

“What the Wild Waves are Saying”

The Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse has heard more than 5100 stories from people who were abused as children. There is at least another thousand to go. Add to that all those abuse stories that relate to abuse by family members and by neighbours and others not in an institutional setting and you see the absolute enormity of what needs to be addressed.

This is one of those stories.

INTRODUCTION

It is about a 12 year old boy who was raped by George Montgomery, purporting to be the beach inspector, on that Australia Day weekend in 1955, at the headlands of Sth. Maroubra.

I am that boy, now 73 and am just dealing with it. Oh, how I wish I had the courage then to tell someone, or to tell anyone over the 60 years that has passed. I probably would have had a much more rewarding life.

I won't detail the actual assault. Anyone can understand what a rape of a pubescent boy, by a grown man, is like and the physical and emotional damage it can do.

AT THE BEACH

I'm at the beach with my brother and mother. Mum is reading a book and my brother has gone to find his mates, who congregate at the northern end of the beach. I'm strolling along the waterline, looking out for anyone that I might know and I'm approached by this bloke in navy blue shorts, a blue work singlet, sandals and a straw hat with the Randwick municipal crest on it, with the words "Beach Inspector".

He warns me about swimming between the flags and the risk of rips and undercurrents. It later occurs to me that I had not been in the water. Some small talk and chatter about not very much at all, and he invites me to go with him to the South end of the beach, as he wants "to do his midday rounds". Wow, the beach inspector wants ME to go with him!! We set off, and he is a very interesting bloke, and he shares some stories of events he had seen.

THE ASSAULT

Before long we progress beyond the beach and a fair way along the headland, where the sound of waves crashing onto the rocks below is quite prominent. That sound later became a trigger for remembering the walk along the cliff top.

He turns off the path and steps into a depression with dense brush cover, and proceeds to take his clothes off and invites me to do the same. He is the Beach Inspector, so why not?

It is not long before the assault takes place, after which he puts his clothes back on, and leaves me there to ponder my fate. Eventually I compose myself and return to the beach, where I see him with a group of men who were playing cards and drinking from long necks. They are all looking at me smiling and pointing. The bugger is telling them about his conquest!

I questioned my sexuality. It took me 60 years to tell anyone. And then all that time, I was like, "It's my fault", as generic as that is, "it's my fault" and "I must have manifested this because I'm secretly a poofter". In those days the word "gay" was not used for a homosexual; it was "poofter". I had all these insane thoughts for around 60 years.

It has taken a lifetime to come to terms with what happened. I had not really resisted other than asking, "What are you doing?" At the time I supposed that as I didn't try to stop it, was therefore complicit. So it was my fault.

THE AFTERMATH

I rationalised that he had seduced me, I had willingly succumbed, and have held that belief until very recently.

I told no one.

I had "willingly" had intercourse with a man. Was I therefore a poofter? I broke up with my first love, Margaret, who lived a few doors down the street, as I was very confused about my sexuality and there was no one I could talk to.

I displayed all the attributes that are now recognised as indicative of abuse. My parents and siblings noticed the change in my deportment, behaviour, manners and an aggressive attitude. I developed a "huge chip on my shoulder". I became anti-social and was a serial vandal around the district. These changes were quick. The parents rationalised I had come under the influence of the neighbourhood gang, who were all my mates as we had grown up together in the new subdivision. I was prohibited from being

with them. They were rowdy but all just early teenage boys. When I told them of the prohibition, they turned on me and I found myself "on the outer" and no longer welcome..

There was no change in my behaviour, so the parents then rationalised that the problem must have been at school and to keep me away from real trouble (police and all that), I needed to change schools. So in November they withdrew me from Marist Brothers at Randwick, where I was in First Year.

At Randwick, it was the practice for the junior high school kids to be marched to the Sacred Heart Church to attend Confession. I rationalised that being my fault, I therefore was in mortal sin. I struggled for a long while (months) to get the courage to confess. When I at last steeled myself, I went into the confessional where a very elderly priest was on the other side of the grille. I went through the usual palaver about the thing that teenage boys do a lot, and then stumbled around a way to say I had had sex with a man. The priest got angry and told me to "go away and stop wasting my time". I have since then been very reluctant to have confession.

