

"a young girl's escape to living"



the I in ME

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“The I in Me”

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PREFACE

"The I in Me", is an electronic gift to anyone in society who cares to know. This free novel is for: child abuse survivors, educators, teachers, and politicians. Child Abuse can transform into identities that can affect an adult's life long after age and time have intervened.

I share the "The I in Me", as the first of many novels I hope to complete in my life. I have found by sharing my writing that it can be used to help others. There will never be another personal message as this one that I will share for those who choose to read.

I hope it will help other survivors to grow in their recovery. I hope to offer insight for educators and politicians of this harsh existence that many children face daily. I hope teachers will appreciate their jobs and know the impact they will make on a student's life.

I hope that my attempt to share this will comfort and support other survivors so that one day; no child will ever know the word, "Abuse", in their daily life.

I caution all readers to the emotions of this book. It is an honest description of the damaging effects of abuse in a child's life and how it does transcend into adulthood.

My efforts to seek recovery and healing are investments for my future. No one can help a person who does not help themselves first.

The "child within" that we leave behind will become adults forgotten in statistics; if we don't learn the truth to the horrible secrets within. The mental abuse doesn't stop even decades later for a child abuse survivor.

The mental abuse continues on within ourselves until we stop it by accepting the truth of the damage within. We have to begin working through these layers that have robbed us for too long.

In sharing this book, I know that I am not alone. I want others to know that they are not alone too. I have shared my story with many child abuse survivors. I can only hope this will help you in understanding your own abuse issues as much as it has for me sharing my truth.

I hope you can open your heart, mind, body and soul; to the truth of your life. I hope you find the beauty of sharing life with those who do appreciate you for the beautiful person that you are, no matter where your roots began.

This book is of: emotional trauma, flashbacks, triggers, domestic violence, sexual abuse and ritual abuse.

Personal discretion is highly recommended. This material may be disturbing to some readers who do not understand this topic of abuse. It may trigger flashbacks and memories if you have been abused.

Please use caution when reading the layers of mental rape and sexual invasions that are held within these pages. The truth to recovery and healing is a process that we all must work through differently at our own comfort. This book is not to offer professional help. I am not a therapist or a trained professional. We all recover differently and when we are ready to seek out this truth about the abuse that we went through.

I am an individual who cares enough to share my experience hoping that it will help others to seek your truth too. I want you to know that you are not alone.

Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of those mentioned in this book. Their involvement and participation in my life are significant characteristics to my views and perceptions. These individuals gave me the courage to share my survival story of "The I in Me".

These words are my personal story and views. These are my perceptions and my encounters of what I saw through my eyes and felt in my heart. This is the truth of my abuse that I have suffered within.

If you feel compelled to dissect this information as a statistic, do not think about it. I am only one of many. This is for education and presentation of the damage that has occurred to only one voice. I am only one of millions.

There are many who have suffered greater than me. Their stories and voices will speak a difficulty that I cannot comprehend, but one that should be shared to help society eliminate this tragedy of the loss of childhood innocence.

All survivors of Child Abuse, Incest, and Ritual Abuse; have their own views and stories to tell. One recovery method may work for one person and not for another person. Don't give up on seeking help that you may need. It is never too late to heal the damage within.

I hope to encourage other survivors to reach deep within and share your story too. These stories will be the true statistics and the avenue of real prevention to stop child abuse!

No one can transcribe from therapy sessions or accumulate data of facts without the truth of every child abuse survivor.

I have read many books that capture the essence of surviving Child Abuse, Incest, and Ritual Abuse, but nothing will reveal the depth of damage that is done into adult lives until adult survivors come forth and share their stories too.

It is our responsibilities as adults to share our childhood trauma with other survivors and with society to break the taboo of ignorance that has plagued too many generations thus far.

Our children of tomorrow depend on us today to speak these truths of society.

We live in a society that allows us to speak silent pen names in support groups to alleviate some of our symptoms of abuse by sharing on the Internet. These support groups and programs online are there to help us and they do. I have shared with many online.

However, until faces and names are brought together to showcase who we are and what happened to us; nothing will change.

Child abuse will continue and tomorrow's timeline will still hold adults who ache within from the innocence taken from them. The questions will still be asked that will never be answered. The perpetrators are free to hurt children. There is no excuse for this.

May you find your courage to speak your truth.

The truth is the cruelest dose of therapy that a survivor can admit. But with this truth, you will find: peace, liberation, self-identity, and characteristic traits within your own heart to amend the damage within.

Your opinion of this content is your opinion.

If you seek the facts of my story please proceed. You will find an adult woman who has struggled all of her life to stay on the right side of the track.

I have been a contributor and asset in everything I have tried to accomplish. You are reading this book because I decided to be true to myself and share this truth with others to help know that it not just one person, it is not just two people, there are millions who have suffered in child abuse. We are not alone. We must never forget this on our path to recovery and healing.

I have been gainfully employed in ideal occupations. I have been employed with the United States Census. I have provided assistance as an award winning contributor of the West Virginia National League of Postmasters. I had an award winning career with the United States Postal Service that I chose to voluntarily resign so that I could live my dream.

You are reading this dream by me sharing my story to help others.

This book is the first of many that you shall read of my "out of the box" thinking of life.

You will find through this journey as you read, how a child became mentally abused as a ritual of family devotion. You will see how a child will do what they are told even if it hurts them. You will read how a growing teenager would lie to the court of law that let her down once and didn't protect her. You will see a lifestyle of living that some may relate to and others may not.

You will read how an adult woman spent two decades of her life trying to grow her voice.

As I stand upon these words that I have written,
I did caution you to my truth before you proceed.

If child abuse really bothers you, please become pro-active to stop the adult ignorance that allows it to continue. If you are a child abuse survivor, please seek therapy and help yourself so that you may gain strength to help other children from suffering the same fate.

Child Abuse can be prevented by every adult out there.
It becomes too late when it is your own child who has been abused,
isn't it?

Examine your own life and the individuals that you have in your daily environment.

The only true selfish behavior to obtain as an adult is to protect your child and other children. I choose to be a selfish parent now as you read this and for those who choose to be selfish to protect our children first.

One word of advice, please grab the tissues, this is going to be the most emotional read that you will encounter I am sure.

Please spread the word if you feel this book will help others. Please offer feedback, so that I may shape up my skills to help others even more. When one person takes the time to help another, the bridges of humanity will be built; not by one pair but by many taking the time to share and care~

Welcome to the My Chapters

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Chapter One Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

These memories and emotions are as vivid to me; as the day that they occurred while I am writing this. The flooding of emotions within almost prevents me from writing this...almost.

It is because of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Ritual Abuse. I fight daily to overcome things I had no control over as a child.

I feel these emotions. I feel these terrors. I cycle the confusion in my mind with these puzzle pieces that will never be put together. I feel ashamed. I feel guilt. I feel hurt. I feel pain. I feel like I am on a roller coaster of another's person words when writing this story to you. I am an adult capturing my "child within" to allow her to speak and make sense of the nonsense that lives within.

It is not because of anything that I did that created this horror within. It is because of the adults that were in my life who could have spoken up and done what was right for the child that I was and to protect my brother and sister.

They chose not to. As an adult and a parent, I cannot conceive how adults would not protect children at all cost from harm.

I am not a perfect human being or parent. My daughter will grow up and have issues I am sure of this because of the skills I will lack in her life to be the parent to her that I should have been, if only my circumstances were different for me.

I am trying every day in educating myself and learning all that was robbed from me as a child.

That has to speak something for many generations ahead of me that one person did make that difference to stop the abuse and the mentality of control that I was subjected too.

Life is not perfect and no one is, but if we try to fix the wrongs of our own life by helping others- shouldn't that make a huge impact that carries beyond the hurt and pain that we suffered? That is my goal from all that I have learned about myself is to help others and give them the good that I know that exists in life.

Society can play ignorant about the factors of abuse and refuse to believe that adults can and do harm children. This ignorance will breed future generations of abuse that occurs long after the children are adults themselves. No one who perceives themselves as an adult should ever tolerate the abuse of a child.

The consequences of child abuse will carry on with the adult while their "child within" bleeds into society.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder harms a sufferer with an experience of an internal body horror. This disorder will vividly put a victim back in those memories of times that were created allowing the victim to feel the emotions of fear, terror and nightmare. The mental confusion of reality becomes broken down from our senses, our visions, the sounds around us, and the smell of the air, or the music we hear and the media in front of us. It becomes an altered state of mind that is not our own awareness of the reality that we have in front of us now.

There are internal flashbacks of puzzles that occur that can strike down the strongest adult in moments of time that they cannot understand or realize what it is that is happening and why.

The fear, the scare, the anger, the emotional crying or fighting the urge to go off in rage are some of the triggers that I have experienced.

I have awoken at night and be so terrified to go back to sleep. I don't want these images anymore. I don't want these visions. I don't want to fight in my sleep. I want to rest. I don't want to ever experience this split body and mind loss of control again.

The shaking tremors of crying like I will never live another day or that I am not safe as an adult. This is a silent hell that makes it impossible for others to understand if they never lived it.

If you can imagine the worst of your fears coming true in your mind and being powerless to stop the effects of what you see, hear, smell, feel and touch in your soul; this is what happens.

These occurrences are called triggers. These triggers affect the daily functions of a victim's mental and physical awareness of reality. A victim can find out what causes their triggers by seeking out the core of their souls to reveal why these incidents are happening.

A person can identify what triggers these mind games when they are strong enough to admit the truth of the damage within.

These triggers develop into a cruel experience of a life out of body examination every time flare-ups occur. It takes us back to a time and place that our memories should have never subjected us too.

I feel as if I lose sense of myself, my identity, my reality and my awareness during these episodes.

Even if I tell me that I am OK; it doesn't stop my body from lashing out in sweats, shaking, tears streaming down my face or feeling hatred toward myself and everyone around me. I feel as if my body has betrayed my mind control or vice versa when PTSD flare-ups occur.

I used to believe that PTSD was only for Veterans or those whom suffered at the hands of War. My war is an internal war of right and wrong.

It is one of whom to believe, who not to believe and somehow piece together these puzzle pieces to make my own conclusions to get past surviving and to live as any adult would want without mental invasion or persuasion.

Somehow, my emotions feel amplified because of PTSD. I can close my eyes and feel the same emotions that I had as a child of nine years old. I am in those surroundings again. I can smell, hear, see, and almost touch that memory again as if I were living it now.

Since educating myself and learning more about how to cope with this disorder; I have found that I can use this strange sensation to amplify the good memories too. It is a psychological game to me. That is what I call "mind games" within my own mentality so that I can take back that control of what was taken from me.

A survivor of PTSD cannot control the flare-ups or prevent these horrific mental events from controlling our safe lives completely. We have to work through these occurrences as they do happen and find out what caused them and why they happen.

My flare-ups are few and far between in these years of recovery but when they occur, I must work through them.

This condition has robbed my daily functions for me to want to make it another day sometimes. I will force myself to work through these triggers no matter how emotionally hard it is or what is revealed from my past. I refuse to allow it to control me anymore.

I accept that I have this disorder, but I control how I deal with it. I can't erase its existence from my life, but I have survived learning how to take the bad and turning it into something good. I have chosen to do this for me. If I didn't; I couldn't survive this internal mentality.

PTSD sufferers can control how we respond and become aware of what triggers our mental upsets. Every case is different and it is left up to us to know our bodies, minds and souls; above anyone.

A doctor can diagnose you and give you medication, but if you don't realize for yourself who you are; it will not help you.

It is an internal mind game of the cruelest kind. No doctor or professional can feel what you do, see what you do, hear what you do or know what your internal "mind games" are to you.

I believe self-identity is robbed when one suffers from PTSD as in my case.

I was forced to believe, forced to decide, forced to succumb to others around me in making decisions that were better for my family than for my own self growth and identity. My identity became robbed in my childhood. Now, I must fight within myself to reclaim the person and "child within" that I should have always been. This works for me.

Ritual Abuse and Incest has not only taken away my childhood that I will never have or the innocence to know that pure feeling of heart. It has left me with PTSD and the ugliness of what lies, secrets, deceit and confusion leaves behind.

I chose to stand up to all of the above and accept this truth. It is not one that I will live alone with anymore. When we share the truth in life of the ugly and the beauty, we share the values that make humanity great. Truth costs nothing but it is more valuable than any asset we could materialize in this world. We all deserve to experience this free gift to us all.

I call my condition of PTSD my time out. I suffer from Epilepsy that I developed at 18 years old due to a car accident that I was in.

These medical diagnoses have become my time-outs to take care of me. Both of these conditions together feel like an out of the body experience.

My seizures have auras. The sensations I have with PTSD can be just as strong and confusing as a seizure aura. I refuse to let any diagnosis stop me from living anymore.

I do allow myself to rest and revise my life with each incident. From every seizure I have, I learn something new about me and the tolerance level my body has to the surroundings and circumstances of my life.

From every PTSD trigger I have, I learn something new about a piece of my puzzle from my childhood and my emotions. I learned how to use my own voice to protect me now as an adult and hope this information will help others too.

Self-awareness and self-education is the best medical treatment and investment that a person can do in your life. Every medical diagnosis affects a person differently. It is every adult's responsibility to know how any diagnosis affects you personally and seek treatment.

One medication is not a cure for all body types and neither is the diagnosis. There is no antidote that can tell a person how to help themselves. However, by sharing what works for one person may help another to better understand that they are not alone in these conflicting issues.

We are all survivors in life who should bond together for a brighter tomorrow in everything that we accomplish within ourselves and for others too.

In using these techniques listed above, it gives me greater control of these diseases. It prevents me from having careless and dangerous behavior that could elevate either syndrome, but it does not alleviate this existence about my life no matter what I try.

Before I suffer a Grand Mal seizure in epilepsy, I have only a 10-30 seconds warning for me to get safe before my body and mind take control over all my functions of awareness.

My epilepsy has been diagnosed as trigger seizures. These seizures occur because of: light sensitivity, sleep deprivation, excess alcohol consumption, and stress for me. Every case of epilepsy and PTSD is different.

When my PTSD flares-up, I become excessively emotion filled and consumed in thoughts, sensations, fear, lack of mind control and sometimes body control. I have to cry. I have to be sad. I have to hate. I have to seek out my soul to work through this constructively.

I have to hang on to the reality of the safety and truth that I have in my life now. I have to succumb to the visions within that tear down my emotions.

I have to allow my mind and body to work through this together to make sense of this internal hell when each episode ends. I have to keep hoping that with each terrifying and mind consuming process that another layer is shed closer to the end of never having another PTSD episode.

PTSD takes the importance of reality away from in front of me. I can't focus. I can't comprehend the mind and body association of how something that occurred to me as a child still reveals itself to me many years later.

I have been to therapy most of my life using many techniques, medications and alternative means of comfort to remove the triggers of PTSD so that it won't occur again. But it never goes away completely. PTSD does find its way back to slow me down again. But it will never stop me.

I don't know that PTSD can be fully cured. It becomes a part of the diagnosis of our souls. I feel as if it presents itself to me, so that I can make sense of the things in my life that didn't or don't from my childhood. It makes me realize how the decisions that I make as an adult were only repercussions of abuse.

I didn't realize my complete truth before I was officially diagnosed in 2005 with PTSD. I am aware now and learning more daily. I view PTSD as a dose of truth. It forces me to accept the wrong that was done to me so that I may get closer to peace and sanity of mind and heart.

This is my personal evaluation so that I will take care of me. For me, PTSD has been taking a mirror and looking at my many layers within to my soul so I can find that peace of mind that will be waiting on me at the end. I know it is there.

I have felt those days of peace and as soon as they come, they are gone again. But I know with education, determination and persistence of the heart and soul of finding me that this will happen.

This will be my reward even if it takes my entire lifetime dedication to get there. I know it will happen. My mind and heart have brought me this far and it will carry me through.

It is very scary and it hurts like hell that I am an adult woman with the responsibility of a child and gainful employment, but cannot rid myself of this internal demon who comes to visit me.

I accept the responsibilities I have toward myself so I can take care of my daughter and my obligations in life so that I can continue on. I accept that PTSD is a part of who I am. I can't run from it. I can't fake that it doesn't exist. I can't pretend anymore that this ugly truth is my remnants of a childhood in hell.

The emotional aspect of PTSD for me has allowed me to feel deeper, think harder, attempt the unthinkable, fear nothing, and yet, the hell games occur within that I can't stop.

Even simple minor things to others become big obstacles for me to work through, identify, cope constructively and move on after learning what triggered each occurrence.

When the world of abuse controls your mind, your body, your actions, your thoughts, and your circumstances for many years; it is hard to break that cycle of mentality that was mere survival tools of your identity.

When one isn't surviving, what is left of their personality? When one isn't being controlled by another, what does one do to occupy their time and mind?

When one is waiting for acceptance or rejections from those that control, how does one function on their own? These are just a few of the million questions that I have asked and answered the best that I could for my own sanity.

The mirror into my own soul has been my best friend and my journals of writing have been the clarity to help me to give definition to the unexplainable in my life's circumstances.

I don't want to survive. I want to live as anyone would without fear, flashbacks, memories, triggers, pain, hurt, shame, guilt, anxiety, depression, bipolar, dissociation, and Doormat Syndromes.

I don't want to constantly battle myself within because I just can't make sense or heads and tails of things without learning trial and error constantly or seeking out the education I need just to keep up in this adult world. I am aware daily of the lack of education and the fundamentals that I never learned through normal childhood development because of the abuse that I did suffer.

Somehow, even with all the above, I can view PTSD as humbling in my personal evaluation of me. I feel insightful in the conversations I have shared with many child abuse survivors. I can relate to others more than they can me. PTSD can only control us if we fully allow it.

There is good even in the bad of life, if only we are able to squint to find it. I squint.

People will strain through an eye of needle to dig out dirt and secrets of gossip to spread in useless conversations. When it comes to squinting to see the good out there, most can't or won't see the good in others. It is so much easier to accept a lie then to face the truth.

Maybe you will understand this paragraph more when you have read the whole book, but who knows since we all perceive things differently, even in the same situations.

Just be careful not to go out of your way to talk about another when they might be the best person to ever have crossed a second of your path; that is all that I am saying.

I am no expert on any topic of life. I seek my inner soul to become an asset in all that I get involved in. I use my strengths to help others.

However, this behavior never comes without repercussions. I find in myself and other survivors that I have talked to that we become a doormat.

What is the so-called "Doormat Syndrome" you ask? It is a desire and need to do something for others even at the expense of ourselves. We become a target to fill a constant need, even if we hurt ourselves.

You may know the feeling of wanting to belong, to assist, and the constant desire to help others. You know the guilt of saying, "No".

This has been the hardest reality for me to grasp in recovering. I battle sometimes when saying "No." The complications in my mind do burden me over the self analysis and evaluations constantly. No one should have to constantly program their mind to help themselves and break out of thought cycles that were not your own to begin with. But this is exactly what has happened to my adult life now. It's reprogramming or changing mind set of the damage within.

It is realizing the neglect that I felt as a child and never being accepted for who I was. I have conversed with many adult survivors who have felt the same need to do better for others even when it becomes a burden to us.

It is admitting that we were not given an equal opportunity to be a child. We were not given that sacred feeling of knowing truth, trust, guidance, direction and protection.

We cannot allow ourselves to become adult victims because of the poor decisions that we saw in our childhood or in the adults we want to help now. No one can help another human being unless they help themselves. Therapy, counseling, medication and rehabilitation will not help another soul who is not ready to admit the truth of their abuse. DNA family cannot be left out this equation. If family cannot and will not help themselves in accepting the truth, you are not obligated to help them anymore.

Chapter Two Ritual Abuse

I did not know that Ritual Abuse existed until 2005. My second decade of life revealed how this condition was a layering of my characteristics in my personality due to the mental control of abuse that I was subjected to from my DNA family.

I never knew I had PTSD and did not realize that Incest had stained my inner being until this moment in time. I was on an island and felt I was drowning and no one could or would save me. I did not know what was wrong with me or how to begin helping myself.

Here I was an accomplished business woman of the world. I had my daughter and my husband to go home to daily. My DNA family was actively in my life. I was successfully promoted in the United States Postal Service as a Postmaster. I should have been on top of the world. I had every reason to celebrate. I was accomplished personally and professionally.

However, I became emotionally distraught and crying all the time. I felt as if my internal mentality was going to shut down the major organs that allowed me to be physically alive.

I felt shame, guilt, hate, neglect, alone, anger and so much frustration that I didn't want to live anymore. My emotions were killing me with this circle jerk of tearful nightmares with no obvious reasons that I could define or write down to understand.

I felt as if every decision that I had made up to this point in my life was a lie and a disguise of who I was.

I felt like I was branching out and becoming someone I should have been all of my life. But why did everyone around me seem to be so unhappy and disgruntled with me?

Why wouldn't anyone share my happiness? Why couldn't my DNA family see that I was doing the best for my daughter and me? Why didn't anyone care enough to say they were proud of me? Why did I care if my DNA family cared or not? They didn't when I graduated high school so why did it matter now?

I went to my best friend. I verbally cried these ramblings to my best friend of this emotional battle going on inside. I was asked why I was so emotionally distraught. I had all the reasons in the world to be the happiest person alive. All I could say was I was scared of him again. I was afraid of my dad.

I don't know why at this point in my life, that my dad still had influence on me. I had overcome and survived these circumstances but this would still haunt me now and why?

I knew that I seemed content up to that point in all that I did.

I knew that I had been content with the decisions I had made up to that point in my life or so I thought. But now, I knew I had to go back to therapy. I couldn't cope with my unhappiness and my grief within. I should have been experiencing that feeling of accomplishment that adults should be entitled to.

This feeling of accomplishment was the first time in my adult life that I realized that I was not wrong for being myself. I realized that all of my life had been for my DNA family.

I lived their ideas. I lived their concepts. I lived their religion. I lived a life that was based upon their goals and silence.

But I could not do it anymore. I knew there was help for me. I knew that I had to stop and take the time to help myself.

As I went back to therapy in 2005 to find me, I am taking you back with me. I want you to try to imagine a life that always left you with more questions than answers. This was and is my life.

By sharing my writing with you, it is like I am opening my diary pages to the world and saying here is the truth. You read this and you decide what must be done to help child abuse victims and adult survivors. You pull the psychological evaluations from it.

You determine how help is needed to make a difference for others out there like me. There are many of us. There should be a zero tolerance judgment for all perpetrators that abuse children. This mental abuse of constant verbal lashings that tears the soul of a person's identity should never be allowed.

I felt so horrible that it is sickening now to reflect upon. I was an adult. My life was being broken down into the mentality of a scared child again. This should never be allowed to happen.

As I scheduled that appointment and went in to therapy, I allowed myself to release all of the truth I had hidden for many years. I let it all go in this session of my time. This was the first time I ever voiced my truth of the silent child within.

I cannot tell you the weight that was lifted off of my heart, mind, body and soul; in telling this truth. The verbal ramblings, the rivers of crying and the violent shaking of my body were the hardest truthful release I have ever physically and mentally experienced.

It was verbalizing my fear, my anger, my shame, my hate, my pain, my grief, and how they had robbed me from becoming a person that I should have been all my life.

This release of lies, deceit, and secrets were now shared about every adult individual in my life who consumed my childhood from the good and the bad of their influences.

I choose to finally open my eyes and my heart to the truth of all that I had survived and was honest with myself.

I did not give regards to my dad, to my mother, to my grandparents, to my brother, to my sister, to my husband or to my precious daughter as I sat on this couch in this room of release. Their title did not matter. Their roles in my life didn't matter. Their good of love or their bad of stupidity did not matter. I realized for the first time that my life was a lie based upon repercussions of mental persuasions.

My childhood, my adult hood, the choice to get married at 18, the unplanned event of becoming a mother, and this unknown path of being a career employee was all a lie and repercussion of what I had survived through.

I had opened up my layers by finally succeeding for me. My mind and body were ready to talk the truth for the first time ever in my life with no excuses, no reasoning and no influence from another soul. I heard my "child within".

The emotional trauma that caused me to open my eyes was because of my ability to finally accept the real truth of the facts of my life and what had been happening to me.

For you see, I had survived up until then using coping survival skills that I learned as a child to get by without really knowing "the child within" or healing myself. I would cope and do just enough to get by to make others happy and to keep the peace. I was good at not opening my mouth to the discomforts around me. I was the silent voice that I was created to be.

I didn't realize that what I was doing was further subjecting me to abuse and my daughter. I felt I was doing the best for everyone with my good intentions to keep the peace in my DNA family and for my daughter. I was not fully aware of my soul even though I was consciously content with my life up until this dramatic juncture that provided self-awakening of my truth.

I could handle the truth of my heart and the wrong that was done to me at this point in my life. By claiming my right to work and making choices to stand on my own two feet in this occupation; it gave me the strength and support I needed to know that I could finally be true to myself. I was finally safe to admit what I held in for many years.

These layers of my life were coming to reveal their self now. I knew I was ready to conquer these demons within.

When a person is controlled and not able to grow into their own self-identity, self-awareness, and be comfortable in the mind and skin that they are in; it's mental abuse of the worse kind.

Your thoughts are not your own. Your actions are not your own. Your happiness and sadness are provoked and created by their wants, needs and desires.

You are a child trained to be as they want. You grow up to become an adult based upon their principles of your identity.

This element of Ritual Abuse in family structures takes away an individuals right to equality of being treated as an independent person.

I have felt their words cut my heart because of my lifestyle differences to step out and above my raising from what they wanted me to believe and see. I have felt the tears stain my soul as they tried to force me with guilt, shame and the loss of love to comply with their standards of living in silence of the truth.

I can not stand by anymore and listen to anyone that dictates how a person should or should not live. Equality begins by freedom of thought and actions. This equality should stand for the rights of children and every adult out there.

No one on the face of this planet has the right to control another human being.

Three –
My "Child Within"

As I was sitting in this therapist's office detailing my timeline of confusion in circumstances, he just sat there listening quietly as he handed me a box of Kleenex.

