALL DAY.

EACH DAY WE HAD CHORES TO DO BEFORE WE EVEN WENT TO BREAKFAST, THE CHORES WERE ALWAYS CHECKED AS WELL, AND IF THEY WEREN'T DONE PROPERLY THEN WE WOULD GET A HIDING, AND WOULD HAVE TO DO THEM AGAIN.

WE WOULD HAVE TO KNEEL DOWN 4 IN A ROW, AND WASH AND POLISH THE FLOORS ON OUR KNEES WE WERE ONLY TINY SOME OF US WERE ANYWAY, IT WAS SO HARD ON OUR KNEES AND HANDS, BUT WHEN YOU WERE ORDERED TO DO IT THEN WE HAD TO DO IT, WITH NO GRUMBLING, REALLY WE WOULD BE TO SCARED TO EVEN SAY NO, BECAUSE IF WE DARED TO , WE WOULD GET A HIDING, AND THE PUNISHMENT WOULD BE EVEN HARDER AND MORE PAINFUL. YOU KNOW WE ALL RECEIVED SO MANY HIDINGS THAT IF IT WAS IN TODAYS WORLD THE NUNS WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT OF WHAT THEY

MY STORY AS I REMEMBER, 2

WERE DOING, BUT IN THOSE DAYS THEY WERE ANSWERABLE TO NO ONE. I REMEMBER ONE DAY I HAD RECEIVED SUCH A BEATING THAT I KICKED THE NUN RESPONSIBLE FOR GIVING ME THE HIDING, THAT WAS THE WORST DAY OF MY LIFE. I GOT SUCH A BEATING AGAIN AND AGAIN, I HAD TO KNEEL ON THE FLOOR ALL NIGHT, WITH MY HANDS ON MY HEAD AND IF I MOVED ONE LITTLE BIT I WOULD GET A BELTING AGAIN. IF I HAPPENED TO GO TO SLEEP, I WOULD BE MADE TO WAKE UP, AND PUT MY HANDS BACK UP ON MY HEAD. I WOULD RECEIVE ANOTHER BELTING, AND BE TOLD TO DO AS I WAS TOLD. I WAS SO SORE AND SO TIRED, ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS TO GO TO SLEEP, BUT I WASN'T ABOUT TO GIVE INTO THE PAIN, BECAUSE I KNEW THAT IF I DID THE NUNS WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE ME BROKEN AGAIN, I WOULD BLOCK MY MIND FROM THE PAIN ETC. THIS WAS TO BECOME A GREAT HELP TO ME IN LATER YEARS, AS A MATTER OF FACT I STILL TEND TO DO THAT NOW AND I AM MANY YEARS OLDER NOW, IT HAS BECOME A GREAT TOOL FOR ME .

ALL OF THE GIRLS I HAVE SPOKEN TO SINCE I WAS AT SCHOOL, WHICH HAS JUST BEEN OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, HAVE SAID THE SAME THING, THAT THEY CAN'T OR DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT PLACE AS IT IS STILL HURTING ALOT OF THEM, SO I NOW CAN SAY TO MYSELF THAT I AM NOT THE ONLY ONE. ALOT OF PEOPLE ON THE OUTSIDE AS I CALL IT, THINK THAT IT IS DISPICABLE THAT I SHOULD SAY ANYTHING AGAINST THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL, HOW DARE I EVEN SAY THAT THESE THINGS WENT ON .

I TELL THEM IT IS WHAT WENT ON THERE, BUT THEY CAN'T OR WONT SEE THAT IT DID. IT IS OUR WORD AGAINST THE CHURCH, AND HOW DARE I OR ANYONE ELSE TALK ABOUT SUCH THINGS.

AS I TELL THEM THINGS HAVE CHANGED IN THE WORLD, AND THERE ARE ALOT OF US WHO ARE TOO FRIGHTENED TO SAY ANYTHING AGAINST THE CHURCH IN CASE OF RETROBUTION.