The parents searched around for a new school in 1956. They settled on Darlo (Marist Brothers HS Darlinghurst) and I started in January, repeating First Year. I still had the chip on my shoulder, still could not make or keep friends, and the prominent thing I recall is that I was the disruptive element in the class, often in trouble. Academically I did reasonably well, keeping in close touch with the class leaders, but often banished to the veranda. The crunch came in Fourth Year when Brother had had enough of the smart arse remarks and dispatched me to have a chat with the Principal, Br Demetrius. He showed me the gate and told me that I was not welcome back until the parents had come in for a conference. They had the conference and that was the end of that stage of my life.

Expulsion was the end of my schooling and I said goodbye to my ambitions of getting my Leaving Certificate and becoming a dentist. Instead I went to work for the (then) Bank of NSW. I engineered a transfer to the country, and saw service in Wagga Wagga, Leeton, Orange, Griffith, Cooma and Goulburn. I was not happy in the bank, not being able to form friendships and was often drunk. I left the bank, matriculated at the Leaving Certificate in 1966 at evening college then went into the Army on a short service commission in the Service Corps commanding a platoon of trucks, a job I thoroughly enjoyed, but forever there was a fear that I might "cross the line". I continued to question my sexuality, which is not a wise thing to do in the military, particularly as an officer, but was unable to seek help. Again I was drinking heavily.

On leaving the army, I applied for and was offered the position of Transport Manager at the Aluminium facility at Gove in Nth. Queensland. Because of my confusion about my sexuality, I thought I could not risk being labelled a poof in that part of the country, at that time. I declined the posting, a decision I have often regretted.

I dated and got close to several girls, but could not take the relationship further. I experimented with men. I was nearly 30 when I met a wonderful woman with whom I could share. I told her of my difficulties but not of the abuse. She accepted me as who I was and loved me unconditionally. We were married inside three months and have three wonderful daughters and five grandchildren. I went into the Commonwealth Public Service, enrolled at university part time, got a good generalist degree and settled into married life.

The abuse drifted into the background but was aroused whenever I heard of Maroubra or the sound of a loud surf. Otherwise, life took a good turn.

THE DEMON IS EXPOSED

When my oldest sister turned 90, she asked all the siblings (there are seven of us) to write their life stories to share amongst each other. I had retired and was just wrapping up the family history, and had traced both sides of my family back to Ireland in the 1750's, so the thought of expanding the whole exercise to include personal memories had a big appeal. On reading the second draft of my story, it hit me that I was not being honest with myself or my family if I did not, at last, bring my demon into the open. I published the genealogy narrative, pictures and charts, with my story and distributed it to my siblings, and daughters.

Their reaction was of understanding and love. "Oh, that is why you were like that. We would never have thought of that", was the common response.

The demon was out of the box at last.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE.

The demon was out of its box, my family knew, and I was beginning to be able to talk about it. So far it had not been too difficult, and reactions had been all positive.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse had been in existence for a while. I found myself spellbound by the stories of the boys, emanating from the hearings.

It hit me like a freight train..."Hey!! That had happened to me.!!!"

One day after listening to the midday news with some horrific stories, I decided to take it further, picked up the phone and rang the Commission. I was initially concerned that they would not be interested, as I could not see how a beach inspector could fit into the definition of an "Institution". I was very quickly assured that the definition of institution was very broad and that Municipal Councils were indeed an Institution. I told the story briefly over the phone to a sympathetic fellow who thanked me, said a file would be opened, gave me a reference number. He told me the Commission would send some material and then if I wished, would invite me for a private conference "in a few months".

The material arrived which explained the workings of the Commission and was very reassuring. I was beginning to feel that I had made the right move. At last! Then, just a few weeks later, (not months) the Commission made contact and invited me in for a private session at the end of the next week, and would I care to make a written narrative of the event so the Commissioner would have a briefing. I agreed and reworked my story to my siblings and dispatched it on the next Monday. This would be a "walk in the park!"

THE PRIVATE SESSION

In the week that followed, I rehearsed and visualised for the session and was pretty comfortable that I had everything down pat. My wife accompanied me, and on arrival were ushered into a small conference room, and served tea and bickies. Then Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald came in with two staff members, one to take notes and the other as an observer.