I already knew the truth in my heart before I walked in this room and was grieving all the loss of my heart and my life that I had known. It was a lie that I had carried on since the days I was a child.

It was like I was asleep for many years, functioning and surviving but, not really living a life of awareness until this moment of my life that led me to this safe room of therapy again.

The process of opening my eyes to the truth began as I stepped out of the comfort zone of acceptance that my DNA family had built around me and led me to believe all these years.

Because of my new contacts in the world of business associates and achieving goals that were not a part of my immediate family; I was standing on my own two feet. I was learning how to enjoy life and become myself without persuasion and the mind control of those DNA family members who affected me for many years in my life.

I had been influenced by my marriage, my role as a mother, and my DNA family in my life up until I began to work. I found the truth of who I was and how submissive of a person that I had become.

I had fought, educated and worked to get a goal that I wanted to achieve. I wanted a career status in the United States Postal Service. I wanted to be a Postmaster.

I knew I was smart enough to accomplish this. I knew that hard work, dedication, persistence and educating myself as I went on this journey would pay off for me.

But this self-discovery of my own backbone and heart; was the elements that brought on this breakdown of the walls I had allowed them to build around me. My silence and truth were coming forward of that little girl I secretly hidden within for decades.

I wasn't a bad person but, I was a naïve soul who believed in the hope of change. I believed in this family of dysfunction and that I could truly live my life without my husband ever knowing or my daughter the levels of abuse that I had suffered. I kept the hard truth from them but, didn't eliminate the word Incest from our vocabulary. The hardest reality to accept was not allowing me to see the truth in these people that I loved so much.

I sat and cried and rambled on that couch past my session time. The therapist gave me terms that changed my entire outlook on life and my acceptance of who I was. I was introduced to: "The Child Within", Ritual Abuse, and the word "triggers" of "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder".

My god, I was not crazy! I was not insane! I was not falling apart or dying but, I was learning who I was meant to be. I was starting to "voice" me! I was never emotionally unstable. I was emotionally amplified. Now, I knew why. I had the terms to help me progress in my life from here on out. That is just what I have done. That is why you are able to read this book now.

I gave therapy the truth. I had never opened my heart, my soul and my eyes as I was ready to do now. I was able to forgive myself for sheltering the child within me that had never healed.

The therapist said that I was insightful and that most abuse survivors of Incest, Ritual Abuse, and PTSD will "open their eyes to the truth" when they are forced to deal with it usually upon the death of an abuser or when a person is ready to handle the truth within of what really happened in their life.

I was emotionally exhausted, scared and so confused when leaving this session.

My husband did not know the truth of my details when we married. He knew that Incest and felony were factors in my DNA when he married me but he never knew the real truth of all the lies that I held within. I feared telling him. I didn't know how he would react.

But more importantly, I couldn't let him know the real truth of my family for fear that he would keep them away from me at that time of our marriage when I was 18 years old when I believed that I needed them and he did too. We needed this family to survive. I constantly feared that one day he would make me chose this DNA family or a life with him that we were trying to make for ourselves.

The fear was always there after our daughter was born that he might try to take her from me. I feared that if I ever told him the truth of the damage within me that he might view me as incapable of being a good mother to our child. These were my secret fears.

This internal doubt continued my entire life from 1976 until 2005. I look back and know all the years that I wrote in my journals and cried for no reasons was because I did not admit the full truth and did not seek education and self-awareness of my own identity in therapy. I listened to my DNA family for words of comfort, support, encouragement and truth. I sought them out for truth and to hear those words that: "I was a survivor!"

I want to live and not survive anymore. You can never get a truth from a lie no matter whom the individuals are that you love. The lie in my life is that I would not share or release from them. I feared their rejection if I would tell. I felt that society would not understand. I feared being alone. I fear being tainted. I fear that I would be labeled a damaged person. Most of all, I feared the truth. The truth in me had been silenced and I didn't know if I was strong enough to admit to all the bad and the good. I didn't know if I could make sense of these layers myself.

I knew I had to. I wanted to live. I wanted to feel free from this burden of silence and lies. I wanted to scream that it all made sense now. I now know why I do this and did not do that with all the choices I had ever made in my life. I was learning to grow up for me with no influences. I was seeking my own identity to claim something that I wanted to help my daughter and me.

The entrapment of emotions, flashbacks, thoughts, smells, surroundings and blaming myself secretly within is because of PTSD. It is a hell that words cannot show you or make you feel. You are never right and even when you think you are; it's easier to believe that others are right.

As I was blindly forced to believe the lies of these fake smiles, laughter and compassion in this family, I began to believe it as the truth of the real world too.

You believe them when they tell you that you will survive. You believe them when they tell you that you will be okay because they appear to be fine too. You believe these lies from your abusers because you have a hope of a child's heart that never grew up. You are a child in an adult's body who was hurt and didn't want to accept the truth of the reality they gave you. It is easier to believe and live a lie then to accept the darkness of truth from these people that consumed your life.

It is no one's fault, but the adults who knew better and did nothing. When they hugged me and told me that that they loved me, I believed them. When they told me that I was a good child, I believed them for the right reasons and not the lies they used to control me.

I was beginning to see this for myself and trusting my own heart. I used my own eyes and began learning as a mother for my own daughter. I began to set the example of truth to her, by accepting it first myself.

I practically had been living a lie of their thoughts, their wants, and their needs before my own up to that point of my life. I was trying to hold together a hope that a child wants in their family when there was none.

It is mind aching difficult to trust your own judgment because your life is a controlled lie. How do you live truth when all you know is lies, secrets, deceit and camouflage your true soul to protect others and yourself from the criticism that lay waiting when you do tell? How can anyone grow to believe their own heart when others constantly tell you that you are wrong or stupid for it or that it is not their way so you must be wrong?

Individuals who have never felt abuse and trauma from the hands and voices of a loved one will never comprehend the layers of mending that survivors have to evaluate within themselves to reach that point of a peaceful mind and innocent heart that becomes robbed of us as children.

The innocent heart and mind of a child is an adventure of self-identity to find their destination into adulthood. When a child is subjected to abuse, this adventure becomes halted and lost in time never to be retrieved.

It is like taking the air out of our lungs and filling them with harsh chemicals that we cough up and never knowing what clean fresh air feels like. We only know that our souls are choking daily in this silence. It is like being in a shell of four walls and never having the contents needed to complete the interior decorating that makes every person complete. This is Child Abuse. This is Incest. This is Ritual Abuse.

Children become what the adults want and need them to be in the skills they lack. Children become a pawn for the lack of responsibility that these adults are as abusers. They abuse children because they cannot accept adult responsibility and children are innocent at heart to believe these troubled adults. My whole existence was led in believing them and seeing their good, but never accepting their faults either.

In my silence, I was as they wanted me to be. But when I found my voice, I was everything that my family detested.

The therapist explained that the mind and body association of thoughts become estranged from one another in Child Abuse and in Ritual Abuse. It is a survival technique to cope for children of abuse.

Our bodies and minds will separate at different facets of our lives so that we can cope, we can survive and we never know the real truth to our emotional upset. It is a means of survival. I believed this to be a fact for me.

For you see, up until this breakdown of my life; I had spent many years upset, angry, hurt, not caring about no one, but me. I would hate everyone and everything but never sharing none of it.

I suffered in silence for fear of sharing and accepting the truth of my own heart.

I could not share this emotional build up inside because everyone around me would think I was crazy. I would cry for no reason. I would write down things that no one would understand in my poetry. I would constantly write and seek out meaning, peace and understanding of what was going on within my body and mind that wasn't making sense to me.

I would shake and have nightmares that I would never tell. My heart would race with no reason. I would get thoughts of hurting those closest to me.

I would just want to die from depression of thoughts of what might have been, what could have been, what did I do so wrong, and why didn't I do anything different. The internal thoughts were so controlling at times that all I did was cry in secret and write as fast as I could write and then let it go on paper and allow time to move on until the next episode occurred and never knowing why.

As I began to go back into therapy, I opened a door in me that I wasn't sure that I would be strong enough to survive this time.

I could accept that the abuse happened. I could accept that I was a victim of our state laws. I could accept the grief I had of loosing out on being a child. But I couldn't verbalize or bring myself to admit hate toward anyone. I couldn't accept saying goodbye to the very people that I loved the most in life, my DNA family. I had to find my own self-identity to survive so that I could live. That fear of truth was the hardest to accept.

I had been raped of my mind and sexually invaded by this family's control and they allowed it. These people that I cherished as my good characteristics were the same monsters that abused me further in their ideas and their comfort level of living a lie. I was their silence. I was their cover up.

They couldn't really love when they wanted me to protect them and hide the truth of what they had done to me. How could they treat anyone like that? Our whole family had been subjected to years of mental and religious control like that. Why and how could they accept it? I was only in my 20s and I saw it, why didn't they? When I was a child and I knew better, why didn't they?

Why didn't any adult in my life see it and do something about it? What about those that I loved the most? Love doesn't hurt like this. It's a lie when someone tells you that silence is the answer.

The pain I have suffered in admitting the truth will never be as debilitating as the life that I was living as their lie.

I promise anyone that. Do not fear because they told you too. The world is full of truthful people who will love you like friends and family should. Do not be deceived anymore.

My stomach hurt and my body shook from this reality of my life. I couldn't break the thoughts of how adults abuse children to become their sickening afflictions of destruction and mind control. Adults abuse the child's innocence and how it does affect the child's entire life even when they become an adult. I did so much weeping and grieving for those innocent dreams that I never knew and never would. I grieved the honesty that I believed in them. I hurt at the true pain that they caused me. I couldn't stop it now, I had begun finding me.

It became a flood of wondering thoughts. What I would have been if I could just play with kids without those worries, fears, shame, pain and guilt? What would I have done if I never knew mind control in my life or sexual perversions in my life? What would have happened if I didn't know what dirty secrets or lies of me were? What would my life have been like if I could have told an adult and someone would have helped me, my brother or my sister too? Who would I have told? Why didn't anyone listen or try to do more? Why didn't my state protect us? Why didn't the laws protect us? Who would believe me now? My family didn't do anything. What would I? What could I? Why didn't I?

Can you answer these questions for me? I didn't think so.

You cannot take 20+ years of molding, crafting, controlling and terrifying another and then expect them to walk away with no repercussions.

If someone stood over you 24 hours a day, seven days a week and hounded your actions, your thoughts, your social circle and your schedules; how would you break into your own identity?

When this is the only life of family structure that you know, you fear losing the only love that you have ever been shown. When you grow up in dysfunction, you believe that is the way the world is and that it is OK. When you step outside that circle of silence and begin to realize that life is not like that and people do not live like that; then the truth faces you.

The reality of self-awareness hits you harder than any lie you were ever told. It is called the truth.

You either chance society's rejections toward your views of being different or you go back to the family dysfunction just to feel you belong somewhere in the world. I felt that my family was the only ones that understood me. I needed them and they needed me.

That is until I stepped out far enough out of reach of their thoughts, wants, and needs to find my own. I found friends who did understand me. I found I could help others outside my family's demands. I found out that I could be accepted for the person that I wanted to always be. This was so important to me to help others.

I had seen the good that my DNA family had done to help other people in society even when they were covering up with lies and secrets behind closed doors. But in those feelings of helping, I was able to help me and not realize it. Even if it was not what my DNA family wanted me to do, by their definition of help, it was exactly what I should be doing for a greater purpose in my life.

This was my life. I had spent most of my life in a silenced lie and then one day, it felt like I was safe enough to wake up to the identity that I should have always been.

I was claiming the identity that I held within. I was away from my family and accomplishing my goals by working in an occupation that I loved. Through this outlet, it allowed me to see the truth of my heart in the safety of the good in the world that I had found. I was outside looking in at me.

I could now safely express the truth of my reality. I could be the person that I was meant to be. I would not let them keep this girl's dream buried deep within any longer.

I did not get this safe break until working for myself and achieving my own accomplishments outside of their thoughts and needs. It was my two feet that found the truth in my heart. It was with my own actions without their influence that allowed me to feel my self-identity for the first time in my whole life.

It did not matter what the occupation would have been or what task I would have chosen to work at, but it was the truth that I was doing it on my own.

I felt as if I had got breaks of peace or fresh air through my whole life that allowed me to tolerate my situation, but in the end I was suffocating and wanted to die at this point in my life as well.

A timeline of life will catch up to your mentality and force you to deal with the innocence that you lost as a child. I wish every adult out there would voice their truth of abuse.

I wish they could be brave enough to verbally communicate to each other and the educators and politicians to make them realize that this mentality does not go away and is very real. It is a factor that affects many adults who survive child abuse.

It is a lifetime of grieving what you never had.

You see it in others around you who were skilled with the tools needed to progress into adult life and who become accomplished adults, but you know you were left out. You know you were left behind.

Your heart is burdened because you know you were left behind in living life even after you get help. It will never be as it should have been. A child dies inside every time they are abused and it doesn't stop until an adult rescues them away from these environments and take them away from the adults that did this damage to them.

No matter how much you try to educate yourself and succeed, you will always lack those precious years of natural progression that you never saw. You have 18 years to catch up if you are lucky enough to realize your whole truth of childhood abuse when you reach 18 years old. If you realize and accept the truth later in life, it will take longer.

The way I see it, my life will always be two decades behind my biological age. No matter what my biological age represents, I will always be searching and educating myself to catch up to those years that I lost in their control. I was not OK. My smiles and outer appearance appeared as a content person so it seemed. But inside, my timeline was clashing and getting ready to erupt.

This is what I ncest, and the "Child Within", PTSD and Ritual Abuse leaves behind for you to carry with you. It's truly horrible that any child ever experiences this and adults carry these burdens of hell within. Criminals will not feel this level of pain no matter what punishment that they receive. Something is wrong with the world when children suffer like this. Wake up world!

It will never be about living life with a simple "Yes" or "No" answer for child abuse survivors.

It is never up to the child to force the adults to make the right decisions in their homes, in the judicial system, and in society. This burden of responsibility is for all adults to carry.

When a child abuse survivor grows up into adults, society will pay the price of this abuse. The years spent seeking medical treatment, education, rehabilitation, self-awareness and identity is a price that we all pay. Society suffers for everyone with effects of: segregation, ignorance, taboos, substance abuse, domestic violence and worse; abused children become an abuser as an adult.

Life will become one huge puzzle piece of ourselves that we have to dissect to get to the core of our own awareness using every tool out there to either alleviate our pain or seeking that source that will fix us.

We have to ask ourselves and evaluate:

- Who
- What
- When
- Why
- Where

It's not as simple as closing our eyes and it goes away. We can't just turn it off and on when we want.

It's about going back to the day that the trauma and horror began and admitting the lies that appeared and was believed as the truth. It's about standing up to the truth and the control that we now have power over.

It's holding the innocent child within that is hurt and seeking comfort. It is realizing that innocence is not a character trait, but a way of life that we became raped of that we'll never know.

These are literally lost years that we can never get back. We have to grieve that innocence that we never knew. We have to grieve the "Child Within". I believe the only constructive way to heal is to grieve our lost childhood and the loss of adult truth from those we loved and called family. It is the only healthy way to progress past the damage within. This was my healing key.

I could forgive. I could scream. I could verbally release all that I ever suffered in silence. But until I grieved and released what I never had, I was finally able to re-focus my life in seeking the education that I need to progress to the adult life that I should have had.

A normal childhood progression begins as an innocent nature. This is filled with trust, truth, love and curiosities of trial and error in normal development. This is achieved for a child in a home where the adults set the examples that guide and lead them constructively into adulthood.

In a home where a child is abused, this innocence is taken away from them. It is replaced with fear, with doubt, with control and with demands from their abuser and their immediate family members.

They become dysfunctional and become bonded with a mentality that becomes forced upon them. It is not until they are out of this environment before they learn to grow their own identity.

It will be many years later of becoming an adult before child abuse victims find out the damage of their minds and how much we get robbed of our childlike characteristics and the necessities needed to function as a productive adult in society.

First, we have to be willing to forgive ourselves as abused children. It is the only way that I know to personally mend the damage within of our secret thoughts. It's about ending the silence within and speaking our voices of the lies that we sheltered for the adults we loved as family.

We are not responsible for these adult actions. It's time to give back the truth of our pain, shame and guilt to the adults who did this. It doesn't matter if it is: DNA family, school officials, lawmakers or a failing judicial system. Truth is the only medicine to begin the healing process for all child abuse survivors.

Our voices deserve to be heard so that this knowledge can be used to prevent future abuse to children and to help survivors. All adults should be held accountable without regards to occupations or their title in life; when they are responsible for child abuse victims.

Children cannot physically control the adults harming them, no more than survivors can protect themselves as children. But we have to forgive ourselves in mind, body and soul for the damage that an abuser took advantage of.

If we fight ourselves and restrict the truth in our lives of what we suffered as child abuse victims, then we suffer as adults too. We had no control over these adults who knew better. Don't let them hurt you anymore.

I have shared many conversations with male and female adults about my story of Incest and Ritual Abuse and my medical diagnosis. I have found it easier for females to disclose child abuse than males.

In the moments of sexual abuse as a female child, or at least for me, we can train our mind and body to disassociate our genitals from visually showing sexual stimulation. This keeps our abuser questioning if he/she satisfied us in the acts of sexual abuse. Even as a female child, some of us; are able to separate our mind, body, and surroundings to alternative thoughts and places to prevent sexual stimulation when the abuser attacks.

Unfortunately, the male gender has less control over their mind and body. If a male becomes sexually stimulated physically, their genitals respond visually by showing their abusers. This impacts male child abuse victims on harsher and deeper levels of trauma. Males suffer mind and body betrayal and suffer submission of visual stimulation to their abusers.

It is almost like females can hide their sexual touches of stimulation. Males cannot. This makes therapy, trauma, and child abuse even more traumatizing to a male victim than a female.

Even though, both suffer deep within many layers of their souls. Both genders are worthy of help and should never feel ashamed to get help because you were abused by the hands of an adult when you were a child.

There is no excuse for any adult to ever touch a child inappropriately in their genitals. There is no excuse for any adult to rape a child's thoughts with controlling tactics that take away their growing independence and self-identity. An adult is not to abuse their right to privilege as a parent or guardian to a child.

The generations that suffer because of one abuser is a statistical fact that will never be justified in print until all survivors step forth with their own story as I am doing my own.

I am not knocking any professional field of therapy, doctors, politicians or adults who assist child abuse cases, however, do not write a book about your years of dissecting the minds of others so you can reap profitable earnings from their stories.

These stories, these traumas, and these emotions are the right of each survivor to tell, if and when they are ready. These are their statistics and their generations of dysfunction. It cannot be characterized into a literacy manual of guidance, training or prevention manual.

The psychological damage that occurs in a victim's life carries on long after the abuse ends. It's a fact of society that all adults should understand and realize. Any abuse to children is the worst conceivable reality that occurs in humanity. Do not be ignorant to this fact. What if it were child?

It is our responsibility as adults to protect the generations of tomorrow. We are to secure, heal, and help provide recovery to all individuals of child abuse and prevent its existence from tomorrow.

Child Abuse, Ritual Abuse, and Incest does occur in the state of West Virginia. I have personally shared my verbal story with over 200 Adult Incest Survivors in West Virginia.

I have found that Child Abuse and Incest does not discriminate in the richest of lifestyles or the poorest. It does not prefer male or female gender.

Child Abuse consists of adult control that prevents a child from experiencing the innocence of sexual privacy and seeking out their own identity. It is not to be dominated over as a proud family tradition.

ALL DNA DESERVES THE RIGHT TO SEEK OUT THEIR OWN SOUL'S HAPPINESS AND IDENTITY.

As a parent, it is not up to any adult to demand anything out of a child because you gave life to them. It is a privilege. Children are the promise of tomorrow that should never be taken advantaged of.

I was not given the privilege to the innocence of childhood. I was not given a gift of choice that "Yes, I can do this" or "No, I cannot do that".

I was not given a childhood of self-identity. I have unlocked and sought recovery for these events and circumstances that I couldn't control my whole life. The longer I seek recovery the more I find self-discovery and self-awareness to be the person that I should have always been.

I battle within to be free and speak my mind. I battle within to make the "yes or no" and "right or wrong" decisions. I battle daily. I accept this as a part of my life in knowing the truth. The word of truth has been the best therapy that I have found in my life. Can you accept the truth in your life?

The truth can be very hard to accept. It is very difficult admitting the truth of each protected layer of silence held within, but anyone can. You are worth it to make that soul investment in yourself. WE ALL ARE and WE ALL SHOULD. The truth of our hearts is the only key to release the damage within.

In my story, I became a child abuse victim by the hands and voices of those that I love as my family. The horror of the abuse only escalated because my whole family became victims of the state of West Virginia.

I hope you read until the end of this book; even if you have to take a break.

The names have been changed, but the events are factual. I do not write this book to seek out harm, hurt or judgment on no one. I know that our state laws did not provide justice, accountability or rehabilitation to my family. I hope that by sharing my truth that future measures will be taken to protect children, provide adult accountability, education, awareness and prevention to stop this abuse of humanity.

The truth is that most abusers of children were victims of child abuse themselves. They are a product of dysfunction.

This is no excuse for their behavior to hurt a child and they should be punished, but more importantly, they should be helped to deal with their trauma too. Should they be allowed back around children, NO!

Children should be protected at all cost!

I do not believe that any adult should ever have the legal right to children again if they hurt a child once, then they could do it again.

West Virginia is tainted for the dirty secrets of our hills and until our laws change and the truth speaks out from our citizens of abuse, it will never change.

This is my truth. You may take it or leave it. You may disregard it for your own comfort level. That is your privilege and this is mine. I use my voice as a gift to help others out there like me who face the daily struggles of healing and growing into their own identities of truth.

As adults who survive childhood abuse; we have to open our own eyes and minds to the truth of our own hearts. It is time to grow within yourself and become who you were meant to be. You don't have to be what they want you to be anymore. It stops with you.

You have my thoughts and support. I want to thank you for taking the time to read this as I have written this from my heart. May you find your voice and education as we journey to: "[The I in Me](#)".

Chapter Four
Where It Began

It is very easy when you are a child to have a great outlook on life. The ability to dream is so much easier as a child then when we become adults. This is very hard to do when you were abused as a child and look back through your adult eyes.

It was because of an abusive home that our memories become tainted.

Our origins determine what we hope to become as adults in our lives. It is because of our dreams as children that we are allowed to accomplish our visions into realities as adults. It is because of these childish dreams and joys that we find pleasures in life even though we were abused.

For instance, our musical genre that we enjoy as adults; I am sure stems from the days as a child growing up.

For me, it was the love of all music. From the country hits of the Kenny and Dolly era, to the Journey and Pink Floyd experiences; and right down to the gospel and bluegrass songs of humanity that were relevant to the Pentecostal Holiness religion we were guided with and embraced in our home.

My dad didn't always make poor choices. My mom didn't always choose prescription medications to alleviate her life struggles.

We always had an electronic outlet that we used to bring happiness in our family to share with one another. Music was our chosen physical release of the tensions we survived in.

We had the love of music in our hearts that carried us through and brought us together. Even though, in the darkest corners of our minds; was the reality of surviving through this nightmare of a life that we all secretly led.

As a small child of about four years old, my dad and mom had this great big jukebox in the tiny living room of our 14x70 trailer we lived in.

This music machine had everything money could buy in home stereo equipment. It was a big unit with the lights on the front panel. When you looked closer you could see the AM/FM turn dial radio, the multi-sized record player and the 8 track tape player.

It was great listening to the music and watching the lights dance on the front of this machine to the beat of the music. It really did light up this living room and the living conditions of this trailer.

The living room was the first room you entered into this mobile home. That stereo was the first thing you saw. Immediately off from this wide open living room were two small bedrooms on the right side of the wall. These 32-inch doors held separate bedrooms. The door to the left was my older brother's room that he had all to himself at this time era. The door to the right was the doorway to a shared bedroom for my younger sister and me.

I thought bunk beds were the only bed you could get for a long time growing up. That is usually all our beds ever consisted of. In the many moves that we experienced in my youth, there were times that the three of us shared one room.

However, at this time it truly was one of the littlest joys of being a kid. If my sister and I were scared, we would just slip into the other sibling's bed for comfort.

When the days were good, mom or dad would crank up the music to: Loverboy, Bob Seger, Funky town, Little River Band, Steve Miller Band and Guess Who. We would all dance, sing and just enjoy the music with any motion of movement that our bodies could release in the songs. We would sing as if we were stars. We would dance as if there were no rules.

We would have family members to stay on night with us that were big kids too. My mom's two younger sisters would come up to stay the weekends with us. It was so much fun. We would always anticipate getting a new record or an 8 track tape to listen to back then. It was the highlight of family fun.

During this time, my dad worked in the coal mines on night shift. My mom and her sisters would drink alcohol on the weekends while dad worked. It was fun to us kids because we could dance longer, the music would be louder and the laughter in this trailer was the greatest music to hear of all. I am sure our thin walls of this mobile home couldn't contain the sound of the music or our enjoyment of one another laughing. It was a good thing we did live on a hillside almost in the middle of nowhere.

It was the starting of a bad joke about my dad while he worked in the coal mines as a coal miner too.

I remember him looking so scary to me when he would come home from work. He would be covered from head to toe with coal dust. The only thing you could see was the white of his eyes and his teeth when he would smile. Even after he showered, the remnants of black still surrounded his hazel eyes as if he was wearing dark eye liner. He was a tall slender man built of great strength. But when he was in his coal dust attire, it was the image of a monster that will haunt me forever.

My mom was always a soft spoken lady who everyone enjoyed. She was the aunt that everyone wanted to see. She was the mother that everyone wanted to have on her good social days. She was of good humor back then.

She had such a unique style about her. She carried her feminine figure very well. She always wore clothing that accented her pretty figure without revealing her assets, so to speak. For everyone that saw my mom, they saw in a visual sense, a lady. Even though, her inner soul was slowly being destroyed I am sure. It wasn't with just the life my dad gave to her, but also the life of unresolved issues from her own childhood.