APART FROM THE HAPPENINGS IN THE HOME, I CAN TELL YOU OF LOTS OF THINGS THAT WERE USED IN THE YEARS FROM WHEN I WAS A SMALL CHILD. THERE WAS NEVER TELEVISION, ~~RADIO~~ OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT , WHEN I WAS SMALL, TELEVISION HADEN'T BEEN INVENTED AT THAT STAGE, RADIO WAS THE GO, I REMEMBER WHEN I WAS ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE HOME ON THE FEW OCCASIONS THAT I DID, THAT PEOPLE WOULD CROWD AROUND THE RADIO AND LISTEN TO STORIES THAT WERE READ OVER THE RADIO, THEY WERE REALLY INTERESTING TO LISTEN AS WE NEVER HEARD OF SUCH A THING , WE WERE NEVER ALLOWED TO SEE OR HEAR ANYTHING FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD AS SUCH. THERE WERE NO SUCH THINGS AS WASHING MACHINES AS WE KNOW THEM TODAY, WE HAD TO DEAL WITH BIG COPPERS , WHICH WERE SO HOT AS THEY WERE RUN BY GAS I THINK , ALL THE WHITES USED TO GO IN THEM , A BIG BLUE BAG OR BAGS DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF THE WASHING WAS ADDED, THAT WAS TO KEEP THINGS SO WHITE.

ALOT OF US WHO WERE ON LAUNDRY DUTY HAD TO SCRUB THE CLOTHES SO HARD THAT OUR HANDS USED TO BLEED.

MY STORY CONTINUED

i began to realise that it was not a good thing to fight against what was to become a way of life for me for however long i was to stay in this place, the night time was my crying time, but you couldn't let the nuns see you crying, as you would be punished again, you could hear some of the girls sobbing in their sleep most nights, and you would feel so helpless because you felt the same way and there was nothing you could do to help them, you could talk to them the next day, but really we couldn't show any form of protection towards anyone, because if you did there were girls who would tease the ones who were weak, i had plenty of run ins with these girls, they would start a fight with you and then stand back and watch as you copped a hiding, they used to call me Higg the Pig so that was a nickname i was given, most just called me Higgie, and that is how they know me today, i was surprised that they even remembered me, it was such a nice feeling to know they cared enough to even look for me, after all we were like sisters . some seemed to not suffer like others, and i still don't know to this day why some were more priviliged than others.

I soon learnt to stay by my self and by doing this i wouldn't get anyone into trouble, the days went on and on each one the same as the next, it was wake up stand in line for bed checks, if you hadn't made your bed properly it would be stripped and you would have to make it again in front of everyone, then you got the dreaded cane, we had to pray each and every day and night, for what i never knew, we would go downstairs for meals, and if we didnt eat what was put in front of us we would be force fed, alot of times the food tasted rotten and when you tried to tell the nuns, you were told that you were an ungrateful person, and you should be happy that you had food at all, alot of the times you would vomit up was force fed to you, and thus another belting was given to you.

I went through the years up until grade 6 in the home, we learnt sewing,

music, singing, marching, various forms of sport etc, when you read this it does sound like i was privileged in all that i learnt, and i do appreciate that i had that chance, but it doesn't make up for all of the wrongs that went on during the years.