A walk in the park? How mistaken could I be. Telling the story, with all the details, was quite daunting notwithstanding the rehearsal and visualising. I felt tears welling and at one stage, just broke down and cried. The Commissioner expertly coaxed and reassured me to continue with my story.

The Commissioner forcefully pointed out to me that I was in no way complicit in the assault, that I was not seduced. Commissioner Fitzgerald told me that in fact, I was abducted and raped.

My reactions were a normal response (particularly for boys) and all blame is on Montgomery

At that very moment, the weight of 60 years oppression lifted off me and drifted out the window, to waft away down the canyons of Sydney. I could at last accept the new reality and now I had to deal with it.

I was commended for approaching the Commission and thanked for my input. Commissioner Fitzgerald strongly recommended that I report the rape to the police, even though it was more than 60 years ago. Also, I should consider seeking a reconciliation meeting with Randwick Council. Following the session with the Commissioner, there was then a de-brief with an experienced counsellor, who outlined where I could best get support, as it would be expected that now the effects of PTSD would kick in (they were so right!).

The day finished with the Commission paying for lunch.

I was referred to the Survivors & Mates Support Network (SAMSN) and allocated a counsellor who made home visits (and still does), paid for by NSW Victims support services.

THE POLICE

It was a few weeks before I could front into my local Police Station and say, "I want to report a rape that happened 60 years ago." I tended a prepared statement and the station sergeant told me that it would be recorded and referred to detectives. I might be contacted, but not necessarily so.

Eventually, I was phoned by a detective sergeant at Maroubra who was allocated the file. He was able to tell me that George Montgomery was known to them, that he had lived at Waverly, and had died in 1973. Apart from that there was relatively little he could do or tell me. Enquiries at Randwick Council revealed a lack of historic personnel records for casual employees, likewise with Prince of Wales Hospital, where Montgomery was a porter/wardsman.

THE ROAD AHEAD

I have had a session with two solicitors to ascertain if I may have a claim against the Council for a measure of compensation. Alas, I do not, as the time limit has well and truly expired and as no records of Montgomery's employment can be found, I am unable to

establish any nexus with the Council other than my recollections. Adding to these bars, there is a legality called vicarious liability, which well and truly knocks me out of the game.

There may be some hope for recompense with a fund being promoted by the Royal Commission but not yet agreed to by any state or the Commonwealth government, but the way it is progressing I may well have fallen off my twig by then.

I have been taking happy pills to help in overcoming the depression, anxiety and stress associated with PTSD, and have also been getting regular counselling, all of which is aiding my recovery. It seems I am well on the way.

The demon is out of the box, and has been banished to history. It is now just something bad that happened, but it happened a long time ago. I am able to comfortably talk about it, without hesitation or embarrassment. My levels of depression and anxiety and stress are approaching the "normal" range as applied to the general population.

I need now only to talk with Randwick Council so they can acknowledge the harm done, and hopefully apologise and maybe offer some assistance. The understanding and acceptance from my family, friends, peers and persons previously unknown, is the real assistance and recompense that I needed. I thank you all.

The book on that aspect of my life is now able to be closed for good

I am at last now moving on with the beginning of the rest of my life."

Philip Hogan

POST SCRIPT

I have recently met with officers of Randwick Council who made the effort to come to my turf and meet with me.

It was at this meeting that they revealed the result of their own investigations which revealed that "Monty" was never an employee or volunteer of the Council, at Maroubra or elsewhere. Similarly, "Monty" was never a member or volunteer with the Maroubra SLSC, or as far as they can ascertain, any other surf club.

As was the case back then, the fact that "Monty" was well known to the beach community for his predilection for little boys nothing was done to curtail his activities. His modus operandi was to impersonate a beach inspector and use that authority to make his mark. He was part of a network.

The Police detective sergeant indicated to me that he was/is "known" to them, but would not divulge to me any details.

I may well have to open another chapter after all, but probably not.

Does this new knowledge change anything? It does not change the trauma or my mixed-up life and missed opportunities. The only thing it does change is remove any possibility that I may have had for compensation.

As someone quite famous once said "Such is life!"