My dad was always the same character to the viewing public and still is. He was very intelligent and a Jack-Of-All-Trades. He could literally take anything apart that was broken and fix it. My dad or my mom never applied the ability that they had in themselves to do any better than what they were raised in. They saw no need too.

It was easier to accept that my dad was a double shadowed creature and for my mom to keep getting lost into her own mentality to just survive.

My dad was a victim of a terrible childhood too. Incest was a dark secret that haunted his family. He was shown verbal abuse and beatings from the hands of his own father. He was over shadowed by a mother who tried to protect him, but as the same time taught him that he could do wrong and mommy would get you out of it. He always thought it was OK. That if the world around him liked him and thought he was a good man, then it didn't matter what went on under his own roof. This was his house, his wife and his children to do as he pleased and no one could stop him, not even the law.

Mom saw Dad as the protector, provider and the best she could do with three children and a 9th grade education. She figured if she would cling to my grandparents, my dad's parents; then she could survive following their lead since his family all had survived.

Even with all the dirty secrets, my dad's family survived through it as did many in this rural area of West Virginia who suffered the same generational disease of child abuse.

Now that you have the general idea of where this is going of my perceptions of my dad, let's finish the beginnings of what would be a reality of a nickname gone wrong for my dad.

You see, while my dad was employed in the coal mines, he received the horrible name Baby Welfare for a CB handle.

CBs used to be a great form of communication before cell phones.

Our house was always loaded in electronics that were hardly ever new, most of them used and found at the trash dumps that we would salvage through.

It was the philosophy that "Another man's junk is another man's treasure". The CBs were small compact machines with spiral cords that contained a microphone. These airwaves could transmit miles of conversations for free.

You could easily hear the locals talking to one another. You could hear the coal truck drivers talking while traveling the holler below. You could also pick up cordless phone conversations on them before the megahertz were increased. It was the typical communication for anyone that lived within a 10 mile radius of each other especially if you had no house phone, which we never did while I was growing up for any duration of time. The bill was never paid so it was always disconnected.

The Baby Welfare handle started as a joke because dads' fellow workers said that if he didn't start trying harder at work, he was surely going to end up as Baby Welfare. This meant that he would be on welfare the rest of his life. This also meant that our family was destined to public assistance.

He was laid off at the mines in the early 80s due to a slowing economy for the coal industry. We never knew how true those words would ring out until it happened.

The slow disintegration of my dad's employment, my mom's mentality and the good times became few and far between following these days.

In this time era, the sexual abuse started on my sister and me which were some of my most innocent memories of good and bad for me about my family.

My baby sister was my motivation even then. She was a little girl who hadn't even started school yet. She was only 19 months younger than me. I felt like her protector even then. She was someone I couldn't really play with as I would have a school friend because she was my sister. I would look out for her when I could. But we would have fun by playing dolls, playing school, comfort each other when we were scared and invent things to laugh at to make something funny.

She had such natural pretty blond hair that I envied even as a child. She was the baby girl of our family. I had petite facial features even back then and she had the roundest little cheeks, the prettiest blue eyes and a smile that would light her face up that would memorize anyone she was around.

She always commanded the attention of our parents and family members. When she talked, they listened. When she laughed, they laughed with her. Even now, she still possesses this strong loud personality that I could never wear as proud as she does. She wears it very well.

Our older brother was only one year and one week older than me. I was due to be born on his first birthday. He was actually almost three years older than our younger sister.

As if life wasn't hard enough, I was the middle child never feeling I fit in other than being responsible for my immediate family. I was and am the exact opposite of my siblings even now.

My brother was always a rambunctious child. He was like my dad, he thought if he could take apart anything he touched that he could put it back together. I am not sure how many toys he had that he could play with after his disassemble attempts, but he would try.

He thought if he could reach it, he could take it. If he could climb it, he could come back down safely from it. If an adult did it, he could too and if he could imagine it, he did it.

He had such sweet facial features for a boy. He had dimples that would emerge on his cheeks when he would smile his "I am up to something" smile. His eyes would shine at each new experience of discovery he would attempt.

His ability to make others smile and laugh came so easy for him and his laugh was so genuine even at that young age. You couldn't help, but to share his joy.

The three of us would play together in the dirt outside, we would invent things to do, and we had little pedal cars that we would ride out in our yard since dad had money to buy things before he got laid off. We always had animals to love on us or chase. We truly enjoyed those precious years of our sister and brotherhood at those tender ages.

My brother's curiosity cost him a few whippings with a belt at that tender age of 4. He would tear his window screen out of his bedroom window when he was old enough to reach it to play outside in the snow in his pajamas, just because he could. He tried to reach a pan of hot boiling homemade fudge and almost lost a few fingers just to take a taste test. He almost electrocuted himself climbing onto our washer and dryer in the bathroom to touch the breaker box to the electrical supply to the trailer, just to see if he could do it. He always managed at that young age to occupy himself with the "I can do that" with no limitations, no responsibilities for his actions and no worries of the consequences. He still retains this logic today.

It's an admirable trait that most would find unrealistic and perhaps dangerous or unproductive to society. I always viewed him as having the creativeness and the boldness to accept oneself no matter what anyone else said. He is so strong and yet so weak even now. My brother has the heart of gold for the male gender. I look up to him very much.

In all this discovery of my siblings and embracing the family I was surrounded by, I was already anticipating heading to Kindergarten. My brother had already embarked on the journey and didn't like it. I couldn't wait just to see what it was like.

My Kindergarten days were so great. Due to the wonderful teacher I had and getting to meet new friends. I just enjoyed getting to learn new things and being away from my family. This was my "me" time. I was sad knowing that I had to leave this elementary school at the end of this school year.

The school I would spend most of my elementary days in, didn't have a Kindergarten class established so I had to transfer to this new school in the 1st grade. I was heartbroken leaving on this last day of kindergarten where I loved my "me" time. I did not think I would see my friends again.

During this time, I realized what a demon my dad was and so did my sister. Our dad started inappropriately touching our bodies and behaving in ways a father should never share with his daughters. He molested my younger sister and me. He treated us as property that he was free to explore.

He would sit on the couch in the living room with a dark brown cotton robe on. He would be nude underneath his attire. He would fondle my sister and me. He would touch area of our body ways that a daddy should never touch his biological daughters. He would touch himself inappropriately while we were sitting on his lap.

The horrific details and specifics are documented at the Department of Health and Human Services in our mile long case file.

Thanks to the courage of my sister, she had the courage to tell our mom to make our dad stop hurting her and me. Her husband had a disease that she never knew existed until it was too late. He had already destroyed his entire family.

I had almost finished my 1st grade year at my new school with what some called the meanest old lady in the school system. She was an old lady with facial features that never embraced a smile. She was stern talking. She had such an unapproachable disposition. I don't know how she became a teacher. But I found her grandmother qualities to be an asset.

She taught me discipline of good and how even if people perceive you to be one way, it's OK as long as you stay true to yourself. She did just that. She never got close to anyone in her class. She never showed emotion of happy or sad.

I would sit quietly always doing my best to never get her attention of any kind. The only time I was acknowledged was by my grade scores. I had good grades. She noted continuously through the year that I had great conduct. I suppose to a teacher of her traits, I was the ideal student even though, I didn't realize it then.

She would make some students cry for their inability to pay attention.

The general desires that children have to talk to one another and not sit still for too long were not appreciated in her class. We were in the 1st grade. That's just what children do. But she made sure you were made an example of if you crossed her methods of teaching. She was an enlightening person to me.

If she had only known how I learned from her. I learned the ability to correct without beating someone, without hitting them inappropriately, and correcting a child's energy without cussing them and hurting them physically. I realized that good discipline did exist. I embraced it. Even since then, I have shared stories with others who were in her class and haunted by her methods. I guess we all do perceive things differently even in the same situation.

This was the battle with my family's new found evil of my dad. The different opinions that flowed and the rumors that began within our family were as damaging as the inappropriate touches that my dad did to my sister and me. The judgment that fell upon my dad because of his poor decision to hurt his own children and his wife were repercussions that have affected everyone who knew us.

His family and selected members knew in my mom's family of my dad beating my mom up to that point. They knew he left bruises on her. They knew he cursed her. They knew that he would hit walls, destroy anything his hands would touch in a fit of anger, and they knew the abuse she had endured in their marriage. They knew he would purposely torture my rambunctious brother when his curiosity would get to him.

They knew that my parents would lock my brother in his room at night. They would say it was for his safety so he wouldn't go outside in the middle of the night or play in something that he shouldn't.

This was just a cover up so they wouldn't have to deal with him. They knew that we had seen our dad beat our mom in full nudity in the living room.

My sister and I witnessed him screaming obscenities to her that even adults shouldn't be subjected too. He was literally trying to force her out of this 14x70 mobile home living room exit door; in her flesh covered body revealing her nakedness and telling her what a whore and slut she was. We saw his fists pound her as she would lie on the floor in a fetal position. We saw her begging for him to stop. We saw her crying. We saw her using make-up to cover up her bruises. We saw how we would stay home until her facial bruises would heal. No child should ever see the rage of an adult that can't control their own emotions.

He would throw things so he could see her and us flinch in fear. She would make us go to our rooms and shut our doors when she knew a physical beating was coming to her. This was her way of protecting us from seeing her helpless and defenseless against this beast that he had hidden from the world. There were many times that we weren't given a warning to hide. His tone of anger is a fear that I hope to never hear again.

Even though, his family knew and her family knew what hell we were going through, no one done anything. Back then, it was accepted. Most families in those days had abusive husbands and dirty secrets in their closets and everyone accepted them in silence.

I imagine the horror of shock that consumed my parents' family and my mother when my sister was persistent and told on my dad. My sister's strength gave me the courage to tell as well. I knew our family would never be the same. I didn't know how or why; I just knew it would never be simple from here on out.

It was such a horrible scare of uncertainty that nothing could prepare us for what would happen.

The reality was that this disease of child molestation and Incest was a disorder that our laws of the land had not been strong enough to stop.

The voices of the victims were still not strong enough to protect them from future abuse. It was not strong enough or loud enough to make anyone in the legal system realize that this man needs to be away from all children so he can never hurt them again. Our voices were strong, but being of silenced ages, we were not old enough to explain the full extent of our damage to anyone. We could not realize as children the damage that was done to us. This damage has carried with us long after the physical touching of the sexual abuse stopped and the visuals of his beating our mom. It was too late. Our childhood was raped and was gone.

In the early 80s, the West Virginia state laws allowed children the assistance of cloth dolls with open orifices on these figures that showed no facial expressions. They were not normal dolls. These were tools of the system.

To a child they were scary toys that you didn't want to see or share a story with to a stranger, but they worked in helping my sister and me to tell our horrid reality.

The dolls felt of pantyhose material to touch. They had little beady eyes and a nose with nude coloring. There was a male and female doll that was anatomically correct.

The female dolls had a total of three holes. The one opening represented the mouth. The second one represented a vagina and one represented an anus.

The male dolls only had two holes. The males had an enlarged mouth opening, a penis and an anal opening.

They were used by the Department of Health and Human Services for children to show how their actual abuse occurred with inappropriate touches. It was effective in reporting abuse cases with children. The children would demonstrate with the dolls their body violations.

However, it did not tell the DHHR social workers the scare, the fear, and how children could not verbally tell anyone the horror within. Children are not aware of the horror that develops within at these young ages. These tools could not tell the incompetence of the families involved. Their decisions could not do what was right for the children involved.

These dolls didn't explain to a family how they were going to cope and to grieve the loss of a father no longer in the home. These dolls were not going to tell them that dad beat mom. These dolls were not going to tell DHHR how we were scared of our dad. These dolls would not tell of the years of damage that would lie in waiting for the three of us children.

Who was going to explain to this woman, my mother, to understand how the man she loved and had sex with; how to move forward with three children that she could no longer protect or provide for? How could they help her since he was the only foundation of stability she ever knew?

How could my mom begin when she didn't have her driver license, she didn't have a GED, and she had no means of doing anything for her children? How do you possibly comfort, support, educate and provide proper justice for the core of another's soul when it becomes robbed in a disease as this?

How could the children explain to society the damage of their internal being and how it had been completely distorted now? How could our family explain the damage that was done to every one of us? How could we know the consequences of their judgmental decisions in our great state of the Wild, Wonderful West Virginia? Did these adults not realize that they would be a contributor to this soon to be felon's legacy?

For years, the horrid fact is that child molestation has been a dark secret that children shared everywhere and not just in West Virginia. It was just kept quiet or shared privately with those you trust.

What state wants to admit responsibility for this demonic act of humanity? What state wanted to believe that this tragic lifestyle occurred in some of their most poverty filled areas? What state wants to carry the statistics of Incest in their court proceedings? What state wants the bad light of society upon them for relieving the truth of their citizens to protect the children in cases as this? Why are the laws not extreme enough to punish the offenders and protect the children?

West Virginia did not want to believe they were a statistic of Incest. West Virginia did not want to admit these crimes occur in the valleys of our steepest mountains. West Virginia politicians did not want to create a grass root movement of truth for our citizens to protect our children. West Virginia has created more abusers and more victims by not creating programs of prevention, support and laws of justice.

Now mind you, this was the mentality of our lawmakers almost 25 years ago when our family's disgusting truth began emerging from DHHR files. However, the laws have changed today, but still are not strong enough to protect the victims or to provide support for adult survivors.

Our children are the future of every generation. If we don't do everything we can as adults to protect and raise our children in the basics of: safety, truth, love, comfort and protection; we will keep the taboos alive over the best interests of our children.

These dysfunctional diseases of families: child molestation, incest, rape, ritual abuse, domestic violence, and substance abuse; kills the potential for a child to grow up to be an adult of an innocent mind.

When a child cries out for help, we have to be smart enough to think ahead for them to prevent these horrible acts of cruelty from emerging in their important developmental years. Once an adult abuses a child, that child should NEVER be subjected to that abusive adult again. There is no biological or DNA title that exists that gives an adult a second chance to parent when they abuse and hurt a child. It should be a no tolerance judgment.

It takes a village to raise a child and when it comes to making laws against these offenders; it's the voices of the adult survivors who should be allowed to be heard so that the proper terms of punishment can be established.

The terrible reality for my family is that it only gets worse due to the state of West Virginia not properly punishing my dad's horrible acts against my sister and me.

They really thought this family could survive with counseling and rehabilitation for my dad. They really thought that since he had no prior convictions on record of breaking the law and since he graduated high school and went to college; he would be OK. They knew he had been gainfully employed and since he was the "breadwinner" of our family, he could be given another chance to be our dad.

When you compared his educational background, his income status and his ability to make anyone believe the lies he rolled off his tongue; you would believe he would be fine too. When it was compared against the 9th grade education of my mom and her only skills as a domesticated homemaker, her inability to drive; and the fact that they saw that my family couldn't be productive without his skills, they let him back in.

When you factor in the reality that we were children that were being forced back in the above situation based upon adult decisions, what were our options? Where were our advocates?

It's no surprise really that the state allowed him back into the home. They were going to make us the "example family" of how incest could stop.

While the state judicial system worked out the details of what to do with our dad during this brief family separation, our mom and the three of us kids were put in a shelter near Beckley, WV.

We had with no contact from immediate family members including our grandparents. We weren't allowed to take any of our personal belongings with us. We were not allowed to tell our childhood home goodbye in the trailer; that we all loved as home.

We were not allowed to hug our animals goodbye. We couldn't take our stereo with us. We couldn't take our favorite toys. We couldn't take our baby pictures with us that mom cherished. We could not take any material belongings with us that reminded us that we had a home and a family once.

We could not fathom what we had done wrong as children. We told the truth.

We were taken from our dad, our beloved grandparents who were my dad's parents; our aunts and uncles and the very social circle we were finding in our discovery of friends at school. We were taken away from the security of our rooms, the freedom of our music and the fun times that we shared together as brother and sisters at that home in Eckman, West Virginia. Our lives would never be the same.

The state of West Virginia held the safety of us children in the Department of Health and Human Services. Our mother was captive to her own thoughts of misery and silence of the truth too. All we knew as children and especially me; was that we felt like we were being punished without our home, our animals, our toys, the security of our bedrooms, school and the family that we use to love so much. We were children of shock.

We were forced to move to an apartment in Kimball, WV; after we were finally released from a shelter near Beckley, WV.

It was just my mom, my brother, my sister and me. We had very minimal items to start over with. It took years later before the reality hit us that the thing that we would miss the most is something we would never know. It would be the ability to be a child who would grow up without the word "abuse" reflecting from our every memory.

Chapter Five Who is responsible for adult accountability?

After we settled into our new apartment in Kimball; it would become a home of fear, fun and learning what abuse of freedom really is.

We constantly had new strangers at this apartment where DHHR was making home visits. It was nothing but trauma of confusion us children had. All three of us verbalized to our counselors how it hurt being separated from our dad and we missed him. We grieved him almost daily. We hurt seeing our mom crying because she was scared, unsure, and not properly able to deal with this new lifestyle.

We saw her dependence on others. We saw how our grandparents, my dad's parents, persuaded us that we were better off with my dad.

He was the only rock we knew to take us on car rides, take us to the store, to Doctor Appointments, to visit family and to fix things when they were broken. My dad was the person who would stand up for all of us when a stranger did come around.

He was the enforcer of structure in our lives. He would make sure we went to school daily and making sure mom was awake to put us on the bus in the mornings. He would make sure we had home cooked meals. She always had done this for him. He always saw our house was clean because she would do it for him.

In this new freedom of lifestyle of living in an apartment on our own and away from dad; we were learning a different kind of self-discovery.

My mom was given the gift of freedom to have others around outside immediate family. She was for the first time in her married life not on a hillside where she had no phone and no communication from society.

At this apartment, she could visit friends and have them visit her. She could walk down the street to the post office. She could walk to the store to get a soda pop if she wanted to. She could go up to the street and visit her best friend who had numerous children too. She took the enjoyment of this experience too far.

She indulged herself into multiple sexual relationships with men and her friends' affairs at this apartment. She and her friends became partiers of life. They experimented with drugs, alcohol and sheer enjoyment of being adults with what seemed like no responsibility. It didn't matter to them that three children lived here and witnessed their encounters either or so it seemed.

My brother, sister and I shared a big bedroom in this two bedroom apartment. My brother had his own bed on one side of the room. My sister and I had bunk beds to share. Most of the time, she and I shared the same top bunk. It was safe on the top bunk. We had each other for security.

We also could peep through the corner of our door into mom's room where her bed was located. There were times that we could see people having sex there. Because of the natural curiosity of kids, we did look just to see what it was that adults did do in their bedrooms.

The three of us found unique ways to occupy ourselves. We would laugh and intentionally do things when adults were there drinking to see what we could get away with. We would walk down the street unsupervised just because we could.

This second floor apartment had big windows facing the street that we all loved. It covered the whole front of the building exposing the sidewalk below and the street across the roadway where we would be eye level to the apartment across the road.

We would intentionally roll toilet paper into balls. We tossed these cotton balls out the window to the sidewalk below as people would walk by. We would do it quickly and hide ourselves back in the window so no one would see us. Since mom was a smoker and drinker at that time, we would use crayons and pretend we were smoking. We would get empty beer bottles and pretend to be drunk.

The other children who were older than us would come to visit and we would pretend to be dating them. We took turns playing innocent doctor to one another. Every day someone else was the patient, someone was the doctor and the rest were nurses. We would intentionally run and walk loudly or make too much noise just to have someone come up to the apartment to tell us to quiet down. We really enjoyed the closeness of being brother and sisters in that year of discovery. If we ever experienced the innocence of child's play it was here.

However, the reality was, we never spoke as children of the fears we hid within. We would share the grief we had of losing dad, and how we missed Mamaw and Papaw. We shared how our mom was not herself since this secret all came out. We all cried and comforted one another when the emotions rang high and we always covered up for one another when we would invent things to do that might get someone in trouble. We had no phone, no television and no radio so what were we suppose to do.

When someone reported my mom's wild behavior to DHHR and the threat came calling that she may lose her three children too; she was terrified emotionally at this point.

The pressure of DHHR visiting more and the strict inspections they would conduct did scare all of us.

My mom began communications with my dad's parents on what to do and talking with her own family by using a pay phone down town.

The ritual abuse of their mentality became evident in how to use religion to erase all bad deeds committed by both of my parents' actions.

My mom started taking us children to the church that was located right beneath our apartment. She completely changed her whole appearance, her lifestyle and her friendships that she had since moving to this city.

Her vocabulary of language was absent of any curse words. Her musical genre became strictly gospel. She had found a new beginning for herself. In church, she thought she could find the answers for us kids and our family as well.

My dad had already started this process since he had no children and no wife to take care of daily. He seemed like he had changed and wanted to prove his love for his children again and his wife and that he wouldn't hurt anyone else again like that.

He had my mom convinced, my grandparents and with the help of DHHR and our counseling sessions, they believed it all to be true. That my mom was a good parent now. My dad was the rehabilitated example that they could use proudly for their future statistics. That counseling does help the breadwinners of the families in this circumstance that ours was.

When you have three children so heavily influenced by the individuals they have known and loved so dearly, you believe what they tell you. You go by the direction they lead you in. When you are mentally, emotionally, and socially being developed at the tender ages of: six, eight, and nine years old; the active adults in your immediate life hold the key to your future.

You believe what you are told and when emotions are so strong they hurt and you can't cope, you will go along to get along. Especially since the laws thought his crimes were not harmful enough to keep him out of lives permanently. We all believed everyone else. We carried the hope of being children in our hearts that we would be a happy family again.

Does anyone remember that as a kid? Do you remember doing what your parents said even if it were wrong? Did you lose something that you loved and it made you cry and if you thought you could fix it wouldn't you?

Why does a child see the wrong and the bad, but it doesn't matter if an umbrella covers the truth? This is what happened to our family.

Thanks to our state laws, the ability of adult persuasion, the inability of a child to speak their future and the unique circumstances of every case of abuse; our family did fall through the system that was in place at this time of the 80's.

It has taken years for my brother, sister and me to realize the extent of the damage that was done to us with this mentality of judgment made back then.

It has taken all my years to realize and admit how that history will repeats itself when an abuser is involved, especially when they are not given real punishment for their crimes.

Our state laws will never be strong enough to irradiate the physical, mental, and emotional abuse that hinders a child and the adult that a child becomes. It will never be truthfully proven how repercussions of substance abuse is evident in most abused children futures' when laws are not strong enough to protect the children of today to save those that will be born of these same generations tomorrow.

Dad was allowed to move in with us into this apartment at Kimball. We didn't stay there long. The prying eyes of civilization proved to be more discomfort for our parents. So we moved. The DHHR would do home visits but then they stopped completely.

The only interviews that would occur after that would be for them to prove financial income, assets and to receive public assistance. We were now a family dependant financially on system that was broken in many ways.

I don't know what would have happened if he had not been allowed back in our home. I don't regret any aspect of my life but I would be lying if I said that I didn't wonder.

What would it have been like to not carry the burden of silence from the years waiting ahead? What would it have been like if we could have received help that we needed to help us children? What would it have been like if my dad was just allowed to stay away from us in our home? What would it have been like to ever have a home without lies and one of verbal truth? I'll never know and the closest I will ever get now is parenting to help my own daughter and those that care to know and help themselves.

Do you ever wonder...without regret...but wonder just the same about your own life?

Chapter Six
The Discovery of a Child
The Real "I" in Me

If it had not been for the many survivors of Incest, Ritual Abuse, Child Abuse, Child Molestation and the hope I have in others... I would never have found the strength to share the "I" in me too. It's going to be a journey that I hope you will continue on and finish with me.

I bounce in this book as my heart tells me to write. It is a conversation between you and me as you read. It is how I have written it to be. It's as close to sharing my diaries as I will be able to share with you.

I share "The I in Me" with those who care to know. From one friend to another, I cherish you reading this. For this means that you want to learn or feel support and comfort too. I am not alone. So-thank you.

Welcome to the world of "I". You will never be the same again. I know I am not. This is my self-identity that I loved and embraced the most of finding: "The I in Me".

"The Shadow Poem"

My shadow follows me,
When the day is bright;
It goes to sleep at night,
Because there's hardly any light.
-c.m. (comer) cox

As I creatively loved writing this poem, I was a nine year old girl of average height in the third grade. I was thin built. I was what most would call skinny or bony-moronie back then.

I naturally got stared at because I was always the new kid in town or new kid in class or so it seemed. My family moved a lot due to the dysfunction that had become a dirty disease of secrets that we all were forced to keep quiet. I was one of the reasons for this dirty secret. My sister was the other.

This elementary school was one for richer children than what I was accustomed to. It was situated in the city that was the county seat of our state. In this school, I had learned a lesson of life that I carry with me today.

As I sit in this classroom anxiously awaiting approval from the teacher on my first poem I had ever written, I wandered into a new-found element of what I loved to do. I always cherished writing as a passion.

Writing used to be simply passing time on paper of the reality that lived within my head. But soon I would learn its value in my life.

Ms. Price, my teacher, gave me the strength within me to know that I was special. It took many more years and a village to finally raise me before I realized that I was indeed different and wonderfully special.

You see by the time you have completed reading this book, you will have found, ways to love yourself, how to take pride in yourself and know that no matter the circumstances of life that shaped you into being you, DNA is still a beautiful piece of the process. Most importantly, remember there is help and hope available for all of us no matter what we have endured.

Even if you were physically, mentally, emotionally or sexually abused, you too; will know you are great for whom you are and you deserve to be loved and to love yourself.

There is no one better person you can be, then to be yourself. No one can ever dictate your feelings or emotions about how you feel when it comes to your abuser, but you. It is your truth, not theirs. It is your voice!

In this third grade classroom that I take you to; I now know this is where I was beginning to learn the most about me. I didn't fully realize its worth at nine years of age, but I had a clue.

I was in a class of multiple diversities of ethnic background. My teacher, Ms. Price, did great in illustrating the importance of understanding cultures and appreciating the many forms of art that a person uses to celebrate their self.

It was through this sharing of: writing poetry, reading books, and putting into action all the advice she had given; that I knew I loved this door she opened within me that I never knew existed before.