When i finished grade 6 i was sent to St Alipies in Ballarat East, for schooling, we travelled by tram to school and back to the home. this was a chance for me to meet my brothers, as they would go to ST Patricks in Ballarat, and had to change trams near the ballarat hospital which was the street we had to go down towards the home, the nuns soon found out about the meetings and i was punished for days over the fact that i wanted to see my brothers, there were times when i used to climb the big wire fence and escape to see my brothers, i knew which way to go , but the police were always called in to bring me back, and so more hidings were given to me. There was one morning when i woke up and i was so sick, i didn't know what was wrong with me, this went on each morning and night, for along time, i must have been about 13 at this stage, the nuns had me checked by a doctor i think, i really can't remember but i do remember being taken from the home in Ballarat to another home in Broadmeadows, it was St Joseph's Babies Home, i was to stay there for awhile, i still didn't know what was going on, i was given a small room with a bed and cupboard in it, this was where i was to stay, there were a few other girls there too, alot of them had big stomachs and i didnt know why, i was told they would be having a baby, and as i didn't know anything about this thing i didn't understand, i was told that i would have a baby too, i couldnt understand what was going on and how could i be having a baby, i didn't know how it even happened, the girls there tried to explain to me but because we were never taught anything about ourselves, i mean our bodies, or sex or anything related to that topic i still didn't understand.

it was to take along time for me to realise that my body was changing, we used to go on the train to Melbourne station and then to the ROYAL WOMEN'S HOSPITAL, where they would check you out to make sure you and the baby were all ok, even then i couldn't understand what was

happening to me.

i think i must have walked around in a daze for the whole time i was there, i used to go to church which was part of our agenda and a few times i passed out in church, after about the 3rd time i was told not to go back to church as i was a distraction to all who went there as they had to carry me out each time, i don't remember much about having the baby, i remember them taking me to hospital when i had terrible things happening to my body, i was in terrible pain, i screamed, i was taken to the hospital, i was laid on a bed in the hospital they came in and strapped my legs in a harness type thing, i just remember crying and thinking i was going to die, the pain was overwhelming me, i remember feeling a great force take over my body, and then all i saw was blood everywhere, i didnt feel as much pain after that, i heard a baby crying , and that was that, i was taken out of that room and put into another room, i was given some papers i had to sign, and when i asked what had just happened to me i was told that the baby was born, when i asked could i see the baby i was told no i would never see the baby.

I think i cried myself to sleep, but the feeling of such emptiness was so bad, i cried all of the time these things i remember to this day. i was taken from the hospital back to the home, and nothing was spoken of what i call the incident,

I have met some of the girls that i was with in the home just over the last year or so, and they actually remember me going away for awhile, and coming back they asked me what happened, i was able to tell them and they said that there were a few that the same thing happened to them.

When i was taken back to Nazareth House Ballarat, i felt like a whole part of me was ripped out, i was told not too talk about what had happened to me, and think at this stage i pushed it all into the back of my thoughts, i still didn't understand what had happened, it is only in the last few years that some of the girls were told why i had left for a short time, they remember me leaving and coming back,

I went around in a daze for the following years, getting up doing what i

had too, and i kept thinking they have broken me this time, i don't remember any joy after this episode in my life after that. i was to stay there until 1963, then i was told that i could leave the home, i remember staying in parks etc, sleeping where i could, running from the drunks etc most of the time.

I know at some stage i must have gone home to dad but im not sure how or when it is all such a blur, i started working in a factory and was able to put some money aside, which i used to later move down to melbourne, but that is another story.

In the following years i found it so hard to make friends, i thought i loved someone only to be used by them, i finally met my husband of today who actually taught me to love and how to give love, i could never cuddle anyone or tell them that i loved them because the fear of being hurt and used again was so strong, you see we never had that contact with other people in the whole time i was in that home.

I have been to hell and back and it is only over the last few years that i have been able to face what i have hidden away for so long i have stood with a handful of tablets in my hand and i just wanted to finish all the pain, i still have nightmares at times, i still suffer form deep depression at times, it still sneaks up on me but i am slowly trying to come to terms with it all. i have some wonderful people around me, and i have a wonderful husband and children and grandchildren, my family know all about what has happened as i thought it was up to me to tell them all and not to find out by some other means, as that thought was always out there, i feel so bad for the babies i had to give up, i only hope that it has made some families very happy. please forgive me for what i have done, i know my wonderful husband and children have and that means the world to me. i know how lucky i am today to have the love of my family and friends.