I always played school as child. I would sit with my baby dolls up in a corner and make up fake assignments for them. I would grade them. I would give them good remarks to make them feel good about themselves. Even at five years old, I became addicted to school.

My third grade teacher, Ms. Price was a tall lady. She was a pretty lady that came to class everyday dressed so professionally. I can barely remember her hair styles or her hair color, but I will never forget her smile and the sense of comfort she gave me. I couldn't imagine her ever showing any student she met anything, but kindness. She would always encourage our class.

She spoke in such a soft tone. This was a pleasure for me to hear of the inspiration in her voice. I believed her when she said we could do anything and be anyone.

She hovered over our class teaching all she could teach third graders. But even now, I knew I had always been different.

Somehow, this particular school year, helped me to see what I secretly carried in my heart. This was the love of words and the good expressions of self that I had found by writing. The kind of person I secretly wanted to be when I grew up. But I never had the courage, support or love to embrace these gifts until many years later.

The students of this class taught me so much. You wouldn't think that third graders could be mean or cruel to a classmate. But for me, there was always one student who was. Sometimes, it was intentional hurt and with others it wasn't. This has taken half of my life to realize the truth of this.

I was probably one of the poorest children in the class. I had the same hairstyle from Kindergarten. My mother chose my clothes from churches or hand-me-downs. She dressed me daily as if I were a professional going to an important job. She would choose my clothes and always help me to fix my hair or at least show me how to part my hair right.

The hairstyle I was possessed with, was a 70s' Farrah Fawcett feathered wings gone severely wrong. My mom always cut my hair. This was really the only style she knew. I had straight medium brown hair that was barely shoulder length.

My bangs were about two inches higher than my dark brown arched eyebrows that rested above my green eyes. When I would smile and my forehead wrinkled, I felt confident that this would fix my short bangs, so I smiled a lot.

My baby teeth had all fell out by then and my adult teeth seemed to be bigger than my head or it looked that way to me, but I didn't mind. I could handle bad hair, bad bangs and big teeth on the outside, but it was all I was carrying on the inside I didn't know how to handle. I was crying inside for something I was beginning to see in me from this class and this teacher.

This was the first time in my nine year old life that I began self-awareness of me, outside my immediate family.

I want to elaborate with you about the scarring of what some children in a classroom can go through because of the definition of picked on.

Yes, picked on is a word we used growing up in my southern roots to describe teasing, instigating, fighting, verbal comments of hate and it was primarily used for someone being mentally cruel to another person.

I was verbally picked on for being poor and wearing such outdated clothing that had been arrayed upon my small petite body too professionally for my age. But yet, I was much older than my years of what a child should be wearing. I didn't get to embrace the youthful styles that the popular girls got to wear.

I never had been to a public school event of any kind up to that point. I never saw a football game or basketball game. I never got to see cheerleaders cheer, even though; I secretly wanted to be one.

I think all little girl's vision this at some point in our feminine dreams. I couldn't afford to pay for events even when they were held during regular school hours.

Because of my poverty appearance that reflected from me, my shyness to society and the inability to fit in; I always felt as an outsider. For you see, the most popular girl in our school and my classroom was the daughter of the local judge. She had such pretty eyes and naturally red hair that shined and bounced whenever she moved. She always wore fashionable clothing and was very smart. She knew who she was and wanted to be even at that young age of nine.

She was a cheerleader and throughout the rest of our school years until graduation; she did just that. She was an outstanding citizen even after graduation. A prime example of being happy with herself and this gift she displayed for all to see. But it was such pain for me to witness from another child of my age.

She was a child that you knew was happy. She had a loving family. She had a supportive environment.

She had real friends. She had stability. She had everything in life I always wanted even at nine years old. I saw this in her.

She was always smiling and walking so much taller than anyone in our class. She was literally the shortest person in our class too. She was so above the reality of what some children struggle within life that she never noticed me to really say hi or hold a conversation with.

This hurt me the most of anyone in my class. Because of her financial blessings of her family's income, she was always able to participate in every school function, exceed in fundraisers, and she would excel in everything she touched.

She, however, didn't relate to everyone. She couldn't understand the individuals that were poorer than her who were from dysfunctional homes. She never realized and neither did most of my peers of the horrid life I did lead when I left school every day. She never saw the tears I would cry.

These students never knew the show of strength I struggled with every day to just keep up: educationally, mentally, physically and most of all personally just to be a part of what every one got from their families. They never knew the shadows of me.

Before continuing on, Ms. Price; taught us it was a privilege to have friends, to be nice, to be unique and proud of whom you are no matter what and to take the time to appreciate yourself. She taught me this in her classroom by using a technique that I think should be used today.

In the corner of the room was this area that had four walls. To me, it was a mini-room. In reality, it was just a small petition room build with four brown wooden walls and a door. Inside laid a bundle of hay, a basket of books and the student's paper drawings and writings decorated the inside walls. If we were good, we would get time to go one by one in this reading booth with the book of our choice to read. I loved this so much.

The peace that I found in these walls, I knew I never wanted to leave. The adventures I took from these books that I had read were wonderful. Judy Blume became my favorite author that year and still is. I enjoyed the privacy of knowing it was my time for me.

I never experienced that before and even now, I cherish the hobbies I do because of the "me" time I learned back then. We all need this "me" time. Even in the hustle and bustle of our busy daily lives, it's worth the time to invest in yourself.

As I laid-back on the hay and looked up to the opening inside this safe-haven of reading, I saw the ceiling. I pretended it was the sky. I remember the pain I secretly hid. I remember the burdens I felt as a child. The fear of becoming an adult one day and the terror of knowing the scars and fears I secretly carried within.

I never saw myself living for me. I envisioned that I would be clinging to every good hope in everyone I ever saw even if they hurt me. Even if they hated me, even if I cried because of the pain they had done to me. I feared that I would live for others and would never know who it was that I was supposed to be.

I believed even then that everyone was good. God created them and even if they chose poorly, someone had to believe in them and see their good for them to still have a purpose in life.

I felt that at nine years old that my purpose was others' happiness, others' peace and never my own. I would spend most of my life protecting those who should have never been protected.

These were the abusers and monsters of society. These were the lawmakers who do not do enough to protect the children.

I was terrified of the reality of my future. I was most frightened that I would never express and share my voice.

When I finally had to leave the third grade that year, it broke my heart for many layers of reasons. One was because of the unknown cruelty one little girl had done to me. She didn't mean too. But for a child like me, growing up as a victim of circumstance, it was hard to embrace someone else's happiness.

It was a mistake on my behalf, but one that I learned from. I saw her strength, her ability, her drive and her motivation. I never gained the status she had or never will, but because of her smiling from her inside out traits, I learned how when I became an adult, to embrace me too.

I would always anticipate the last day of school not because of the reasons most normal children did. It wasn't because of the anticipation of summer, a whole three months of no getting up early, no teacher telling you what to do daily or the freedom to be a kid; like most kids my age did.

I looked forward to it because that was the day I could hug my teachers. I couldn't ever express in words, how much their guidance meant to me, how there roles as adults gave me continued hope that I could trust, and that I could grow up and have their strength and motivation too.

I had these precious memories to comfort me when I needed a hug. It was an innocence of hope that only my teachers did fill.

Ms. Price was the teacher that gave me a real vision into my growing heart. My desire was to continue on even though, I was very alone.

I had found the magic of writing when my words would help me cope on paper. These words would not come out of my mouth for fear of my inner emotions that I held within and I had no one to listen to them even if I did.

Apparently she witnessed something in me that she had taught me and how grateful I was for her.

She wrote on my report card that I received in the mail a few days after school was out to my mom.

"Thank you for sending such a Beautiful Lady to school everyday. Cynthia was truly a pleasure to teach. I wish I had more students like her."

I don't ever recall secretly crying that many tears of happiness up to that point in my life. I couldn't believe that someone thought I was pretty, much less beautiful. There was someone that thought I was a pleasure of any kind. She wished there was more of me.

I took this as a highlight of my very short time of life and that I did make a difference. I really did it. I was somebody.

I transferred to another school at the end of the school year. I never cried so much over two people in my life.

One was for a life that I was never blessed to have. The second was for the teacher that should have been my mom. I grieved at the dreams that only I knew inside. I grieved of the loss inside and feared my traits of happiness would never be unlocked or shared.

Their examples of living life and being an example really have encouraged me to be a better person, to reach higher, and to be myself.

We are all beautiful inside. Some of us just wear it better and brighter on the outside. That is truly a good thing. We need the complexities of cultures, the diversities of lifestyles, and the humanity of the examples we all have within ourselves to share with one another. You just never know who is learning from you.

Chapter Seven
WHAT NOW?

"He who dares not offend cannot be honest." © Thomas Paine

Their "truth" was a word that I was taught to live by.

The Ten Commandments was always known upon my heart since the first time I read it. The biblical and religious aspects of my childhood were very evident and practiced in our home no matter where we lived or where we would get dislocated to.

My paternal and maternal grandmothers; both were Pentecostal Holiness preachers. You would hear the term Christian as a daily name for their self living ways. Both of them lived the gospel in outward appearance. The choices they would make would make it difficult for me to understand these religious lifestyles.

Their actions spoke much louder than their words that it made it difficult to believe that religion was an answer. It was a lesson about outer appearance and how that was more important of what people thought about you than what was actually practiced from your heart daily.

Let's take a trip back into time of the religious controversy that had confused me and left my mind and heart to seek out my own definition of religion and practices even today.

When my own mother was a child of 12, her father passed away. He was a man that was a good man, good husband, good provider and a demon when the alcohol would touch his lips. He beat my grandmother, he terrified my mom and her brother and sisters and this addiction of booze finally killed him when he was struck by a driver while walking intoxicated on the highway after dark. None of their lives would ever be the same especially for my mom.

My mother was left to help my grandmother raise my mom's younger sisters and brothers. It was such a heavy burden for my grandmother and my mom and her oldest brother. My grandmother became obsessed to the churches of her religion.

Back then the practices of their religion were our social outings. They had water baptism in creeks. They had foot washings and drinking of wine or juice if the congregation felt that wine was not appropriate. There were church services that became week long church revivals that would play nightly gospel music with bands combined with worshipping and continuous praying out loud to their belief of what God was.

It was a unique experience to witness to see this kind of worship that they did.

I remember being a little girl and being scared because I didn't understand what was happening. I remember when they would stand up praying out loud, crying with their hands in the air and just fall to the floor. This was known as the Holy Spirit consuming their worship and being consumed in their belief that this power of the unknown forced them to the floor.

As an adult now, I don't question anything I saw as a child of this nature or the laying of their hands on people to pray for them or any of the other practices given in the church service that we went to.

I only wanted everyone to see that there was so much more than what they were showing in those church doors and that so much more begins when you are out in the general public with strangers.

It truly goes beyond the words you speak and the church you attend. It's not up to us to decide any one's definition of religion as right or wrong. It's up to each person to seek their own meaning and purpose in life. We are here to help each other with the journey and to love them and show them someone cares. It doesn't matter if you are rich, poor, abused or privileged in life. It's simple human nature. That's all.

My mother was often left out of going to school like she needed to so she could baby-sit and watch the other children. They would walk miles with my grandmother to go to church and Sunday school services. My mother was burdened with the chores of taking care of the younger children that she never experienced being a normal teenager herself. She was robbed of this special privilege.

Her mom, my grandmother was a cold, distant lady. She rarely would hug us just to hug us. She never would just ask us how our lives were. She never cared enough to embrace conversations with children.

She always had gray hair of short length. She was of medium stock build and always wore glasses. Her tone of voice never changed when she was happy or sad. She never spoke of excitement in her voice of any kind. She was an intimidating person to be around because you didn't want to say anything wrong or out the way to get fussed at from her. She always wore dresses.

I never remember her even wearing even the first piece of jewelry. Her homes were always depressing. She never had family portraits for a long time on her walls. She never had anything materialistic of value in her house unless her kids bought it. She always had a telephone though.

She would feed us when we were there and tell us stories of family members from long ago.

However, it would always haunt me how she would talk for hours on a telephone discussing everyone else's lifestyle. She would criticize someone's wrongdoings. She was very eccentric in telling and scaring people about the visions she would have and see. She would talk about a person's outer appearance of dress and how it was not appropriate in God's eyes and they would be doomed to hell. I remember these conversations and who she would talk too so vividly on the phone. It bothered me so bad that this lady that my mother was born to could be so socially held in high standards at church, but so hypocritical of her actions when away from the watchful eye of the church.

When my family needed her loving embraces and her caring support of her emotional nature of heart, she had none to give.

She did help us at one point when we were separated from my dad by letting us live in a single wide trailer she had owned. However, the roof above our head was not worth the price of the damage it had done even further to our already emotional fragile state that we had learned to survive.

I will elaborate more on it, but when you have three teenagers who are once again allowed freedom of life and no mother to guide your path and a grandmother and other family members to criticize your "going wild" stages that teenagers go through, it's very hard to see the religion that they talk and speak of when it is truly double standards by their words and actions.

If you ask any one affiliated in the church about my mom's mom, they will hold her in high regards of being a God fearing, spirit filled lady of the Lord. They will speak greatly of the help she has given so many around her. They will talk about her great speeches or preaching as they call it about her public readings from the Bible.

It has always been very hard for me to be close to a lady that has such standards to live by. If someone was far away from living under her roof, they saw a completely different woman than the lady that I saw as my grandmother. It was only because I was invited in her house to see how her actions were so much different from the lifestyle that she led at church. This is how I drew my own conclusions.

I saw the damage that my grandmothers' neglect of love done to my mom. It was long before my mom met my dad or before I even came along.

You could always tell my mother's lack of being emotionally attached to anyone was evident in her life and with us kids. My mom always tried to please everyone around her even at the expense of her own feelings and never offered emotions or even explanations to any of the pain she had endured.

Thou shalt honor thy father and mother.

This commandment was taken to heart to so much in the dysfunction in my family from my dad and mom. No matter if they beat you, if they hurt you, neglected you, loved you, praised you or cursed you. They were the parents and that's what you do. It was a Bible verse that was lived daily for many generations in this dysfunctional family.

It was so evident how greatly my mom was neglected from her own mother. She still seeks approval love and care from her mom. She seeks that void even now. When a female child doesn't feel love from their mother and they have to try to find their own path without guidance, love and support, often bad realities face these little girls that grow up in to dysfunctional women who are left to raise children without guidance of their own.

Yes, the victimization process does continue most of the time at the unawareness to the victim. My mom's brothers and sisters all have faced domestic violence marriages, mental abuse, and even their children; have had to endure the repercussions of living this kind of harmful childhood.

I know it wasn't easy on my grandmother when my grandpa passed away. However, these were her children. They were her responsibility to raise, not my mom and her older brother.

Most of my mom's family never graduated high school, none of them had the chance at college and they lacked the privilege of being able to grow through the normal processes of self-identity.

I use to read the Bible as a little girl and into my early adulthood when I did try to be a Christian. I now realize it's so much more than what people think about you. It's what you feel and practice for your self to make others' lives better without discretion to their lifestyles.

I love poetry and the Bible has so much poetic truth to it. It can be a very emotional guide to how we should live our lives. It can cut you and comfort you when there's no one else to understand. The lessons of examples of the repercussions of sin is so evident that it takes the simplicity of being human at heart to understand the truth behind it from the beginnings of the Bible to the end.

So many times, I have seen how people abuse the privilege of this wonderful book. They will eliminate and take out of context the words of the whole book to accommodate the lifestyles they live for their own purpose. I do believe that God is a great God. I do believe that every single person is responsible for their own behavior. I do believe that each person will be held accountable for their own actions.

I don't believe a title of religion or a piece of paper makes a person a minister, a preacher, or a social light that should be held in high regards. I always have felt that the humanity of a person's heart, their actions, not their words; would always be a true light for anyone. A person's actions of good would flow to those around them. No, we all can't be happy or be perfect all the time and no, we are not anyone else's judge no matter what someone says.

A person's own soul salvation is their gift to themselves to work out between them and God or whatever they believe. In reading the Bible, I read how Jesus co-mingled with sinners, how he would sit with the poor and rich and how he traveled to so many different lands to show his love in the simplest forms of life.

I believe the miracles that he did back then from the words that I read. I cried at the common sense of his teachings and the prophets of his book that believed that by loving a stranger and taking care of the hearts of others and being aware of those around you; it is some of the greatest teachings I have learned on my own. No, I am not perfect and no one is. But if you try, try from your heart and don't be afraid to say I am sorry or thank you and mean it; these are the simplest forms of humanity there is. All we can do is to be honest in our intentions and show love with our actions for the truth will stand when foundations fall.

I am only saying everything I am to display what it was like to have two different family beliefs on religion.

Even though, my grandmother on my mom's side and my Mamaw and Papaw on my dad's side; believed from the same Bible, claimed to be Christians, claimed to be of the same general practices of worships and yet, despised each other.

I heard both sides verbally criticize each other for the preacher they had, the churches they attended, and the interpretations that were different from the same Bible that they both read from. It was a very struggle just knowing who to believe. All I had was actions of living, loving, comfort and support to draw from to make my own way. That's what I did.

My Mamaw and Papaw on my dad's side fully displayed these characteristics in the smallest of their actions. They carried and possessed these traits even at times when they weren't perfect. In my eyes and in my heart even as child until now, they carried and showed what any human would try to show love even when their words would be different. It was their actions' of love that I embraced the most from them.

Both of their traits of human nature of heart are what I held to as a scared child.

These people were who I cried for when I felt alone and scared as a child. These individuals are who I sought approval from for the good I tried to do in life.

These individuals became my rock and the foundation of the good traits I clung to and I share now to get me through anything in life. They were the best of my DNA I came from. That's what I saw in them. It was their good at heart in them.

I am sure many will speculate on the controversial individuals spoken about here. Please remember that as a child, you seek out good. You want a happy, fun, innocent life of enjoyment with the people that you trust, you love, and you share within growing up as an adult.

I didn't have the option of diversity or privilege to choose. I had a small closed in world that was dictated to me. It was the vision of good that I saw in everyone that I was subjected too. If I didn't squint, I couldn't survive. These are my views.

My grandpa was a demon to his children growing up. They saw forms of molestation, mental and physical abuse that it was a scary realization for me to know that my grandpa was this kind of man to his own flesh and blood.

All of my dad's family, his sisters and brothers carried inner secrets about issues of this family. I am sure my dad did too, but he was never verbal about it. He always helped out my grandparents and done everything he could to get approval, their love and care for them both. This timeline of dysfunction and dirty dark secrets and religion all bind into one as the very molecules that made up so many generations of my DNA.

It's no wonder that my personal perception and my sister and my brother were so messed up to what was real, what was not, and what we should do or not do.

It was so controversial to the very core of our hearts that it made it very difficult when it was our times as adults to step out in our paths with only pieces of sanity, fractions of human emotion and guidance and support to lead us on our own independent ways. We have spent years without the truth of living and surviving the best that we can.

However, I chose even then to take their good and make it my own.

My grandpa was nothing but kind, appreciative and a good Papaw to me. He would take us to Sunday school with them on Sunday. He would sit in the kitchen around my Mamaw's table with me and others when we would visit. My grandpa would sternly scold us when we were kids and was running or being too loud in the house. He never raised a hand to hit us.

I never heard the man curse at us grandchildren all through our days. It was not until the molestation of my sister and me did I learn what a demon this man used to be that I lovingly called Papaw.

He had been a man that went to church faithfully. He would play the guitar and sing in church with us. He would smile and laugh over the slightest things when his health allowed him to enjoy life on the good days. He was the reason I was first able to being to trust men. He was the reason I knew that not all men were bad. He was the reason that I knew that sometimes, sometimes people can truly change.

He was a disgruntled man due to his aching health of getting older when I was born, but he never disrespected my Mamaw in front of me. He never hit her. He never degraded her.

They would squabble over the same things that normal marriages go through with finances, house or car repairs in front of us, but never the trauma that a previous generation saw from them.

My Papaw and my Mamaw never had a truly happy marriage. They both were young and being products of dysfunctional families themselves, it shouldn't be any surprise that the horrors of the child abuse continued with their own children.

But somehow this man stopped hurting children. He was a survivor of World War 2. He shared this story with me at one point of my journey about him becoming an adult and being in service. I did get to share in the good of my Papaw that made him who he was now. This was the man in front of me sharing our many conversations. I am so proud of my Papaw even now. I would always trust my Papaw.

He was a tall strong man of slender muscular build. He was beginning to get feeble when I was born. However, his eye sight and lack of hearing are the only real evidence of his age. He was a man who came from a world of untold horrid too.

I am sure he was a product of being abused even though; I would never hear him open up and talk about it. His evil characteristic traits he possessed were the same very traits that my own dad possessed.

The family gossip that I had heard was how they would never trust my Papaw with their own children. However, I did trust him. I always have. I don't hate him for the ways he treated his family even though, it was wrong and bad. He should have been accountable and my Mamaw too.

Papaw should have been punished for his crimes on his wife and his children. He was never legally brought to charges. It was unfortunately accepted by families back then and the laws were not in place to deal with Incest or Domestic Abuse. Many did not prosecute their family members back then. They just dealt with it the best they could.

The word, "survivor", was all that was needed to make victims feel they would be ok to keep this disease hidden in silence.

In everything I endured with all the family DNA that I was exposed to in our family visits and such, my Papaw was the one who tried the hardest to overcome his demonic ways and past.

He tried to show his children love in his own ways even when they became adults. He tried to care for the grandchildren that he had. He tried to show the great-grandchildren that he got to know how the shadow of the man that he was to his own children and my Mamaw was now gone. All of the traits that I loved about my Papaw, he learned from my Mamaw.

He taught me how to care for others when his eye sight failed him to drive anymore. He taught me the very meaning of trust when you bestow your life in someone else hands while driving a car. He taught me the importance of being able to be happy with yourself and knowing in your heart what and who you were even if no one else agreed and regardless of speculation. He taught me that a person can change. He taught me that men could be trusted and could change.

But my Mamaw, my dad's mom, was my hero for many years of my childhood and into my adulthood. She was a short lady with the prettiest blond grey hair. She had such beautiful blue eyes that expressed her soul when she would talk. Her face would light up with such expression when she would talk. Her tone of voice would be just as expressive. You could always tell how she was feeling by her words when she would speak.

She was always a lady who loved God as far back as I can remember. She would talk endlessly to me as a child and an adult of all of her troubled times of her slightest wrongs by others. She taught me how to perceive the best in others even when you couldn't comprehend why they chose to do the wrong they had done. She taught me how to look at someone from the inside out. She taught me how not to be deceived by outward appearances. She always told me that "Pretty is as Pretty Does" and that "Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder". It took me half of my adult life to really grasp what she was saying.

We take for granted the heart of someone and all they have survived through and been through in their lives by the outer appearance.

We see age as reasons to treat another differently, we treat a person's financial and material wealth as reasons to uphold them in society, we treat children as someone too small to understand and we treat humans for our own personal agendas to do whatever with and too.

My Mamaw taught me otherwise. She had very good reason to.

She married my Papaw when she was 15 with a total of seven children and one grandchild they did adopt. She had miscarriages and was married to a demon man more than she was not in my Papaw.

She had no mother to guide her as a child should have due to her mother dying when she was a young lady and her father dying when she was a little girl. She knew the effects of dysfunction more than anyone.

Why did she stay with Papaw through his years of abuse on her children and herself? I will never know other than her true belief that if you love someone enough, they will change. I don't think that my Papaw never did truly change to the point that he was a good loving husband to my Mamaw.

She truly loved him with such dedication, loyalty and with such a unique outlook to the human nature of people that her family would become better people for it.

But the odds were so stacked against everyone in their immediate family. My grandmother worked and scrubbed other people's house to have money to buy her children clothes, she worked so hard educating herself to help them do homework, she never quit learning on her own about life in her own walls and to the those around her. She never quit telling of her ambitions and why she loved everyone liked she did. She was such a controversial little lady.

On one day, she would be talking about the highest motivations that life had to give and on the other, she would be speaking the worst about her neighbors, her kids, her grand kids, her husband and everyone whom she came in contact with her.

But she never turned away someone that had a need, she never turned away someone that was hungry, and she always used her church to help out the local community. She always loved through her actions.

If you speak to anyone they will yes that my Mamaw gossiped, but that she had a heart of gold.

She may have talked harshly at times about her decisions of not trying harder, but then she would always emphasize the good that she tried and how everyone was blessed by what they do and give. That everything we do does come back to us, good or bad. I have always believed that too because of my Mamaw. If you are a good person, it will come back to you. If you are a bad person, bad will come to you.

It really doesn't take a church setting, a declaration of any religion to make anyone justified to any God. It's the humanity of our hearts. It is the non-judging of others and the gift of action and sharing that shows a person you care. It is with actions that give another love that touches to their souls that helps them to want to carry on with the good. I could relate to my Mamaw's teachings because she lived it.

I will never forget the greatest lessons of life and love that I learned from my grandparents. The actions that both demonstrated paved the thoughts of caring and sharing that I have now. In our double-edged sword family upbringing, I found heart. I found soul. I found love in my Mamaw and Papaw.

Every person is different and even if you don't believe in change, it's worth the opportunity to try. You never know what love you might be missing out on in your life or the blessing of another if you don't. That's what I learned through this whole traumatic religion experience. It has been a great life changing experience for me to share with both sets of my grandparents.

The mind manipulation of controversy that surrounds the word "religion" to me has left me not to question the practices that I saw. It does leave me to better question my own personal evaluation of myself and the circumstances that I grew up in. I will never know true right or wrong in a religious life because of the distortions that I did witness. However, I do find peace by seeking out my own happiness and sharing now in the words that I write for those who care to know.

No human being is perfect on this Earth. We all have our own inner unhappiness. Some of us know abuse as a silent emotion. Some of us will never know abuse as anything but statistics that you read in a newspaper.

Abuse to any human being is wrong. Child abuse should never be tolerated. It is up to all adults to prevent this.

I loved my family even in their wrongs. However, the truth is the truth. Society shuns the truth just as abusive families do too. Stop the lies and accept all truth about abuse that affects the world we live in. The truth is the greatest bond of humanity that we can share to help each other.

Chapter Eight
Not Again

Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. [Edgar Allan Poe](#)

Tears, laughter and smiles were the very blankets of my childlike soul, even now as an adult. I can watch a silly movie with a sweet ending and a sad movie with a heartfelt message and cry happy tears because the movement of emotions in it.

I have the same emotional overflow with real life events and the happiness or sadness of others. The lyrics in a song, the words of poetry, the magic in a book and it doesn't matter what extent others feel or believe about it; I have always been like this my whole life. It would be contributed to diagnosis of medical terms I am sure as a trauma survivor for such an emotional roller coaster of torment and happiness I express in my tears. I absorb the simplicity of human expressions like a sponge would water. That's the only way I can explain it.

As a child, I would be the only one crying because it was the last day of school. I would be the only one happy for the first day of school.

I reflect on every birthday that I have and look back and I see that because of all the bad that I was exposed too that I couldn't choose all that was done wrong to me. I get to make those choices now of those traits that I want to keep as survival skills and as my own personality. I do not want to survive. I want to live.

I have now realized through years of researching this trauma that most incest survivors go through emotions that are either extreme on each end of the horizon or the other on what gets our internal feelings flowing. Some survivors of incest will have the overly openness of emotions like I do.

Some refuse to feel emotion. Some choose to let hate, confusion, victimization, drug abuse and the worst of human emotion destroy their lives because they don't know that they have a CHOICE now. You have a right as an adult not to inflict pain on others. You have the CHOICE now to stand up and say I will not be hurt anymore. You have the CHOICE now to say I want better for myself physically, mentally, emotionally and financially now if you want too.

There is still so much unknown about the long-term effects of the many ghosts that haunt a child abuse victims' life, an incest survivors' outlook, any person that has been abused or not in their life; we always have a CHOICE to ask and seek for what you never had the privilege to feel, to find, and to be loved while growing up or even in your adult life when you have made mistakes.

As long as we have a breath of air in our lungs, we have the only tool needed to be better, love more, support more, guide more and CHOOSE better for ourselves and our children than anything we have been through.

I speak from experience. Yes, the road to recovery is never going to be easy. We are never going to be fully complete until we CHOOSE. WE have to CHOOSE the lies or the truth. We have to begin living and learning about ourselves and accepting the truth of lies that we were subjected too.

So much of our lives are taught about the things we need to survive on for financial prosperity and to function in society. There were not many messages about self-discovery and seeking self-identity.

As an abused child, you can allow yourself the privilege of not being robbed as an adult to the simplest pleasures of being a child. You can productively do both. It's the best medicine for the soul. Learn to love yourself like no one hurt you and you will find who you truly are.

Do you honestly love you for the good in you or do you know? Do you have to have someone to tell you? Do you have to look at others and their perception of you to know what and who you are?

All my life, I lived as a child who looked up to the immediate in my life.

While the other children were playing, I was sitting with the adult women in my life. I always did. I would absorb their every word, in their every conversation to just learn. I know no one is perfect and that you can forgive and what you choose to do with this knowledge is your own CHOICE. Even as children, we had this simple gift that I never fully understood until I became an adult and almost lost myself.

From my earliest days as a child, I never knew I had a CHOICE. I never felt safe making my own choice as a child. I had no one to protect me and help me if I would CHOOSE right or wrong, so why bother?

When my dad started abusing me again, I couldn't fathom that CHOICES were available because I feared before and I feared even more now. FEAR took my CHOICES.

I was never brave like my sister to tell on my dad when he began to molest me again at 10 years old. I had already seen the hell that separation done to our family and why bother, he was only hurting me. He was only touching me. He wasn't raping me sexually or having intercourse with me. He was not raising his voice to me. He was just talking to me about his wants and needs.

Every evening while the abuse happened, he would take me to the dirt basement that had been dug out to accommodate a coal furnace beneath our single wide trailer so I could help him build a fire or stoke the fire before we all went to sleep. Our family acted as if nothing was ever wrong with this.

Why my mother never saw anything wrong with her 10 year old daughter going to the basement to help her husband when my older brother was much stronger than me, I will never know. He was able to carry the coal and he was much more apt to know what it meant to keep a fire then I ever did.

Why wouldn't she question us being down there so long? Why didn't she ask him or me what really was going on? Why didn't my brother and sister ever question what truly was going on? Did they learn to trust him again or was it because they were still scared of him? I never questioned my dad when he was allowed back into our lives. As long as my mom was there, I thought I was safe.

As long as my brother and sister and family were around, I felt I could truly trust this man I called daddy.

He quit beating mom but he would still make us flinch with fear with his occasional throwing of things. But he had stopped most of his physical damaging of things and beating mom since he came back into our lives.

I never questioned anything he had asked since we got together again as a family. When he asked me to go with him to fix the fire I did it. To me, it was just a chore as doing dishes, feeding the animals, going and helping my Mamaw as told to and like everything else in our lives, it was what he said and we would just do without fear to believe anything bad would happen again.

Since he was released to be back in our home again, my mom was a happier person or seemed to be. She would smile, laugh and carry on with us kids when we would visit family. She was a great hostess when someone would come up to visit us at our house. She was a domesticated housewife again. My dad gave her purpose and she had her family back together again. The three of us kids were happy to have them back. For the monster my dad was, he was and is a lot of fun to be around.

He would find the silliest things in a salvage yard and saw potential to make it work. We never owned a new car. He always got these salvage yard finds for a few hundred dollars that were always an embarrassment to ride in as a kid.

He loved electronics, mostly stereo equipment, CBs and those dang CB antennas that looked more like thin towers to me.

He would mount them on the outside of the trailer and on the back of every vehicle we were ever subjected to ride in as kids. He would proudly blow the horn at even the slightest of associates he knew in town or yell at people out the window that he knew or briefly talked to once. He thought he was everyone's friend to the world due to his ability to put on a show. He was great at it.

He would always take us kids fishing and to visit family members. One time, he found a family jewel to us all. It was right before the abuse started again. It was an old Volkswagen.

We all called it the dune buggy. It was of terrible color, rusted body and I believe this is the only vehicle we ever had that wasn't marked by his electronics.

We only got to enjoy it for a brief summer. For you see, it smoked when running due to a bad motor; but when it started, it was fun. It was not a legal vehicle that had insurance. I am sure it wasn't even worthy of a safety state inspection sticker that West Virginia road worthy vehicles have to have to drive them on public highways.

But we were safe from the law to ride illegally since we had moved from Welch and back to Eckman. We moved 4 times in less than 6 months in this small community since leaving the city of Welch.

We started out in a 14 x 60 mobile home on a hillside when we moved back to Eckman. This community is what we would always call home.

My siblings and I shared one 8 x 8 bedroom in this tiny trailer. My brother started out sleeping on the top bunk. My sister and I slept on the bottom bunk. That is until the bunk bed fell down on us from his weight. So we traded places.

Then we moved to a big two story house. It was frigid cold in this house. It was beautiful and we had our own bedrooms but it was more than we could financially afford, so we moved back into the 14x60 trailer again.

But the final move of our family together would be into the 14x70 trailer that would house my horror of silence and abuse again. But somehow, this trailer would be what we would always refer to as the location of "home".

Now let's get back to taking a ride in a dune buggy shall we.

My brother, sister and I would sit in the back. My dad and my mom would proudly be riding up front. We would ride up to the top of the mountain in the hollow on the dirt road and laugh our butts off.

This thing had no suspension, no good tires, it rolled very bumpy and bounced you everywhere, and you guessed it, no seatbelts. The back floor boards were rotted to the point that you could see the brown dirt road beneath our feet. We barely had enough metal in the back floor to keep our feet from touching the ground as dad drove. He would intentionally speed up on the curvy dirt road to make the back of the car slide just a little to toss us kids and it was the highlight of that summer.

At the top of the mountain was an even greater treasure for our family tradition. In those days, the state of West Virginia hadn't enforced the dumping of trash on the side of the roads. Who was going to come on the middle of this mountain that had no paved road, no living structures around, no one living there to complain of the mess? That is unless you were intentionally looking over the hill at the deep, slope sides way into the valley, you would never see this treasure we saw. It took many years before the state put up no dumping signs.

I remember dad would park the car in what we called wide spots. These were just areas in the middle of curves big enough so that a passing car could squeeze over so that two vehicles could safely pass at a juncture on a dirt road.

When he would pull over and park, it was a race to slide down the edge of the hillside to see what we could find. We would step on genuine trash, dirty diapers, molded food, old dishes, unwashed clothes, bed covers, and mold covered items such as curtains and towels, and just mounds of metal that you could imagine.

There was the old floor model TVs, the old wringer type washing machines, rusted refrigerators with holes in them, 8 track tape players and my personal favorites of the finds were the old music records. It didn't matter if it were the small ones or the large ones to me. My brother and sister and I would make it a contest to see who sling it the farthest down the mountain or sling them in a tree to break them.

Gracious, if I only knew what a value those treasures would be now. It is hard being a child growing up in this entertainment. There isn't too much of seeing that far ahead, just then and there.

You could easily hear sound traveling throughout the valleys when you are in mountains such as this. We would laugh or scream out in joy at the little finds we would get to keep. The happiness would echo.

We got many clothes from these trash dumps. Mom collected her home interior decorating from her many finds.

From bleaching dishes to soaking towels and wash cloths to the many curtains that she found and was able to change with the seasons and not to mention the scatter rugs that covered our floor. It was her way of making our house a home no matter where we would go. She would adore the walls in family pictures. The most smiling faces you would have ever seen of everyone that was ever touched by our DNA since we became a family again.

My brother was all about toy cars, trucks and just typical boy things. His piles never seemed as big as us girls. My sister was still into dolls and clothes mostly too. I just wanted to find the things that I could piece together that I thought were cute outfits for me. It was always hard searching. But searching was half the fun as ever finding things.

You would dig through some things you couldn't even identify as material anymore and find an earth worm's house or those little sow bugs. You know the little grey bugs that you touch and they roll in a ball to protect themselves. They have a strange odor to them.

My dad would get the weirdest things of electronics to keep. He would keep the 8 track tapes even if he had to fix the cases, and the transistors out of the big floor model TVs.

One time he started a Mason jar collection of mercury that he found. It was the mercury out of old thermostats that was used to set the temperature for furnaces in houses. He would take the mercury out and just put it in a mason jar just to watch the silvery substance flow back and forth.

It was a heavy weight liquid. He would get everyone amazed by the amount of mercury he managed to collect in those days.

He would occasionally let us kids hold the mercury in our hands and let it roll on our fingers. It was dangerous fun.

It was a thrill to laugh at something so silly, but yet of such quality entertainment that we had together like that. Mom would enjoy some of his electronic guru traits when something would break or he could fix a broken TV that someone gave us or a broken stereo that he could fix. He was truly a man of many traits.

It's hard looking back and embracing the very same enjoyable memories that I loved then and knowing the hurt, the bad, and the scary that were right on the horizon for our family by this man that made so many laugh, so many smile and yet I looked up to him. He was the social outlet of our family.

He would help assist so many people by doing mechanical repairs on cars, carpentry on houses, and helping someone to fix their electricity because they couldn't afford to pay someone.

He would help out the elderly by assisting them in transportation when they needed to go to the store or the doctor's office. My mom would always stand so proud beside of him for the good in him.

My brother and sister always looked up to my dad on his good days just like me.

When his temper wasn't raging or his curse words weren't flying because he couldn't fix something fast enough or if us kids didn't know which tool to bring him or if the dog would try to jump on him with a wagging welcome and he didn't like it, he would kick and beat the dog for just being a dog.

If mom didn't bring his coffee or water to him fast enough, his tone of voice could be seen upon my mom's face when the monster was showing again in him.

But no one said anything to him. No one would stand up to him.

But in the days that followed him returning, it wasn't all bad. He was the Baby Welfare that most said he would be. Our income came from public assistance. He would do odd jobs on the side to make money without paying taxes so we could have gas money to see family on the weekends and to buy my mom and him cigarettes or maybe to take us on a fishing trip somewhere.

Our family on my mom's side of the family and my dad's family accepted him back as well. They were allowing him around their children too.

If all the adults around us thought he was safe to have around their kids, then why wouldn't we trust him again too?

Even in poverty, we spent a lot of days laughing and just enjoying being children growing up on a hillside with freedom to invent, freedom to run outside and the privilege of responsibility to do our chores as it was said to us.

When and how did it get so wrong so fast? When my dad told me for the first time to go with him to our basement to help him with the coal fire why didn't I just argue and say no? I didn't question his motives or anyone else in our house at that time.

At 10 years old, I had learned to trust this family again. I had been safe. My dad never hurt me or touched me or tried to inflict abuse on me. My mom always was there to keep me safe. With so many around me that trusted my dad with their kids, why wouldn't I trust my daddy too?

I remember walking out the front door of the living room into a wooden porch with no insulation and plastic up on the windows with a wooden floor. You had to step down from the trailer to the porch so you wouldn't fall. It wasn't the prettiest to look at, but it served purpose of keeping the cold out of the house and provided a place for our cats to sleep on too.

I will never forget going through that piece of a screen door to go outside so I could go to the basement. This trailer only had one way to the basement and that was through going outside and through an awning and these metal steps that stepped down about four steps to the dirt filled room. There was one light there.

Most of the trailer underneath was dark and you couldn't see except right where the coal furnace was located. The smell of coal dust and filth was so evident. I always hated the dirt in that dark room. I hated it even more for the evil that lurked down there. I hated it for what my dad became down there.

Ever since the first abuse took place, I was a child of little words. I never spoke my opinions verbally, I never cried to anyone and I never showed how weak and confused I truly was. I never shared with anyone how I felt responsible for my dad hurting my sister, how my brother was a target of my dad's anger and how my dad deprived my mom of the only life she wanted and that was to be a mother and a wife. That's all she wanted was a family.

I always wrote down my feelings, thoughts, shame, guilt, hurt and pain. These journals I kept were my only best friend. They couldn't be translated by anyone that might read them, but it was my release of abuse and the silence within. This was the only sanity I found.

I would find encouragement when listening to the littlest of accomplishments of others. I always did everything I could to learn and make good grades in school.

I always tried to work so hard helping any adult that we would visit just to let them know I cared and was appreciative of them being nice to me. I was of little words most of the time until it came time to laugh and smile and just have fun.

But most of the time I was in my own little space of the reality I was in. I was always focusing on what to do more of, how to be better at school, at home or anything I did.

I didn't do it for the approval of others, but by me showing others I did care, they cared for me too. I was searching for comfort, for making peace within me even when I didn't know I had a peace to make amends with. All I knew is that if I was a good example then everyone else would be good too.

Then the abuse began again. I was stripped of my innocence again at ten years old. I had allowed this man back into my heart as my daddy. I had allowed myself to trust him, to love him, and look up to the potential I had in him. I had allowed him to hurt me again.

He saw my nudity. He saw my childlike body just when I was starting to appreciate who I was. He touched me in ways that a grown man never should touch a child much less a man I lovingly called daddy. I looked up to the very traits that others liked in him and knew that my ambitious drive, my creative instincts of life, my motivation of doing things that were out of the box by excelling where I had come from, and that my inner drive of helping others came from this man.

The man that would give us a hug when we would leave for school and made us go to school. The man that would tell us he loved us every day. The man that made us laugh. This was a man that lightened up a room with his silly antics and commanded attention. This was the man that our neighborhood appreciated. This was the man that allowed me to trust him again. This man that I so wanted to trust as my daddy had intentionally hurt me again.

He made me believe his lies again. He made me the pawn of his sexual teachings of what men and women do while having sex without ever entering my virgin body with his penis. He took worse than my innocence of what sexual virginity is.

He took my heart, my soul, my visions, my dreams, my drive for life and he used me to shatter our family again. He thought I would never tell. He knew how quiet and reserved I had become in my emotions. He knew that I would never want to be the fall and blame of our family again. He knew that I would never let this dirty secret out to destroy my mom or my Mamaw and Papaw.

He knew I wouldn't take daddy away from my brother and sister. He knew this secret would be safely guarded with me. He knew I would never hurt him by putting him in jail. He knew I would die before I would bring this upon everyone else. He told me all the above. He knew I was strong enough to carry this inner hell and burden of others and yet not be strong enough to tell on him.

As the hell progressed and the same occurrences of the nightly trips to the basements would happen, he began to talk about me becoming a lady soon. He talked about the days that I would be dating in the future.

He would talk about my friends who were maturing faster than me. He would talk about the many different scenarios of fondling my friends and he would sit and just fondle himself in nudity, as I sit in my own nudity for his eyes to prey upon me.

He would sit and speak softly while looking up to the ceiling on the left between the cracks of the trailer floor and the porch floor to make sure no one would come on the porch or outside while were downstairs.

I became so sick of his voice, of his tone, of his lies, of his smiles, of the very man that I was forced to call daddy when we would return upstairs. I would dissociate myself from my mind when his tongue would touch my body or his hands and his genitals would invade my physical and sexual innocence of being a child.

I would eliminate my mind into a transition of other thoughts, other surroundings, and other places so I would not demonstrate that his touches would affect my body. I would think of scenarios that any 10 year old would. I would think of playing outside. But then, I would also think about dying and how I would do it.

I hated going into that basement and hated leaving. The show would begin. I was forced to hug him goodnight every night with the rest of the family. I was forced to look into the eyes of my mother and lie to her about everything even when she didn't ask. I was forced to smile and laugh that everything was OK to my brother and sister. I was forced to visit my Mamaw and Papaw as if my dad was a good man. I was forced to live a lie every day for a year and a half.

I was forced to look up in the eyes of my aunt and uncle that loved me and they realized my sheltered, quiet corner I lived in and what I had become when asked, "Is your daddy molesting you again?"

All I could do was get the energy, everything an 11 ½ year old child can hold in and say NO. Just a simple No.

I couldn't let anyone know what a monster he had become again. I couldn't break their hearts like that. I figured if he is hurting me, then he wouldn't hurt anyone else. I was only a child.

I should have been playing with dolls. I should have playing with my brother and sister. I should have been able to stay on night with my friends without the mental distortion of what my daddy had said about my best friends developing. I should have had the gift of growing into my female body without invasion. I should have had the innocence of a mind of a child. I should have never had to bear the guilt and hurt and shame of what this monster had done to me.

I should have never allowed him to touch me. I should have screamed. I should have kicked him in the balls or ripped his penis off. I should have killed him. If I would have killed him then he would never hurt anyone again.

These are thoughts that invaded and controlled my childhood. What gives an adult the right to invade and rob a child? Why didn't I tell?

I couldn't tell because of fear, shame, pain, hurt, guilt, worry and I had no one I could trust to protect me. The adults had let me down once, what solutions did I have.

But worse than anything, I had that hope that a child has even when they are being hurt. They still hope. I still saw the potential in my daddy that he would wake up one morning and stop. He would stop taking me to the basement. He would stop taking me in his bedroom to scratch his back. He wouldn't show me how he would caress the television screen at woman's genitals of visuals that he liked.

He would stop playing these mind twisting games with me. He would shut up talking to me. He would stop abusing me. He would stop from hurting my mom, my brother and my sister. He would stop and not hurt his dad or mom like that with the reality of what he was. He would stop this evil disease that he possessed. He wouldn't make me lie to them anymore. He wouldn't make me touch him again and he would never touch me again.

But for a year and a half this man stole my identity. He stole my motivation. He took away my summers of fun. He took away my childhood years and my adult years. He took away my hope, my motivation, my drive, and my creativeness. He took away the pride I had in school. He took away my care of life.

I was in the fourth grade and had an excellent teacher. Mr. Garrison was a great teacher and this elementary school was like my home. I had been here in the 1st grade and then was bounced around through the previous battle of our family dysfunction and I was finally at my home school.

I was with some of my best friends. I was back with the safety of the walls that I loved. I was somebody here at this school. Because I was such a good child, a good student and a representative of what conduct of students should be in school. But when you are beaten down to the point that I was, silence is your true protector of the insanity of life.

Mr. Garrison was very proud of who I was in his class. I had the honor of the Student of the Week in his class for many weeks in the beginning of this school year. I clung to that at the lowest point of my reality at home.

I clung to the fact that he believed me to be a normal child of good upbringing. I felt that if I seemed OK, then I would be OK.

I helped the other students in the class and in other classes beneath me. I was a volunteer and mentor to help others in their education. I was an example of what good was to this classroom with my grades. I was competition to a few students who we would always secretly compete for Student of the Week opportunities too.

I was so proud each week I won. They would always allow the parents to come up and eat lunch at the school with their Student of the Week. My parents never would show up.

They would give out these tall white paper certificates that had the student's name on them.

It would have their parents' names on them. It would have their siblings' name on them and the student's favorite subject and hobbies.

I would proudly put my parents' name and my brother and sister on it each week that I would win. I would always put a different subject or a different hobby on it.

The teachers would proudly display these weekly winners on their grade school room door so everyone who entered saw the accomplishments of this special student. I worked so hard to be that student for reasons that they never knew.

Most students in my class came from divorced parents or dysfunctional homes that were known as the gossip in school. I would strive to put my name up there for the survivors of abuse. My name was up there for the parents that I had still in my life and the hope I had in them. Even though, I was poor, I was just as worthy and smart as anyone. I earned those awards from the heart.

Even as a young girl going through hell unimaginable to adults, I remember sitting in his class and looking out the window down at the city below and thinking even then; I could and would be OK.

But as the frequency of the abuse grew and the conversations of mental rape took over my will to try, I wasn't the Student of the Week.

I was sick. I became physically sick with tonsil infections, sinusitis, and pink eye and with fever. I started missing school more. I was unable to go to school. I was unable to bear the hell in me that was slowly eating away at me. My mind was not my own anymore. These were not my thoughts and actions of control. I was terrified at the new thoughts in my head that would eat at my heart.

I became too weak to care for reality anymore. My mind and body knew this too. I was constantly being taken to the doctor and wrote to stay home from school.

At least when I was sick, I was safe. My mom was with me all day. My dad wouldn't ask me to "help" him anymore. I would battle the fears within by just not thinking about them when I was down in the bed covered in blankets.

I managed to get mentally stronger when the abuse wasn't directly in front of me. I was able to embrace the good of all that was around.

I was able to begin to contribute again hoping that today would be the day that daddy would stop and never say a word again. But he didn't.

Mr. Garrison knew something was wrong.

He wrote on my report cards that he was concerned about my absences and why I was sick and if I were OK. He would write that he was worried about my grades and was everything OK at home.

My dad secretly hated this teacher. Mr. Garrison was a tall slender gentleman. He was a mentor with the basketball team of school. He was liked by so many. He was always nice and polite to my mom. My dad and his insecurities accused my mom of liking this man in some of his verbal outbursts of anger to her. I hated my dad and the hate he carried in his heart.

Some of the best people in my life I saw of no color, no outer existence, and no gender. I could see through their eyes and the actions of their lives they led me to determine my own decisions about others that I accepted in my life.

My dad would accuse Mr. Garrison of being too nosy in our lives. He would talk such hatred of this teacher that I looked up to.

I saw trust and care in Mr. Garrison's eyes. I saw a teacher who set aside all barriers of color, of gender, of income status and he saw a person's heart. The children in my school loved this teacher. The respect he had of his peers was respectable. He led our Raiders Basketball team to many wins that year of elementary competition. I so hated my dad's judgment of someone he never knew.

I never understood how a person who would come into our lives to make it better and how my dad would immediately find fault in them. That is unless he took us to them so to speak. But I realize now, it was just to shelter his life of lies and his secrets.

My dad was a very sick man. He needed help that I knew I couldn't help him with. His verbal ramblings with nightly touching in that basement haunt my ears and stain my childhood memories.

His tone of voice and content told me of the layers that he forces himself to hold within. I don't know why he chose to hurt his own children, his own wife or me again.

I just knew that when I hit the 5th grade that I couldn't go on much longer like this. But I did almost to the middle of my 6th grade year.

I had a female teacher for my 5th and 6th grade year. She was a great teacher.

I was always in the classes with the smarter students. It made me very much different compared to my brother who used school as a playground. He never wanted to learn expect what he had to, so he could pass.

My baby sister always felt like she was following in the footsteps of Cindy's shadow and was never able to keep up with the high standards and privilege that I saw in education. My sister was referred to by teachers and other students as your Cindy's sister.

It was a nightmare for her in so many ways. She was robbed of her own motivation and her own will power by hearing my name everywhere we went. I never intentionally did any of the above to hurt them in school by trying so hard. It was my only form of actual happiness I had as a child. It was the only time I felt safe and truly appreciated. They will never understand that. They have their own battles to work through too. School was just another element to our already complicated lives.

In Ms. Haye's 5th grade class; I was in a completely different mental frame of mind that school year. I could not focus. I could not care about trying. I did barely enough to get by. I just wanted to be left alone and in silence. That was all.

I would sit in my own thoughts of what if, how could I, and what if I killed him. I would think this many times and how I would do it. I would dwell upon taking this man's life. I would factor in how my mom and brother and sister would survive. I would sit and listen to music and cry. I would write as fast as my little fingers could write in my journal just releasing what I could find in words to say without anyone knowing the real meaning of what I was saying. I would write notes to me and analyze every student in my class. I would see the repercussions on their lives because of their parents.

I would literally sit and dissect every ounce of humanity that made up my teachers that I had in school. I would write down girls that I hated for their ways of being loud, their ability to stand out in a crowd, and their defensive attitudes in even elementary school. I knew they were on their way of being strong women.

All I could do was fear the abuse that I was in and hate those verbally strong girls and become consumed in terror that my life would be like my mom. I would be on prescription medication, poor health and no voice to get me thorough even in adulthood.

I now have realized those very same ladies I disliked so bad, were just like me. They were neglected, abused, molested or hurt in their own homes.

I have had the sweet joy as an adult to share in their strengths now. We have helped each other, even now, since removed from the days of just being children in a school we all thought we ruled. We all wanted to just make things better even though, we were all just children searching how to cope and how to survive. The reality of the horror in child abuse speaks loudly for most of my friends I knew in school.

We aren't alone, but it took us to becoming adults and parents now to know this in our hearts and the conversations that we have shared.

For the very girls, we hated in school for whatever reason it was, I have learned and teach my own daughter now to be good to everyone.

You never know if they have been hurt and one day you might be losing a best friend that you never really knew. I have found this out by my best friend now. We hated each other in school due to the ignorance of not knowing the separate battles of hell that we each fought just to survive daily as children.

In learning all I did being in Ms. Haye's class, I knew that I was wearing thin. My grades weren't what they should be. I started seeing more fault of everyone around me, just like him. I started hating everyone and everything. When I wasn't sick, I was snappy to those even closest to me. I remember being a smart mouth to my Papaw and Mamaw. I remember how that bothered me so bad to think I disrespected them. They never knew. But just the tone of my voice was harsher than I liked. It was like him.

I would think of how I hated where I lived. I hated smiling. I hated laughing. I hated faking love and hated being loved in a blind home as this. I hated him. I hated my dad.

I realized I didn't want to be like him anymore. But I wanted to embrace the good of me again. I wanted to be a child that loved and seen love. I couldn't let him take that from me.

Finally after all this time, my mom saw something in me.

Maybe my aunt and uncle had told her of their suspicions, but she asked me one day while I was home in bed sick if dad had ever touched me again.

All I could do was cry and say yes. She cried with me. I kept repeating to her that I was sorry. I was sorry. That's all I could do.

Only God remembers what happened at that point. All I know was I could breathe. She would make him stop for good. She would protect us as a mother should do. She would help me carry this burden now.

She would let me be a child again. That's all I wanted was to be a child. I was given bits and pieces of this treasured enjoyment. I wanted more of it. That was all.

But it was so short lived, that I really can't recall how many years I did spend as a child.

For a child that grew up in an abused home, I know that I was become robbed of treasures that I never realized were treasures. Until I read about these treasures of innocence and try to wonder what it would have been like without mental and sexual invasion. I will never truly know.

Imagine if you can...your life, without the abuse that you may have known. Imagine your life with abuse...if you have never experienced it.

Now just for a second, allow yourself to see the other side of the fence per se'. The world looks differently doesn't it?

Now imagine both worlds from the eyes of a child and what kind of adult they will be. It gets you to thinking out of your comfort zone, doesn't it? Now, you know what it means to see both sides of the world from the eyes of abuse.

Chapter Nine
Please, Tell Me

The Opinions That Become Facts

When talking to another about a person's life;
It can become easy to stir in their strife.
The circle of rumors bind;
An obsolete reality that becomes true.

To look down your face,
At the one below your feet;
Must be a feeling of pride,
A sensation that only,
Deceit can provide.

The truth cuts through,
To allow the heart to bleed,
The feelings are an unbelievable low,
Of who is your real friend or foe?

Guilty as charged;
When the loop of the fraud appears to be real.
No defense is allowed,
When opinion becomes the judge over the final deal. –c.m.cox

The funniest thing about this poem is that I actually wrote it in a time and place where my new job was sometimes more than I could handle when it came down to finding out who my friends were, my enemies and those individuals that use gossip as a way to get ahead in the game of corporate America.

I never was part of the gossip queen scene. My phone still never rings at home or the office. It's just the silence of growing up inside my own head. Honestly who wants to hear of someone constantly talking about their rough life or having a hope that it unrealistic to most adults?

Even when I have touched such sensitive subjects with my adult friends, I am shocked to find out that most relate and all survivors do it. I have shared many stories with ladies of my immediate family and associates at work of child abuse.

The real surprising shocker is that once a door is opened between two people such as this, you are bonded in a unique way. In all the differences I have lived through trying to find me, the one person that I could never relate to was my sister.

I don't know if age had something to do with it or the fact that all my scars and wounds were public knowledge and family gossip or maybe it was the fact that we did grow up in two different worlds even though, we were under the same roof.

She was always close to our mom as a daughter should be. They took the time to ask each other how they were doing. How were the grades? How were Baby J's friends doing? All her buds were regular household names at our house even when we hadn't met them. It was about who was doing what, who was a friend with whom and who wasn't in her childhood days. Their conversations were about which students were making good grades in her classes and who wasn't.

She was the cut-up like our brother. I was the serious one and always silent. I never spoke of my school friends.

Why is it that the middle child always seems to carry the loads of even the normal families? Is it because we are not the oldest with the highest expectations or it is because we are not the youngest needing extra TLC just because they are the last one of this generation?

Is it because we have a sibling to look up to and one to protect, but never anyone really acknowledging us in the middle?

I was never introduced as the oldest child or youngest child; I was the middle one or simply Sissy. My brother, James, and Baby J made fun of me and called me "Monkey in the Middle?" Who really knows why this happens?

My sister had her own wings to spread and fly. Even if we flew in separate directions of life, she chose what she wanted and always did; just as I did, no matter our consequences as adults.

Unfortunately, of all the turmoil my mind ever took; the damage that she and I did to one another was the most hurtful. That's a lifetime of memories in itself.

In most of our grade school years, we were mostly separated. She was almost three years behind me in school. That was another reason for her and my brother to dislike me; they both had failed grades in elementary school; I never did.

I never saw her in school functions. She was never someone I mentored. I never recall even helping her with her homework or helping her to fix her hair for school. I was too worried about my own.

I never remember just the two of us sitting and talking about anything emotional. It was easier to be the smiling and laughing girls everyone knew us for.

It was just easier for us to fight over whom got to do what, whom got to go where, this one got this or that one got that instead of just sharing a simple child conversation together.

The tension got bad sometimes between us. Mom and Dad would whip us with the wooden switches off of rose bushes. They would make us bend over and touch our toes with our clothes on and just whack us on the bottom.

Whatever we had done to get these whippings, it was short-lived at times because when that wouldn't work; we would get the belt. I remember Baby J getting the soap in the mouth for saying something to me and me back at her. It could even be something simple as joking and saying, "I know you are, but what I am". It would be all that was needed for the two of us to hate each other.

She would pick on me about my prissiness. I would pick on her and her tomboy ways or being a baby. She would say I was fat. I would say she had Jay Leno's chin. She would say that I had zits. I would say she was just jealous because she hadn't reached puberty yet. Yeah, it was a typical sister relationship like that for us. Sometimes, it's hard to look into the eyes that you love so much and realize that yeah, even unintentionally you hurt them.

Baby J was such a pretty little girl. She always had the prettiest blue eyes and beautiful blond hair. She had a smile that was sweet enough to be sneaky. She was outspoken since Dad had wronged her. Her theory was that if she spoke loud enough, then Dad would never hurt again. She was right.

She could laugh and get a crowd going. She was friends with all the other strong kids in school. The kids that I called the loud and proud girls and could never relate too.

She could get anyone involved into crowd moving fun with even the silliest of ideas. She'd get anyone involved in the same lame humor that Dad and James embraced.

She would get her friends and say: "Pull my finger".

There would be silence for a second and then you'd hear a butt crack would speak. The eruption of laughter was louder than the farting noises.

My friends would never do anything like this. I felt so alone most of the time with her and because of her carefree ways. I saw her spirit of enjoying being a child that I would never know or be.

I just couldn't relate. Baby J always had the gift of open communication with everyone. It didn't matter what ethnic race they were, how rich or poor they were or even if they had the same likes or dislikes, she always made a friend where ever she went.

She was able to carry a conversation on with anyone no matter how long or short. I still fumble with words. She was the verbal doer and I was the verbal writer.

She wore her heart out in the open to be exposed. I carefully hid mine and the silent burdens so no one could see the real me. She embraced herself even if people didn't like her. I just wanted people to like me almost to the point, I was afraid of hurting their feelings, so I would hurt myself emotionally. She had more true friends because she told them what she thought. I had very few special friends because I couldn't get close enough for them to know what a damaged person I was.

She never saw herself as a damaged person. She saw herself as Baby J; you can take it or leave it.

I was strong enough to gain the strength for my standards of living. She was strong in just being herself, even when she was too young to ever decide her path. She learned what I never could and that was your voice is your protection. Your inner voice is your ability to make others believe what you say. Your tone of voice says you mean what you say. Your voice said when she loved you, she really loved you.

I didn't really know how to love my sister like a big sister should. I was too busy fighting for sanity to keep a reason to stay alive. She was just too busy being a kid to notice me as her friend too. It was a position you had to earn with Baby J and only if she let you. I was just her sister, not ever her friend.

She allowed herself to make best friends that carried with her through leaving high school. I was jealous of her strongest traits.

I am still just as mysterious, just as judged and just as much in silence; most of the time; as I was like that little girl I used to be. I choose to be now.

Some of the best times, Baby J and me shared were with her friends. She didn't care to bring her buddies home when she was having a birthday slumber party. It was a privilege to her.

I was always ashamed of every place we lived at except one and it was very short-lived in the big two story house when we moved back at Eckman. Most of our homes were too small and sharing a room with a baby sister didn't fit well for me when inviting others to stay.

I didn't have any privacy and the only privacy I knew was when I would shut her out for awhile so I could read, write, cry or listen to what music was available.

But it was Baby J's weekend. Mom always would make a big deal out of our birthdays. She would always make such a great homemade yellow cake with chocolate icing. She would put candles on them; invite the grandparents up and her family. It was hamburgers, hot dogs, pizza, chips or fries. It was really the only time we had pop too. (That's soda to some people.) But it was our good times.

I had to always share my birthday with my brother since we were so close in dates. Our birthdays were in the month of November. Because of our expenses, they had to have ours together. Since it was so close to Thanksgiving and Christmas, James and I didn't quite get as much as Baby J.

My grandparents and mom would always get us something little. Mamaw and Papaw would always get us a card filled with at least \$2.00. This was the best gift. Even if we wasted it or Baby J would give hers to mom and dad at times, it was our money. It really was about the only time we saw money in our years of growing up.

Baby J really didn't mind that we lived about two miles up a dirt road that was hard for even a truck to get there must less a car.

The old dirt road was never ditched properly unless we got elected by dad to go with shovels and dig out the worst spots. These would be the places that would become mud pits when it would rain due to the water running over the road and puddling in the road.

We would also have to pile or pull rocks out of the roadway when it would rain and dislodge the dirt and loose rocks; so the car wouldn't drag idling around that hillside.

Drag is what we called it when you would ride over a rock and could hear the metal getting hit under the floor pan of the car and hoping it wasn't an oil pan or the gas tank touching the rocks. My brother was always on the hefty side, so we would all blame him for it. Dad would joke with us and tell us to lift our feet up or butts off the seats to lighten the load.

When you did take the 10 minute drive to go two miles, or so it seemed, you had a steep incline to get up to the actual single wide trailer we lived in. There was a sharp curve to the left at the top of the hill and this dirt was our driveway, so we called it. There was nothing but mountain behind us.

It was an early 70s model 14x70 style single wide trailer. This would be our "home".

You could see the trailer from the old dirt road when the trees and briars finally cleared to daybreak of this dirt road to our home. The trailer looked as if it was on the edge of the hill, but it wasn't.

At the driveway was my mom and dad's bedroom window. Everyone always liked them because they were like a bay window covering the whole end of the trailer. The windows protruded just enough, that we thought they could pass for bay windows with such unique wide trim running along the side of the trailer windows from roof to bottom. We used pieces of tin for underpinning that never stayed in place.

Dad got some old mining belt that was our sidewalk. It wasn't bad to look at, but you wouldn't dare walk on it when it was wet. You'd slip in a heartbeat.

We had who knows how many cats and dogs at that time and our pet goat.

I just loved the pet goat we had. Dad never cut grass. We didn't have much up there. The goat would take care of what little we had. The little bit of grass that did grow was mostly weeds and crab grass for the goat to eat. Normal grass just wouldn't grow up there.

It might have been the many animals we had that used it for a litter box. It could have been that the trailer set on a coal seam. It may have been that the septic tank was busted and just oozed under the ground and over spilled everywhere.

It done it the whole time we lived there for almost six years of my life. These weren't consecutive years either. This was our most stable home.

The septic tank was located right below the window in Baby J and my bedroom. This infestation of yuck would really just flood the hillside with odor of disgust in the summer time heat when it would boil up and you couldn't stand the stench. But no one else had done anything to fix it other than complaining about it.

All of us kids always found humor in everything; we would sit and make jokes about blaming someone for farting or needing the toilet paper to clean up their personal mess of funk.

We were of elementary minds, including me getting caught up in the lame humor that Dad had taught us. It was funny when we would all laugh about our own traits of honky. That's what we would call the accents of people who would talk with a country accent. But that's what we all were too.

Baby J's friends really didn't seem to mind to go outside and see the goat. They didn't seem to mind watching where they were walking so they wouldn't step in animal piles of dung everywhere. They really didn't seem to mind that our landscaping wasn't something to look at or that we didn't have luxuries that most kids had.

They all did like the valley you could see for about four miles down the hill. It was nice. You could see the railroad tracks and the Post Office from here. You could see my Mamaw and Papaw's house from up here.

You could barely see the highway, but in the spring, it was beautiful everywhere. We couldn't see the holler road below and no one could see our place. The smell of honeysuckle was my favorite. The scent of spring in bloom was everywhere. The birds would sing such melodies. The wild roses would blossom everywhere.

You couldn't even see the trash that we threw over the hill. I guess the garbage service wouldn't pick up there. They especially liked being able to let their voices just echo in the valley. We would always guess what nearby towns could hear us.

They all did like the interior walls of our living room too. Mom put pictures in frames of every school picture she bought of us. She always would have curtains hung nicely even if the windows were plastic covered and wouldn't open in the summer. Her friends didn't mind taking their shoes off.

Mom always kept our floors covered with scatter rugs and very clean. The interior was fashionably outdated with dark paneling, flowers on the kitchen cabinet and ugly dingy yellow wallpaper that matched. But for a 70s motif, it all worked. Mom made it nice with her little figurines everywhere.

My dad and brother really hated the rugs because they would be a tripping hazard to them, but it gave a country style effect to our small place.

Then there was the mini trip down the thin small narrow hallway that led by our brothers' room as the first door on the left. The bathroom sat in between our bedrooms. Baby J and my bedroom was located at the end of this trailer. Mom and dad's room was on the other end of the trailer, next to the kitchen, off from the living room. They had their own bathroom.

Our room might have been about 9x14, if that big. We didn't have bunk beds then. We had one twin bed we slept in. We both would fight all night over covers being in our faces, one of us moving and waking the other, feet in each other's faces and then the silent but violent aromas of someone who couldn't hold their air flowing butt whistles.

When someone farts under the covers and your head is under there to stay warm, it is one of the worst forms of rudeness to be a part of, but you had to get them back right. It became fart tag.

We especially appreciated having each other on cold nights and when we were scared or when one of us was sick. That's something we both never admitted until after being adults. We hardly kept curtains up. We would use blankets or sheets by choice. We had carpet in there, but you couldn't see it because the floor stayed piled with clothes constantly. There were stuffed animals everywhere and little figurines we had got from different occasions. We didn't have many pictures on the wall.

Baby J did hang a few New Kids on the Block posters taped to the wall. She was crazy about this group of guys. Her friends were too. I was into Bon Jovi and Poison and the louder rock of life.

She was a dancer of all styles of music with her friends. Mom would fuss at her for mimicking what she saw in dance moves at school from her friends. She could pick it up so well. She gave me the courage to try too.

Her four friends that stayed for her slumber party all came from different backgrounds.

Jane was older by a few years than James, our brother, Baby J and me. She only came because her younger sister, Jewel, who was in Baby J's class was staying. Jane was looking out for her I am sure.

But Jewel was a sweet quiet girl. She was self conscious about her looks. Candace, was Baby J's friend of color. She was a nice girl. I didn't know her or her family before then. Angel was a girl that was of intimidation to me. She was taller than me even though, I was older than her. Baby J and her clicked well most of the time.

Angel, Jewel and Jane lived in the same bottom together. Candace was up another holler. They were all nice to me and even tried to show me how to dance like the New Kids on the Block, but I just couldn't do it. I was too old for their music. Angel and Candace were cheerleaders at Baby J's elementary school. We would try to do cartwheels and round-offs like them. It was a lot of fun.

Mom would make sure she stocked up on junk food with things we all liked to eat so the kids would enjoy themselves more.

They all liked mom's homemade gravy and biscuits. This was tiring to me just because I ate it every day it seemed that I was growing until I left at 18. Dad always had to have it every morning. I realize now since growing up that it really would feed a crowd too. It amazed Baby J's friends, how much we all laughed.

They all thought our mom was so nice and sweet and made them feel at home. They thought WE had a home.

At that time, I always looked at everything in shame from anyone who came there. Our house wasn't pretty, it wasn't a home and you could look and see poor; but somehow, the more Baby J would bring her buddies up or I would get to stay and tag along with them; the more I realized that she didn't need me. I needed her.

I never had friends to come and stay with me. My friends were of families that worked and could go to the mall and buy new things. They had really nice cars and houses. They had credit cards and their parents both had jobs and they owned small businesses. They were smart students. I was with the smart student classes. I was always consumed in trying to do good that I didn't know how to be a kid. I didn't know how to smile a real smile when her friends would come up. Baby J did it. But she was happy. She didn't have the fear of something hiding in her heart like I did.

That summer we spent a lot of time in the bottom a few communities away with Jewel and Jane. They lived with their dad and mom and her older sister who had one son.

They lived in what I called a nice house, even though, Jewel always complained about it. Jane didn't. Jane always helped her mom and dad out. She cleaned, cooked and done whatever was needed.

Jewel would always talk back to her parents until she got the material things in life she wanted, new shoes, new jeans or such. Jane and I hung around with Jewel and Baby J. We would sit upstairs in their double family house.

It was actually a coal company house that two families use to live in. One family lived on one half of the house and the other family lived on the other half. If you can imagine taking a big two story house and split it right down the middle from top to bottom, this would have been a two family house. Each side of the house had an entrance and exit for each family. It was a nice architect structure to me.

They were not rich by any financial means. Their oldest sister Dawn was in college. She never really socialized with us.

Jane quit school so she helped Dawn with her son too. Their dad was retired and their mom was a homemaker.

They both were always nice to Baby J and me. That's why we stayed there so much. We found out what it was like to have a car that was road worthy to go places, even if all we did was ride to the grocery store with them or they would take us home. We heard Jewel arguing a lot with her parents over silly kid things.

I saw how Jane would never say much when she was home. She was the middle daughter. We both could relate on a lot of levels like that. We had become good friends.

We always had fun down there on the weekends and in the summer. It was one of the best times Baby J and I did share as sisters, with sisters.

The four of us would walk in their bottom to pass time. It was three rows of houses with a one lane road that divided the sections of these blocks. One row of about 10 houses was near the creek bed. The second row in the middle was about five houses and then 10 houses next to the side of the hill. Everyone knew everyone down there. I didn't even know what it was like to have neighbors much less know them.

It was so cool to me. The bottom went on to the upper bottom. We never went there because it was too far to walk. We always walked and stayed close to their parents' house so we could get out and about. But it didn't mean we wouldn't find things to do, even when they didn't know.

Their cousins lived a few houses down. We called it a few blocks down even though, it was just a dirt road to get there. The dirt road ran in front of the alley of their house and behind it. You could drive for hours and just circle this block of houses and never go anywhere, but in a big circle. We did walk it many times at night during the warm summer nights. It was our own world down there.

Sometimes we would talk to her older cousins, Jake and Gene to walk with us. Jake walked with us more than Gene.

Jake was quite a bit older than us, but a real nice fellow. He helped his parents out a lot. We would all talk about music, our state, and news of interest to us or local gossip of the neighbor kids that I didn't know. I listened a lot when a crowd of us got together.

That is until we found a way to invent our own fun. Jane and Jewel would hang out with Gene and Jake a lot and share their stories with us of what kids would do to get high. They knew people who could get them alcohol to drink. Now underage children aren't supposed to do those things, but it was a common thing pretty much for the High Schoolers and the Jr. Highers back then. It gave us something to look forward to.

The four of us girls found our 1st alcoholic beverage of choice when we tasted the sweet taste of the M/D 20-20. We would also huff gasoline when we didn't have an alcoholic beverage to consume.

We would put gasoline in a rinsed out milk jug. We would take turns just sniffing it and passing it around. It was hilarious fun.

We were stupid to think we could do it without repercussions. It would leave a bad taste in your mouth from the vapors up your nose and horrible headaches you could get afterward. But it was fun for those brief seconds of passing it around. It was dangerous fun, but we didn't know it then.

The only drugs we heard of were pot and crack cocaine. We would share our most inner thoughts while inhaling this strong nauseous stench of car food.

We would talk about what boys we thought were cute, what NFL football teams we liked, and our favorite bands and songs. The lead singers we were in love with and the celebrities we wanted to be.

The only thing the four of us really agreed upon in harmony was "To Be With You" by Mr. Big.

When that song would come on the local radio station; we all would sing as long and loud as we could go. Gracious knows that we all had that secret special guy in our hearts. I am sure we all were fantasizing about the older guy that didn't notice we were even alive. The guys who are into sports, into girls that looked liked they came from somewhere, the girls who had families that gave them the means to show how being a kid growing up privileged looked like and those girls that we would never be, not in school anyway.

We would sit upstairs in the big bedroom that Jewel, Jane and Dawn shared. It had three beds in it and it looked like you could fit our whole trailer into it. I know it wouldn't, but to me, it could and I felt like they had everything.

We would sing and talk. We were never emotional friends though. I am sure Baby J and Jewel shared many more best friends' moments than I ever got to share with any of them.

Jane was like me, we were the middle girls who were just content in being part of someone else's life that wasn't about responsibility.

When the four of us were together, we weren't two pair of sisters. We all were sisters. We all saw the normal problems that any growing gals go through. We tried our first times as normal adolescents with huffing gas, drinking alcohol, and just being there for each other.

Our friendships have carried into adulthood, but we have all grown up and separated. We talk about getting together again and making a reunion now with our own children, but it just hasn't happened.

I wished I had taken the time to say Thank you sooner to their parents.

I am not sure if they knew their daughters were staying with a monster in our house. They never said anything and Baby J never did. But they saw a man different than the man that I knew.

For you see, it was announced to my mom and my Mamaw at this time that my dad had molested me again. No one else knew, but us. The abuse did stop. I thought that's all I wanted was to make it stop. So know one else knew; not Baby J, not James, and neither did Baby J's friends.

However, my mental roller coasters of influences were upon me by my mom, my Mamaw and some of my dad's family to just let it be. I was to forgive him. Mom promised to watch him and said that my dad promised that nothing like this would happen again.

Besides, he was working for the State Board of Education in the same school my sister was in for the Welfare to Work program. How could I say anything? I was just so happy the abuse had stopped. But now the chapter begins of another kind of abuse.

A kind of ritual abuse horror movies can't even properly depict. It's the breaking down of your soul and the raping of your mind that begins from the very sources your whole being comes from.

But for a brief time, I got to experience being a typical kid. I was a part of someone's real family. I did get to sit and laugh and not care about anything except sharing our stories of laughing, our music, our teams and the boys that all little girls dream of. We all thought we were too old to be enjoying the simplest of pleasures. However, it was the pleasures we all shared that gave us a part of what normal girls were even though, our lives were anything, but normal.

I never had the chance to really thank her parents for their love, support and most of all their invitation into their home. They gave my sister her first real home away from home.

They gave me not only the gift of my own sister, but to extend with two more sisters. I felt that I was one of those lucky kids at this age of my childhood.

Chapter Ten
What Is Home Anyways?

If you have ever experienced the love of an older brother's, then you know that love as no other especially mine. My brother was just a year and one week old than me. He is the reason I am known as Sissy today to my family and the communities we grew up in.

He couldn't say Cynthia as a child, so he called me Sissy. I thought at one time, you weren't truly West Virginia bred unless you have a Sissy in your family. I was my family tradition of this hillbilly name.

James was a carefree kid. My gracious that boy could really get into things that kept him in trouble. He would always be taking something apart, putting it back together, doing what they said he couldn't do, making excuses and reasons not to do something and almost always had mom to stand up for him to family members. Their comments on his behavior and his personality and his mischievous ways were a bad light in the family. This boy was labeled to be just like my dad from the beginning.

James was compared against our dad for his unique ways and his lame humor. His inability to pay attention in school only added to the family gossip claim that he is just like our dad.

The horror of this labeling is what robbed my brother of his life. It demented his perception of how to treat woman, how to be a good father, and how to be a productive man of society carried by the ghosts of being labeled a child molester as our dad. These kinds of accusations have hurt him his entire life. Why should he care or try?

There will be someone out there to throw it up to him verbally. He is a child molester like our dad. He is an abuser like our dad. He is just as lazy and unmotivated like the man that destroyed his mind and his will.

My brother as a young boy was struggling to find his own path with no guidance or love. My brother is evidence of what it means to have an abusive father with the ingredients of parenting that consisted of: neglect and no emotional love for a son.

James was just James to me. Baby J and me never really did get into scuffles with James much while we were kids. We would all joke around, but we never did relate to each other.

Baby J and I had the privilege of sharing clothes, stories and general girl things. James had no one, but three women to talk to. He could never share anything with our dad. The only thing my dad ever shared with James was hurt on so many levels. I will never know what it feels like to have belittlement from the man that should teach you as a man should his son.

I will never know how deep the scars run in the mind of a boy that was destroyed and robbed of the privilege to learn the high standards of being a male.

My dad would torture James so bad. Of all the pain I suffered through, talking about my brother is the absolute hardest. I had the women in my life to cling to so that I could cope and survive. He honestly had no one.

James couldn't talk to anyone, including family. Why would he want to do better? Why would he want to try? He wasn't a son that could talk to his father or his mother for advice because they were just as delusional as the rest of us. James seemed to seek comfort and advice from our Mamaw and Papaw to help him.

Mamaw was really like a surrogate to James and me for a long time. James and I shared a bond with our dad's family. I guess because we felt my Mamaw's strong desire to show us that life is better. It can be good even if you have to squint to see it.

James and I could always share in the good of our youth because we were closer than Baby J and me on many levels. James told me that sometimes he felt like a referee or a mediator to Baby J and me. He felt like he had to play tug of war with us because he didn't have a favorite sister, we both were. I never saw his hurt and damage until many years later as an adult.

James has such multiple personalities of all that is good and bad of the life we grew up in.

He was such a sweet kid when he wanted to be. He would help fix things around the house when dad wasn't in our life. He would always try to make you smile when you were crying. He would sit and cry with us when the emotions ran high. He would give the best hugs from the inside out. His eyes still ring of that little boy in him that hasn't healed. He shares with me so many of my most memorable moments. James and I were at the same schools no matter where we went until he was allowed to drop out of school in the 9th grade by my mother.

She felt the hassle of letting him quit was easier than the battle to make him go. Since dad wasn't there and in jail, that's what they both thought was best. The truant officer couldn't fine mom for him not attending school.

But there was a protective side of James that he never allowed to be shown until he was safe enough without dad there to let us know that he would protect my mom, Baby J and me. Most of our family took James for granted, including us.

In looking back at these memories, I now know that none of us had the proper skills to comfort one another, the general affection to really talk to each other and we couldn't support each other when we were all fighting our own demons of horror that my dad, my mom, and our grandparents had given us. But James tried harder than any of us. He still does daily.

James was perceived by everyone in our family to be too immature to be productive. They saw his mischievous ways as reasons not to even trust him. He never stole from any of our family or actually broke their trust, but they assumed he would. They assumed he was the worst of DNA's reincarnate so they never gave him a chance to do anything different.

As a child growing up on a hillside with only family member contact, you tend to cling to what you see daily. You have a tendency to think they are right. You start to believe that you are bad when they tell you. You think you deserve the worst when they whip you because they are the adults. You think that you don't need or deserve love because you weren't worthy of it as a child. You think that you never will be anything or anybody to no one because these adults you love taught you that and they know you better than you know yourself. This was the mentality that was shared by James and me the most.

Baby J was sheltered from a lot of the elements of the adults' gossip. She played as a child should. James was not and I was not even though, they were of different elements of adult conversations that we were subjected to.

We were entrusted with the worst of adult behavior. James would get dad's verbal lashings and physical beatings.

I got the verbalization of the adults telling me I would be OK. I was a survivor. I lived a lie daily as did James. We thought that if we just did it, we would be OK.

James would always have to help our dad to work on cars and electrical things. James would get dad his tools and be his right hand man in the many projects that dad did.

Dad would never just sit down and say: "Son, let me teach you how to ride to bike. I will show you how to take apart this radio and put it back together. I will take you down to the river just the two of us and go fishing. I will talk to you about the facts of life of being a man and what your roles are of being a man. I love you and am proud of you." Dad never said these things to my brother as a Daddy should.

He never held my brother when he would wreck on a bicycle. He would never tell James how proud he was of him when he did make a good grade in school.

He never did anything, but added layers and layers of insecurities into James. Dad always gave away his hurt and insecurities to others, but never accepted accountability for his own.

My uncle and my dad would always work on old cars, old machines or anything else they could do to pass the time. Their favorite pastime it seemed was to make bad jokes and bring James down.

They would call him Faggot for a pastime. They would curse him so bad. My dad treated my brother as if he was an embarrassment and his own competition. My brother was not competition to my dad, he was dad's son. It was dad's only chance to prove to the world that he got it right. It was dad's only way of doing right when he had been wronged as a young man. Dad never saw his responsibility to being a dad to James. He never carried the burden of a real parent who worried about what his children would be.

He never cared about the protecting role other than protecting his own life and morals. My dad never cared enough to show "I LOVE YOU" even though, we all heard this daily in our lives. It was nothing but words, that's all.

My brother was never like my dad. James always had a heart. He would talk to Baby J and me when we sit around and cry missing dad being in our lives. He would hold mom and tell her she would be OK. He would sit and watch our soap operas on TV just to be in the same room with us.

The only immediate friend James ever had was a cousin. Darryl was about the same age as James but just a few months younger. I always disliked him because he was truly a lot like the bad that I always heard about James. He got James into trouble a lot in school.

Darryl was rambunctious; he was dirty talking and cussing even when we were kids. James looked up to him because it seemed that Darryl had a lot of material things and a happier home.

They caused a lot of trouble for Baby J and especially me. James and Darryl seemed to be on a mission at times just to see how much humiliation that they could cause me in school since we shared the same hallways even though, we were never in the same classes.

While growing up as kids barely in elementary school, Baby J and me were persuaded to get into a rock throwing contest with James and Darryl. The boys were elevated on a hill above us, Baby J and me were below them on the dirt road leading up to the house.

The object of the game was to throw the rocks and try to hit each other. Looking back now, I realize the errors of Baby J and my strategy. We were throwing rocks up hill. The boys' pebbles would fly faster going down hill with more accurate targeting.

Darryl hit me right on my eye leaving a huge scratch. We all got a whipping for this one. We knew better, but why not. It sounded like fun right?

That should have told me that I should have done more to keep James away from Darryl. The damage that these two would do and bring into each lives were almost as complicated as Baby J and my relationship.

They should have been brothers. The life these two boys shared and their adult competitive ways toward one another was nothing more than the evidence of the dysfunction we led and the general mystery we were to Darryl and his family.

Darryl would soon become a thorn to my side. He thought I was to blame for my dad being the monster that he was. Darryl thought I was the reason that my brother got beat and neglected.

Darryl thought I was the reason our grandparent's dirty secret came out. All because of my ability to try to do better, I was labeled by this boy in terrible gossip that would eventually be the true light our family needed.

I would never talk to James about Darryl. It wasn't my place. He had to learn on his own just as I did about people's character. But next to our controversial views on Darryl, James and I always got along.

There were a lot of people in school who didn't know we were related even though, we shared the same last name. We never hung out. We were of two different social outlets in school. My focus was on grades and James was enjoying being away from home. This was his time to just be free to do what he wanted and he did.

It was easier to be a kid at school and not listen then to carry the burdens of being belittled when he got home.

He never had friends to stay on night with him. He never had buddies to hang out with except Darryl. He never got the privilege of riding a dirt bike that Dad bought him. He never got to learn to drive from Daddy's hands. Dad never taught him anything that a man should know.

James and I shared many conversations during our time of walking those two miles in the evening up the dirt road that led to our house when we got off of the evening school bus. This was some of my most treasured conversations with him.

Then there was the one summer that James and I got to share together.

I was given an opportunity of a lifetime to go stay in another state with our aunt and uncle. They wanted to pay me to be their babysitter for their two daughters while they worked. They were the first real family members that had trusted me with actual responsibility. It was such an honor for me of only 13 years old.

By this time, I was developing into my own body finally. The abuse had stopped. I thought I was becoming visually attractive for a 13 year old girl with my own mentality. My brown hair was now getting curly, thanks to puberty. My teeth were finally growing into my more mature face. I felt I was ready to go and get a break and accept this huge responsibility before me.

I was given the talk with my mom about being careful about strange men and my uncle. Be careful of not letting anyone in the house while they were working.

I was talked to intensively about the responsibilities of taking care of their young daughters, who was barely three and two. I was never prepped on the freedom that I would have that summer year.

I enjoyed being away from my immediate family and feeling the release of mom knowing what my dad had done to me. The abuse had stopped and I had freedom to just breathe being away from the heavy burdens that burdened my heart daily.

I was in another state. I was with a family that I loved dearly and looked up to my whole life.

They had done so well in their lives. Both my aunt and uncle worked, they lived in a beautiful two story house. The girls had their own rooms. They had a big nice yard with grass. They had a nice little concrete porch that looked out on the paved sidewalk in front of their house. You could see the river and the city from their porch. This place had the prettiest sunrises and sunsets.

I always loved being down there. I just wish now, I would have tried harder so I could have had the privilege to go back. I did get homesick a lot though. I could only call mom or they would call me when they would go to Mamaw's house. We didn't have a phone at my house.

I would write them letters home telling them how much I missed them. It was hard writing letters to them and asking them to come to visit me on the weekends. I was missing Baby J and James terribly. They never had gas money to come down was their excuse.

I started sending ½ of my small earnings back to them. I felt I was rich. I never had earned my own money before then like that.

I wanted to send them half of my money back home to my mom and dad so they could have gas money to come to see me.

I was so proud to have a job. I wanted my parents to be proud of me too. I so enjoyed taking care of their daughters. I was enjoying the down time of not having the reality of dysfunction in my face everyday.

I did go out and eat at restaurants with their family down here. I did go to the mall and outlet stores. I did buy things I never had before. I got new clothes, cheap makeup and could fix my own hair. I was able to pick out my own styles now. My uncle and I would go fishing together just the two of us. I learned that I could trust men again and enjoy being around them by myself. I learned a lot from them in my time there.

I am not sure of the exact specifics, but I did get everyone to agree to let James to come down there with me for a few weeks of the summer. It was great. I wasn't so scared now while watching the two little ones. I was able to feel safe. I had my big brother with me. It was nice to have him there. I didn't miss home as much with James being there.

There was an unforeseen thing that I never realized until many years later about the price of freedom to two kids that were raised like we were. Freedom wasn't something we could always be given as a gift without the proper guidance and we would learn a whole lot by trial and error.

My aunt and uncle had this really nice stereo equipment that would actually rattle the windows in the house when turned up to a good tune. I would put the girls down for nap time and James and I would turn the music wide open. Of course, the little ones didn't sleep long.

Sometimes, it was hardest decision to enjoy the loud music and have fun or to turn the music off. The little girls would cry and be upset just because it would be so loud.

I should have known better than to indulge into this mini-privilege, but I didn't. James was well-behaved and I did everything I could while there. It was just another piece of evidence of what we had lacked in life.

I never got to go back and I never asked why they never let me watch their girls again. I am not sure if it was because our family would experience even more dysfunctional upset the following year or if it was because a cassette tape was later found with me singing real loud and telling the girls to be quiet in the background. If only I had the courage to say I was sorry.

It wasn't child abuse but it was abusing responsibility and having fun with the music that loud.

I will never truly know what happened, but I can't blame them for not allowing me back the following summer. I will always be grateful for that summer with my aunt and uncle and their family and the chance to enjoy my brother as a friend.

James and I never did hang out much even now. It was always a situation where I gave him room to go through trial and error, and when he needs me; I am here. We don't have to speak to each other for many years, we don't have to be around each other; but when we have no one else to talk to, to comfort us, to support us; we always have each other.

I am the emotional one in my family. I am not afraid to cry and to laugh. I am not afraid to talk about the wrong that we went through.

However, my verbal skills were never as easy to express as writing them. My emotions are also an attribute that can be hard for any man to accept, including my brother.

There have been statements made that I look like just like my brother.

We both have the Jim Carrey smiles and curly hair and the naturally arched eyebrows. We both have laughs that sound like hyenas when we get rolling. Baby J and me didn't look as much alike as James and me do.

It's not my place to make anyone believe me. But I can say with a peaceful heart that my brother is not the horrible demon that the world around us gossiped him to be. He would never hurt a child and is not a child molester like our dad. He was just an easy target because I inevitably told on my dad and put him in prison and that gave a label to my brother that he is just like my dad. It is so far from the truth then and even now.

He is now living daily as a nomad under his own rules of life and making his way whatever he chooses to do. He does what he needs to so he can get by. He answers to no one about any questions or rumors of our lives.

He doesn't care to stand up and tell you where to go and if you wrong him, you have lost a good friend for life. He is my nomad brother and that's what I call him. I have so much respect for him. He has the most right in the world to hate our dad for the wrong our dad bestowed upon him, but he doesn't. He doesn't. He still sits and cries and wonders why, just like I do.

Why wasn't we loved like normal kids? Why couldn't we be held by a dad with no motive? Why couldn't he just teach us the good and leave the bad out of our lives and these haunting memories? Why did he choose to beat James and hurt him?

James never did anything, but love our dad. We both wondered why we let dad live when looking back. No matter the topics of our conversations even now, when we travel memory lane together; it's always a tear filled event with triggers of being caught up in an overwhelming reality of what we endured as children. It's no wonder; why we are the way we are today.

The fact is that my brother is nothing like our dad and did not make the same stupid choices. That's the truth. What would everyone have to talk about if speculation wasn't their truth right?

In a small county such as McDowell County, you have a diverse population of ages, backgrounds and poverty. The locals of each community would gossip about what wrong their neighbors done. You could go anywhere in that county and if they didn't know your name, they knew your face and who your family was.

This was one of the most enduring qualities of this small time county life, but at the same time that you knew who the good were, you heard the bad too. I guarantee you that if someone knew you; they had already heard about you and made their mind up without knowing you. Welcome to the real truth of what society believes in rural America.

It took from 1984 until 1992 for the state of West Virginia to admit that Incest did happen in West Virginia and needed to be prosecuted.

Before the legal justice stepped in we had moved seven times and went to four different schools. We had been in two different shelters with our mom and been to numerous counselors who poked and prodded our minds without resolution to really help us learn the childlike factors of psychological development that our family lacked in seeking our self-identity of our robbed childhoods.

It wasn't that that they saw three wounded children with a distorted view of life. It wasn't that a woman had been married and allowed a pedophile back in their home because the State of West Virginia said it would be OK. It was counseling of where to go from now. They figured we would survive and we could move on from here.

As statistics increase of child abuse in America it only proves that more survivors and victims are coming forth with the truth. Healing and seeking help is being brought to the forefront.

Before you move ahead as an abused child, you have to go back. You have to be strong enough to look into the eyes of a mirror and see what they did take from you as a child.

You have to admit you were abused. You were just a child that couldn't be held responsible for the adults' actions of wrong against you. You have to take control of your own life now. You have to be able to hold the hand of someone you love and trust to walk this journey with you. It's always too scary to go by yourself, but you can. You have to want to go back and talk about what it was that you went through. You can't really help an adult that never had the full circle of being a child. It's a right that every child is entitled to and every adult survivor should be liberated from.

Every child has the right to grow up without knowing fear from the adults that should teach them love. They have the right to not have their precious lives scarred with the effects of abuse. They have the right to be virgins of their mind, body and souls until they grow and CHOOSE, until they CHOOSE what they want and are taught to accept their own consequences to their own actions. You have to give that gift of sharing in their world. Children should not be dominated as a playground for demented ways of parenting.

A child should never know a life of ritual abuse in religion or mental control in their own homes. A child should never be able to tell you that they know what sexual matters of life are because their young bodies were invaded to early. A child should never bear the results of a grown adult not being able to control their own urges to abuse another.

A child has the right to be taught verbally, to be loved and physically held without invading their space to grow and learn their own bodies and mind.

A child should never be persuaded to accept and go along with an adults' bad decision because it's convenient for them.

A child should only have to worry about what games they will play, what songs they can invent, what their friends and them will talk about when they see each other again. A child should never have the battle of contemplating am I better off in this world or not?

A child should never be taken for granted for income so a family can get a welfare check or a free medical card. A child should never be just the object of any one's life, a child should be the example of what your parents never got right in your life, not a continuation of the diseases that destroy many generations thereafter.

A child should be able to simply be a child.

A parent's role should be to protect that child even before you accept anyone else to be in your life. A child's happiness should be before your own. A child's want comes before the adults. A child should have healthy happy examples of being a kid and actually looking forward, looking ahead to being an adult.

A parent has the right to be a friend to their child and teaching them that by example. A parent has the right to use the bad in the world as an example of why you should CHOOSE carefully in your decisions. A parent has the right to hold their child when they cry, to heal a wound when they fall, to share the enjoyment of young adulthood, to anxiously await the choices they will make to be an adult.

A parent has the right to guide that child, to protect that child, to love that child so it will never be alone and to comfort a child when their hearts need to be held. A parent has the right to learn from their child as much as an adult could ever teach a child.

The laws have the right to step in and to protect the home of a child when the parents are not strong enough to make the right decisions. The laws should be written to install fear into the pedophiles, perpetrators and child molesters and scare them to stop abusing. The laws should be strong enough to protect the innocent children who do find courage to speak out against these crimes.

As a growing child from 12-14 years old, these were my thoughts that consumed me almost daily. My dad had stopped the abuse. My mom seen that she protected us. His parents were the only members in the family that knew again. My brother and sister had been sheltered to this dark secret that the monster did return. However, I had a new battle. The more I was with my dad and our family; I battled with a new reality.

In the 7th grade of school, I was attending a new school. I had finally made it to middle school. I had babysat the whole summer and got a bonus from my aunt and uncle to buy my own school clothes that year. I had clothes that fit my growing feminine body finally. I was still growing into my new hairdos that I was finally to experiment with on my own and I was approaching a new level of mentality that was almost satisfying to me.

However, the lurking began of the abuse in my own silence began to eat away at me and no matter what I could do, I couldn't escape. But I did try.

When I told my mom and she told my grandparents, I never spoke to my dad about the abuse and the conversations between my mother and him. All I know the abuse had stopped. My dad almost stayed distance to me from there on out. I had done wrong by telling on him. I knew that.

But he could still work it out so that others would believe the lies that rolled off his tongue and the deceit that he would hide so well.

I didn't go back to that basement and I kept safe distance from him. Life was just as it used to be. Mom would always make sure to keep that extra eye on dad and his behavior. She allowed him to stay.

My grandmother reassured me that I would be OK too. My mom and my grandmother convinced me that there was no reason to go back to the law. They would just allow him back into the home anyway so of course, I agreed that this was the best thing to do. They both secured me in the knowledge that he would never hurt me again. They both re-triggered the years of hurt that we had endured when dad wasn't in our lives. They both constantly told me how others in our family had survived incest without the rest of the world knowing. My Mamaw was always persistent in assuring me I was a survivor. He had stopped the abuse, end of story.

But it would be far from over.

While entering the 7th grade, it was a new world that I had trouble adapting to. I wasn't safe and secure in one class with the same faces everyday. I was introduced to many more students. The teachers would change constantly with the shuffling of the classes we had to now take. I couldn't concentrate in this environment that I was now placed in. I was given a new freedom to explore on my own. It was scary.

My elementary friends were all separated from me. My ability to not speak out was my biggest hindrance. I realized what had been done to me in this new situation at school and my inability to cope. I hadn't coped. I thought I did. I tried to make the best of it. I tried to concentrate. I passed, but not with such high regards to learning that I once knew.

I became friends with the students who mocked school and authority figures. I soon began to be a cut up in class like the rest of some of the class members. I soon realized that smoking cigarettes helped, skipping school and how using rubber bands to shoot paper in class with other students was a thought reliever for what I tried to really hide inside. I knew what the rooms of detention looked like.

I learned how you would get labeled by association of the class of friends you hung around with were important in this stage of life. I realized that I was found cute by some of the boys in our classes. I found out how much I missed out on life by fighting to stay alive and I wasn't ready to prepare me for this new world I found in middle school.

I soon realized I wasn't the only abused student in the school talking with one of my new best friends.

She seemed like she had it all figured out. She was almost in all my classes. I don't know how we became such good friends, but I have come to learn that when you are abused, usually, you can tell the signs of another's personality that they have been too.

Maybe that was our silent bond from the beginning or it was because we had found new fun from the lives we secretly led when the bell rang to release us back into our hell. I am not sure what it was that kindled our friendship or all of the above components, but she was a true friend.

She had been abused at the hands of her step-father. Her mother had married a man that was mean to her.

She figured as long as her mother was happy that's all that mattered. She wasn't going to ruin that for her mom, no more than I was going to be the blame for my family separation. She taught me how to be tough and gave me a sense of having a voice and of understanding. We both would talk in detention and writing letters to each other of how to cope. We relieved our hurtful hearts and burdened minds with the typical topics of conversations that all young girls do. We both realized that we weren't the only poor kids anymore. Honestly, it didn't matter these days even if we were. This was OK. We had each other. I looked at this gal because of her internal strength just to get out of there when she was 18.

She didn't have a clue of what she would do but we shared conversations of running away, we would talk about getting jobs and moving so far away no one would find us. She helped me re-identify myself by spelling my name Cyndi instead of Cindy as most of the world knew me as then. I found even changing the spelling of my name gave me strength. It was the time era of Madonna and her questionable songs, her unique styles she would chose and how no matter what you look like, if you are good at what you do and happy with whom you are, you would be OK. You would really be OK.

The abuse that my best friend had endured was even deeper than my own level.

She expressed her anger to me and the pain she had suffered. I wouldn't admit mine to her. I would just sit and listen or read the horror she had written on paper. We always spoken about staying with one another, but never had the chance to.

I couldn't bring myself to really make it happen for her to come to my house because the threat of my dad being there and for another's safety. I couldn't even think about it. It wasn't just being poor I had to hide but it was now the threat of what if my dad did this to someone else and knowing I could have stopped it for good by sending him to jail that I had to burden. But my grandparents, my mom and my best friend really made me feel I would be OK.

I was beginning to come of age and Mother Nature stepped in. I had a maxi pad in my purse in class. Well, fumbling through it looking for a pen, the maxi pad fell on the floor. I was humiliated, my best friend saw it; for you see everyone knew that girls my age were menstruating, but it wasn't something publicly you announced.

So when this happened, I thought I was going to cry and just die. I picked it up and put it away hoping no one saw it. Well, I got nicknamed Maxi Pad the rest of the year and my best friend came to the rescue once again.

She made me see the humor in real situations and helped me to laugh at myself instead of crying like I was use to doing.

She taught me how to not to take the little things such as this so seriously. She taught me how to use the things of life to escape the real burdens we carried. The music we listened to and the writing of even simple notes. I had a friend who shared my greatest releases of life. I couldn't wait to go to see her daily. She was the first real person I had opened up to ever in school. She was the first person I talked to that had been abused like me. We both knew we weren't alone. Her tone of voice let others knew she was mad, when she happy, when she was sad or just didn't want to talk and they listened to her. No one ever picked on her in school.

There were some boys in our class that would. Now looking back, I am not sure if they had crushes on her or if it were her wit of being real where ever she was at that made her intimidating to them. I am not sure.

But she was my rock that helped me survive the every changing progression of our teenage years that year and she taught me that I was not alone in my abuse. She taught me that I could trust in someone else to listen to me too what little I told her. But I taught her that she could always depend on me to be there for her. Our dreams had no limits and somehow we would see each other through this mess that our parents got our worlds into.

I cried so much at the end of this school year. It was one of the hardest to say goodbye too. I was so happy to be finding Cyndi. I was thrilled to have a whole year of nothing but explorations and listening to others my age talk about normal teen things. I was so happy to be a part of my best friend's life. We made a promise that we would be strong for one another to see each other next year.

I was so happy in knowing that I had my first real friend. I had someone out there in the world that knew my dirty secret and we both found shared relief of coping skills together. Even if we weren't model students or even students that some of our teachers would brag on, it was OK. We were good people none the less.

It was just something we had to endure. I knew I was going to be OK, so I thought.

As the summer progressed and the memories of strength became weaker and weaker upon my mind of those strong days of school, the reality was that I was faced with seeing this monster daily.

The more I was around my aunt and uncle and their children, the more the thought ate away at my heart that what would I truly do if I ever heard that my dad would hurt one of them. My dad was around children in our family my whole life. They all knew the abuse took place to my sister and me.

They chose and accepted him back into their lives and homes since the state didn't see reason to convict him.

However, I couldn't forgive myself. I couldn't escape the inner fear I carried. What if Dad would molest my sister again? What if he would touch one of her friends that stayed at the house? What was Dad really thinking now that I was developing into a young woman? What would Dad do to my baby sister when I wasn't there anymore to protect her? What would I ever do if I had a child one day and my daddy would hurt the child that I would have someday? What would I do? How could I look at this man every day with love and trust him again? How could my mom and grandma expect me to just forgive and forget? How did the rest of my dad's sister do it? How could they look at my grandpa for 18 years of their lives and just accept this? How could they not hate my grandma for keeping him there? How could I do this too? How was I was going to relieve these fears, these voices, and these worries? How could I be as strong as other survivors and still keep our family together?

The more I looked at family pictures, family gatherings, and the more I seen my Dad interact with them all it became unbearable. It was as if nothing ever happened. He acted as if he never done anything wrong. He was treated by others as if he was a good man. He was viewed upon as a good man, lazy and never working up to his ability; but none the less a good man.

It was just a bad memory that we all survived through and that's what everyone on the outside saw that never knew the real inside of our walls. My brother and I went to school everyday. He always drove us to school in the morning and never letting us ride the bus. But we would ride the evening bus. He always took my sister to her school. He always was there. He fixed things when they broke no matter where he went and he shed smiles where ever he went.

He acted as if he truly had never done any wrong in his life. Mom covered his dirty secret.

My grandma camouflaged my dad's bad by always projecting the good that dad had done at their house to help them and her elderly friends. They all acted like nothing was bad or wrong.

Dad really did wear the good person act very well on the outside. He never showed an ounce of remorse to us kids. He never showed us kids that he was sorry for our lives that he was destroying. He really thought that we were all supposed to just forgive, forget and go on.

He knew that if my grandpa got away with molesting children, he figured he would too. He thought I was never strong enough to tell on him to mom, but I was. He thought that if he had stopped when mom found out that I would be happy again and that he would never have to face the legal system again.

So what if he would, they would release him right back into the home. So why did this man have to worry about anything but keeping face like he had always done.

They all didn't know the inner death that was eating away at me again. When I was in school, I always found release and ways to cope with the inner child that was so secretly held within. She would scream at me to listen. She would talk to me to hear.

She would torment me with thoughts. I now realize that this little girl was inside and just wanted me to protect her and others as I got older. She was real.

If you think this is insane, go back in time when you might have been moved to tears good or bad at any point in your own memory. Can you still feel those tears swelling up now? Can you still see and smell that surrounding you are in? Can you still feel scared, fear, humbled, happy or sad because of that given moment? Are you there just like you were when it happened? Was it like opening a doorway to somewhere you didn't want to go again or something you wished you could have embraced a little longer?

I was living these triggers, these emotional horrors daily when I didn't have a release to cope. I had to face this abuse daily. I was not being touched anymore but now I was shielding a burden that was more than the abuse itself. I was not being protected from this man; I was being mentally raped by him and the two women I looked up to the most.

As long as I didn't see him or was around them all together, I was fine. If I were around them independently, it wasn't so bad.

But when I had no release of school to run to and my best friend to talk to, I couldn't cope. I was being consumed again in my own mental hell. When I was with all three of them together that is when it was the absolute hardest not to cry, not to scream, not to just explode with confusion and give them all this that I had within.

I didn't see my dad anymore in the childish light I use to. I didn't see the good in him to get me through to face his lies. I didn't see my mom as protecting us, I saw her as protecting the lifestyle she wanted.

I didn't see the good in my grandma anymore, I saw a woman that was protecting another dirty secret as she had done with my grandpa for so many years. I didn't see how keeping my dad there was going to help my brother, my sister and mom in the long run anymore. I was growing up. I realized I wasn't just a child anymore. Their expectations of me were becoming disappointment due to my new way of life in school. The music I choose to listen to was not what they thought I needed to hear.

Motley Crue and Metallic was Satan music in my house. My new found way of finding clothes that fit me, bothered and worried my mom. I realized I had a blossoming figure. I realized I had a nice smile. I realized that one day; I might want to grow up and get married and have a child. I realized that I might want to be a mother. Then I realized that I did.

I wanted to grow up and get everything right that no one in my family had done before. I wanted to be the example of good in life even if no one else in my whole world that I loved dearly wanted to.

I never chose drug addiction as my relief. I never chose alcohol as an escape. I never chose sex at that point as a solution or even hurting others intentionally as a way to get even.

I chose music. I chose my best friend. I chose the gift of the writing ability I had to make sense of this insanity when I truly had no more good to look up to. I would write and write so much.

I would read and re-read everything I put on paper; all the while I was gaining more sense of who I was, gaining more strength within because I knew what was truly right at this point.

The state didn't protect us and I knew they wouldn't. But what could I do and where would I go? I didn't know. But I knew I had to cope somehow to get me through the summer. I stayed gone as much as I could even staying on night with elderly ladies that were family friends just so they wouldn't be by their self. I would work in their houses and cleaning for them. I never got paid with cash. I didn't want their money. I just wanted a safe haven away from the reality that my house had now become. I wanted to listen to good in others and believed them when they talked. I wanted to hear of their stories of how they became the older ladies that they were now so I could have hope that one day, I could to.

I enjoyed their company so much.

I thought of ways to just stay gone including trusting to be with those I didn't really know; just to be somewhere other than this new style of home I had come to know in Eckman.

I never looked at my dad the same again after he stopped the abuse the second time. I never told anyone how much I was battling inside. I saw that he had no remorse. I saw that he hadn't changed or that he cared. I saw that his actions didn't care that he had violated my sister and me when we were children. I seen the tears that us kids had cried to let him back. I seen the tears that mom had cried with her wanting our family back. I listened to them all in wanting him back. I saw him continue on as if we had never been wronged.

I saw how the adults tried to protect this newest dark secret of our lives. I didn't see my sister and brother as needing this man as their daddy. I didn't see this man as a husband to my mom. I didn't see any good in this man that I called my dad.

I saw a man that would surely hurt my children that I would have one day. I saw this man hurting another child that he would have access to that was quiet and obeying as I was. I saw this man manipulating his way through life to touch someone innocent and taking away their childhood too. I saw this man using me as the reason of why he never had to pay for what he did again. I saw this man for the monster that he truly was. I was terrified. I was scared. I couldn't express to no one around me what I was truly going through alone at this point.

The family around me loved him. The family around me enjoyed his traits of helping and his skills of hands on knowledge he had to fix everything. My family really did embrace this man and the laughter he shared with those around. It was too late. I had seen the good and bad in him.

I could handle the thoughts of being abused. I could handle the fact that he had molested my sister and that she truly had seemed to move on from her days of being hurt. I could accept that my brother and me were labeled and singled out for being ourselves.

But as a child growing into a young woman, I could not begin to fathom the love I had inside for a child that I didn't even know then but what if this monster would hurt a baby, a baby I might have one day as an adult? What if this man that I was forced to love would inflict the same on my child one day? What if I would have a little girl one day that needed me to be strong for her, would I be able too? How could I?

What if this man would steal her life, her soul and ruin the privilege she would have as a child?

What if this man would take the only good thing I had to look forward to as a child and that was the privilege to be a mother and to have a baby one day? How could I possibly carry this burden?

My grandma had done it. My mom had done it. But I would never allow it. I would never allow any man to hurt any children I would ever have.

I was physically a virgin inside. He had not taken this from me even though, he had raped me in every way that I could be; but he would not damage the type of mother I would want to be someday. The reality was that when I was in the presence of my family, I could smile, laugh and be what they needed me to be.

But when I was in the silence of my own room or in the bathroom staring at my nudity and what my body was becoming and the conversations of the normal kids from school; I could not hide or run from the fact that I was growing up and that I couldn't stop this process that I was in now. I couldn't hide this becoming of age.

I couldn't stop the fear inside that I was alone. I couldn't run far enough or cope with this new found truth that only I knew within.

But I did manage somehow. I survived. They all were right. I made it through one of the hardest summers of my life. For every ounce of growing I did mentally on my own, the harder it was to accept I was growing up. I knew I had been robbed. I had been stripped of every ounce of privilege of being a kid that a child could hope to enjoy.

I knew I had 8th grade and my best friend to help me see it through another year. I was going back to school. I knew I would get by another year. I didn't dwell on what was leeching at my heart strings so much while in school.

Now that I was in 8th grade, I was accustomed to the running in the hall between classes. I was stable in the routine of the daily school game. I had my best friend and a summer full of catching up to do. I worried about her so much. I didn't have a phone and no way of communicating with her. It was a grand relief to me to be able to even say that I was abused again to her and vice versa.

We both had accomplished what we said we would. We survived the summer and we were best friends again. We could go back to dreaming of what we were really going to do when we turned 18. We dreamed more of running away and we started talking about boys in our classes that we thought were cute and the ones that were dorky. We talked about the music we used to get us through that summer. We still would write to one another. It was going to be a great school year.

Wrong. For you see, our family secret of Incest was not as quiet as I thought. In all these years of James and Darryl, our cousin, being friends. Darryl questioned to James things about our childhood. Darryl heard the family rumors that were anything but the truth of what our family really went through. I had become a target to Darryl's misunderstandings of who I really was.

Apparently, guys would say things to James and Darryl about me in school. I was growing and blossoming and being the typical boys they are, you don't see your sister or your cousin in a sense of them developing into a lady with all the exterior features.

You always see them as the kid that you have fun with, that you joke with and that don't credit for as ugly or pretty or cute and handsome. Kids just don't do those things. Darryl would only pick on me and make verbal comments about me being skinny or me being stuck up in school.

It really escalated in middle school when he got some of the boys in school to call me Dump Truck.

Even though, my clothes were more of my taste they still were not the right size I should have been wearing for my body. My pants were loose and droopy in the derriere so they labeled me as Dump Truck. This was just child's play to me. I ignored it and went on as I always did never thinking twice about it other than typical boy behavior from my brother and our irritating childish cousin.

This drastically changed my acceptance of coping what I was learning about myself. These events to follow gave me a taste of reality that I could not be prepared for or even begin to care about anymore.

A mutual friend of Darryl's came up to me in the hallway one evening at school. He had never talked to me before. I always stayed away from any of Darryl's friends because they were just as immature as he was.

I was changing classes and just happened to be by myself at this time. When Paul came up to me, he just hovered right in front of me because he was a little taller. I just stood there. He said: "I know why you don't have any boyfriends." I was puzzled looking at him thinking he was going to have some kind of lame remark about me being stuck up but he didn't. I said: "Why", thinking how stupid is this. All he said was, "Because I heard you F*** your daddy!!" I stood there frozen for what seemed like forever. I felt that time had stopped. I didn't reply. I just turned and ran holding back all the tears I had.

Our secret was out. My way out was here. I couldn't do it anymore. I couldn't handle this anymore.

I couldn't face this kind of reality and questioning from a boy of my school. I couldn't explain the happenings of my hell to females, how could I ever look at any guy in the eye and speak about something like this. I couldn't defend or deny any of his questioning.

I had to tell an adult before I had a breakdown. I had to go somewhere so I could be safe. I just ran to the guidance counselors' office. By the time I reached her door, the tears were flowing down my face as if a river was being released.

I don't recall if there were any students in there or not. I didn't care about who knew now. I didn't care about what I had been told to accept. I didn't care about the repercussions of what would happen. I needed someone to hear my side of the story. I needed someone to hear the whole truth of all that I had to endure. I had to let someone else have this burden. I couldn't do it anymore. Those words bled into my soul as if I had done the wrong. They sang in my head as if I was the one with the problem. They made me realize that I was not strong enough to carry these lies anymore.

Thank God for the strength of my teachers to help me. Thank God for their strength to be able to help someone like me. Thank God I hadn't done bad enough these years in middle school because they were still there for me.

Ms. Mary Ann was my guidance counselor. I had known her practically all my days in school. She was a lady of such sweet nature. She always possessed the brightest smile and made every child feel welcomed in her office. She immediately took me back to her office and just sat there listening to the horror of my encounter in the hallway of Paul's comment and Darryl's instigation in this process. She listened and got up and held me as I cried and I managed to tell her of the abuse I had endured at the hands of my dad. She listened carefully of all the time line I gave her and what we had been through. I didn't know how long I had been in there.

When she did talk, she asked me about proof? PROOF? What more proof did I need, I didn't need any? My God, I wasn't making this up!

She asked me to calm down, just calm down. She reassured me she wasn't calling me a liar but was there any proof that the abuse occurred and any proof that it stopped.

Since my dad never actually sexually entered his penis in my body and I never went to the doctors for physical check-ups there was no medical evidence that the abuse did occur.

She asked me to keep calming down. I explained to her the only thing I had was my diary. My dearest blessed diary that was my best friend for so many years of my conflicting life. She asked me where it was. I told her at our house and where.

She began to proceed to ask where my mom, my brother and sister were. She asked of my dad's whereabouts also.

She proceeded to tell me that honestly, I didn't have a case without that diary. I told her the only thing that had any proof that the abuse happened and ended was my diary the night I told my mom. I had written one line in it that said, "I told mom". That's all. It was those three little words with the date.

There never was any reference of any of it on paper that anyone else would understand. All my writings that were of convicting evidence I destroyed after I released my inner torment.

Ms. Mary Ann just held me and comforted and helped me to understand what was going to happen now. It was in the school's hands now. It was not my burden anymore.

Even if I told her it was lie now, it wouldn't matter. She knew the diary existed. This precious best friend of mine would free me of an eternity of mental hell. She had to follow their rules now. I was finally in the shelter of someone who would help me. I was with someone who would protect me.

I knew my family's' whereabouts when I was in school. Dad would drive Jamie and me to school and drop us off at the front door. He would then drive to get Jen and take her to the elementary school she went to. He would then start his job as the janitor down there at this elementary school working for the welfare check we got each month. Mom would be at home waiting for us to come home in the evenings.

Ms. Mary Ann then took me to our principal. She was on a mission now to get our family to safety. She was reporting the abuse to the proper authorities. She was working to get everyone safely away from my dad and to get my mom, brother, sister and me safely to another place. It was in the hands of someone else now.

I was in Mr. Nate's office. I felt so safe with him and always did. He was a very good principal. He gave orders and directions with out dictating his authority. All the kids that knew him respected him and his ability to relate to all children, rich or poor, and the good or bad students. He saw potential with everyone.

It was so easy to just let the tears fall down and the words of everything I was shielding inside to just be released to him also. I felt I couldn't say it enough. I felt I couldn't leave any detail out of these last few years of hell out to anyone that wanted to listen and help.

I felt I could just talk forever and forever to Ms. Mary Ann and Mr. Nate. They both had such understanding their voices.

I saw the sympathy in their eyes they had for me and all I had secretly managed to survive. I felt for the first time comfort from another adult of all I had to go through.

I felt that justice would be served now and they would definitely help enforce something that was never enforced before, a child molester would be stopped for good today.

It was such a fast paced world wind from there. I still don't know how they managed to get my mom, Baby J, James and me all to safety. All I know they were taking us all to a shelter and that Dad was not in our worlds anymore.

James could see by my swollen eyes that something was wrong. He didn't know the truth or Baby J at this time. Mom knew that I couldn't handle it anymore when she seen my tear streaked face.

When I looked into their eyes, I couldn't handle seeing that same familiar hurt I had seen way back in our earlier childhood. I saw their same tears of WHY DADDY? Just WHY? I seen their disbelief, I felt their pain in addition to my own. I didn't know what dad would do at this point.

I never have fully got the whole story of what did happen that day on his behalf, I didn't need to know. I didn't care to know. I was relieved that I could speak now and let the truth out knowing in my heart that I did what was right even if our new reality would make me have doubts.

Chapter Eleven
Who Decides Now?

As I sit with this door of revelation open on my life, I am completely numb. I feel no emotion, I have no tears, and I have no smiles, no laughs, and no emotions of any kind.

Being an adult now and telling this unbelievable story, I wonder how I can possibly go on. How can anyone who has never read this be able to understand? How can I comfort those and strengthen those that do read this.

I don't know exactly how other than hoping to let survivors know, you are not alone. We all have our own unique and horrible stories that need to be told.

We need to gather strength from one another. We need the voices of victims to help protect other children out there being abused. We need to stand up to these perpetrators of the world to let them know that they can't do this, no matter their title in your life. We need our states to see that the laws have to be strengthened.

It's not just acts of: physical violence, sexual touches and mental rape that rob a child of their young lives. It is the actual decaying of a soul that takes away from these adult lives that abused children will have one day. The abuse doesn't stop at the end of the touches or beatings.

It is the gift to know right from wrong, the gift to learn proper perception of characters around us. Most of the time is so easier to just not heal, just not try to make sense of this horrible mental disease of incest that infects your mind and emotions.

It's easier to choose to live as a victim. It's easier to just use the survivor skills within that kept you alive to keep you going. It is a scary, scary reality for incest survivors. These triggers of emotions are always with us.

We can't hear a song that we aren't in a moment of time again. We can't smell a smell that can remind of what it is like to be sitting in a metal chair while your daddy is groping you. We can't see the same four walls in childhood pictures and not feel that sickness that your home was never truly a home. You can't look at family portraits of your parents and siblings and not have inner hate, inner bitterness and just that same heart wrenching yearning for the answer of WHY??? Just WHY?

You can't proudly look at your childhood mementos without linking abuse to this piece of your history that makes you who you are today. You can't see a year book without linking it to the year and time span of your horror mentality you were living.

The hardest part as a parent for me is trying not to recall the years of abuse through my daughter's life and every age of progression she has had. I have been robbed of the simplest pleasures of having a normal conversation with her.

"What did you do when you were five years old Mommy? What did you get for your sixth birthday? What did your mommy and daddy do for you? Did your mommy and daddy do this for you or that for you?"

I try not to think about it. I have to read, educate, and research on how to be a mother that a woman should be. I have to read how to answer even her most simplest of life's pleasures. I was never taught this gift of nature. I was never prepped on the proper talks of life.

I was never given the option to know what it is like to be touched by a boy in the secrecy and intimacy of sex for my first time. I was never given the privilege of privacy of knowing what it's like to talk to my mom about the facts of life and having a baby and the wants of a healthy marriage.

I was never given the most secret privileges that a child never realizes is a privilege until it is taken away. I never was able to just explore the natural stages of the curiosity of growing within without personal mental repercussions of the hell that was within me. I never had a clear consequence of anything. I was always battling the things within.

I lived this. I carried these secrets. I protected generations of abuse before me. I protected the men that continued this disease of incest and dominating lies of secrets. I protected the state that didn't enforce what was right.

I didn't blame anyone and I faulted no one but myself. I blamed myself. I beat myself up emotionally and mentally. I felt as if most of the time I was two different people living in one body.

At times, I would embrace just being a normal child and a normal young lady enjoying life. But when the burdened child within and the daughter that let down her parents, her grandparents and hurt her siblings by not stopping these horrible events of life we were accustomed to; I was in shock of the world around.

I had become so accustomed to opening and closing these doors so often, it was a way of life for me. I only spoke to those closest to me when I was forced to say what they wanted to hear, do what they wanted to see, and once again; this revolutionary door of extreme emotions wouldn't be shut. It would continue on into my young adult life.

I can't believe that I am sharing some of my private secrets with strangers I will never know. It's easier for me to just to be numb and forget the abuse that happened. But I can't.

I have talked to so many survivors who thrive in life and are numb to most of their emotions. We need to know we are not alone. We don't have to live this hell anymore.

We shouldn't have to bear the guilt and shame of things we couldn't stop and truly had no control over.

We should be able to feel and not be robbed of feeling happiness, to feeling great self-esteem, and we shouldn't be thieved of the opportunities that make happy tears happy and sad tears sad. We shouldn't ever have a trigger that causes such internal pain we wish we were dead. We shouldn't ever carry these emotions that are so strong that most never experience. We should never have to carry this battle alone. We shouldn't ever be afraid to release with words what we feel, we think and what we honestly believe to be the truth. We should be privileged to always just be ourselves.

This battle of doing what is right, what is wrong, what is morally right and what is morally wrong is not something that any child should have to know or carry within like a heavy anchor upon their heart and mind.

As our family was once again subjected to another dysfunctional upset, I was the target of their pain this time.

We were far removed from the abuse of 1984 and the rest of the family seemed fine in accepting what had occurred. I have fought an internal battle of death and living that was only known to me. I didn't share it with anyone.

That day in Elkhorn Jr. High School, I felt so much weight released.

I felt tears that said I done what was right. I felt my heart start to beat for all the right reasons once again. I felt like I had finally put an end to a life of lies, of mental abuse, of sheer hurt now.

The emotions would just get more tangled up in this web of ritual abuse of the core of our families' mentality. My mom was devastated because I had told. She kept reassuring that she did understand but her actions would always speak louder to me whose side she was really on. My brother and sister were just in shock. The tears that followed this immediate separation of our family were almost more than I could bear. I began to question myself once again.

The fear inside of what would we really do, what would our State of West Virginia do now to our dad, what would Dad and my Mamaw and Papaw really think of me now? What had I really done to our family?

While the adults in the courts took care of their procedures in the background; I was truly shielded from the facts by my family members. My own mom would not even tell us kids what the reality would be now.

The grandparents and my mom would only tell us what they needed us to hear at that point. We were immediately removed from the school system for the rest of the school year. We were put into a safe shelter near Beckley, West Virginia.

We had limited contact of phone conversations with our grandparents and we couldn't talk to Dad. We could only know what they told us.

All I knew is that we were being moved to another place with mom when leaving this shelter and my dad was not to be around us. Dad would stay in Eckman at our trailer.

Mom, James, Baby J and me; moved to Hemphill in a trailer that my grandmother, mom's mother owned. This little single wide trailer was right next door to her house. We were grateful that we had somewhere to go but once again, the price of freedom to such children of mental distortion was more than we could handle.

James and Baby J looked at me with disbelief. They didn't know who to believe anymore. They hadn't seen the abuse of Dad that I did again. Mom knew the battles now that I had of right and wrong. Mom knew how I was burdened within. I had told her of my inner struggle. All that I had shared with them fell on deaf ears.

We had become so accustomed to a life of comfort that my dad provided. Even if we rode in ugly barely road worthy vehicles, we always had a car. We always had a daily routine of going to school. We always had family meals together. We always would pile up in the living room to watch Star Trek and Dr. Who. We always knew if something broke, dad would fix it. We always had lights, water, and our family visits to look forward to on the weekends. We always seemed to be a family.

The horror of this separation was more than any of us could bear especially me. Mom was now in charge as the head of household. She was responsible for making sure us kids went to school. She had to ensure we had the bare necessities of life. She was responsible for raising three teenage children with such an emotional trauma to deal with not including her own.

I am sure she battled with what to do. Should she allow this man back into our lives who done everything for us or chose to be a solo mother to us with a limited welfare check income?

She tried, however, her abuse of prescription medications had escalated at this new home. Her medications made her sleep so much. She wasn't in a routine of scheduling. Being the three teenagers we were with this new freedom, we figured why should we care too?

I had reached a point I wasn't happy inside. I had no way to release and cope except what I could invent.

Ever since I had told, I wasn't able to talk to my grandparents who were my rock. I wasn't able to make James and Baby J understand why I did what I did.

I couldn't make them realize that I was dying inside from hiding this burden. Our relationships would once again be covered in lame humor and experimenting with limited opportunities we could find for fun down there is this neighborhood that had other teenagers our age.

Some had cars, some were older than us and some were younger than us. More than anything we appreciated the opportunity to be free from the reality we were actually facing.

We didn't want to talk about Dad going to prison, we didn't want to comfort our mom who was absorbed in her own mental world, and we didn't want to answer prying questions of what happened from any noisy neighbors or family members. We all just wanted to be left alone to just be typical teenagers, most of all, I especially did.

I never got to tell my best friend goodbye at Elkhorn. I would cry and grieve not having been able to tell her what I had done too. I missed this so much. I never got the chance to tell her Thank You.

I didn't care if I saw school again. I didn't care if I lived or die. I didn't care if I were happy or sad. I just wanted to be. I just wanted to be left alone. I didn't want to hear someone crying. I didn't want to cry. I didn't care to know what would happen to Dad. I just wanted to be me even if I had no clue who this person was, all I wanted to do was feel normal and to be me.

Just once, I wanted to indulge in what I thought was the right decision to do and that was to tell. Even if my path to self-discovery led to more repercussions of hate from others, I wanted to try. I didn't care that I tainted my relationship with those around me that I loved and looked up to the most. I just wanted to be a kid. A big kid with no worries, no hurt, no pain and no burden of others, if even for a bit. I wanted this so much.

In this part of McDowell County, it was a unique place indeed. Our neighbors were pretty much familiar faces to us because Dad had taken us to visit my grandma there while we were a family growing up. We knew the landscape. We knew our limits. We knew who to avoid and who not to.

This was the real paths that led to my own self-discovery. It was a timeline for me that distanced me from my family. I was able to be one of those loud mouth girls that I use to idolize. I didn't care about nothing or no one. I didn't need my family. I just needed what I wanted. I became a very selfish teenager due to the hurt that I thought I brought on my family. I wanted so much to just be one of those girls that the other girls would be jealous of. You know the normal teenage deal where there was always one popular girl in the crowd who was the wittiest, the smartest, not necessarily the prettiest but the ones that the guys wanted to date and be with in their cars. I had that opportunity now.

Baby J hated me and verbalized profanities to me for becoming a whore that summer. She made sure to belittle me and tried to black mail me to do what she wanted me to do or she said she would tell mom what I was doing.

How could I have been a victim of sexual abuse when I had purposely had sex with 3 different boys in a time span of less than 3 months and did not date any of them that summer?

How could I sit and tell my little sister of almost 13 years old that I invented the word "F*** Buddy"? How could I tell her that since no one cared about me and my body, why should I? How could she call me a whore, slut and bitch? How could she not believe me when I told her that our dad did what he did? Why wouldn't she see my hurt and the pain that even our mom had caused me to keep quiet? Why didn't she care that dad might hurt another child or her again? Why couldn't she see that one day we might be mothers and he do this again to our children? Hell we were both fighting arguments that neither one of knew anything about.

We had truly become strangers. We were simply strangers to a world that had been sculpted around each of us under the same roof we survived under for the past years, and we didn't know it until that moment. Our relationship in life would never be the same, not that we really had one looking back due to all that we had been robbed of as children and as sisters.

My brother and I still we were always close but never emotionally through this time. He was just happy to be away from the rage of Dad. He was happy not to go to school.

The three of us did manage to socialize with the neighborhood teens. We all three managed to cope together.

We all managed to stick together for each other when prying teens or others would make comments about the three of never amounting to anything. The three of us bonded in making a name for ourselves.

Even if it were a bad name, we all three were becoming loud and proud and in charge of what we wanted to do, never seeing the real world we lived in.

It became a time of smoking pot, drinking alcohol, going to the local city park in the middle of the night with a crew of our friends and just playing on the playground.

We would sit and swing each other for hours. We would take turns going down the slides. We would sit and just dream about what we would do as adults.

It was a time of life that we chose to just cling to each other as normal siblings would even if it was so we all could hide the terrible truth of the reality we would soon face. It was a great time for us just to be enjoying looking out for each other.

When school started back that year, we were in the city Jr. high. I hated it. I hated mixing with students I hadn't seen since 3rd grade. I wasn't the same girl anymore. I didn't care to be in school.

I didn't want good grades. I didn't need teacher approval, supervision or safety from no one. I didn't respect any adults. They would just lie to you or couldn't protect you. Why should I?

School use to be the only safe haven I had and now it had become tainted to me with all the dirty lies and secrets I had. I was now on a mission just to be a loud and proud teen with nothing to no one. I knew I had to barely do enough to get by and pass. I knew I didn't want to fail or quit but I could handle having fun and doing just enough to get by on. This was my new mission at this school. I was ready for anyone that was willing to fight me. If you had something to say about me behind my back, it didn't matter; I would find out and it would be a fight. I was unleashing this confusion on anyone who would tempt me to.

I didn't realize until many years later that was the only release I had and even though, I thought I enjoyed it at the time; fighting is never a solution. You only hurt yourself and others. It's not going to change anything or help anyone.

Being back in school, I became faced with this feeling like I was damaged goods. Not only had the word spread that I was a whore in Hemphill bottom, but the rumors were circulating of why my family had been dislocated to this new school. The mental struggles started becoming more than I knew what to deal with.

Home became a burden because it was very evident to Baby J and James what our family really was. Mom was so taken back by all the questions she was getting consumed in from family and friends that she literally couldn't deal with it.

I was just so mad, hurt, confused, angered and broken inside. I hated this new person I was. I hated not being a good student in school. I hated not being true to me. I hated this new release I had found in fighting girls and making out with boys. I hated the labeling that was done to my family and my own self due to the actions I caused by being verbal in everything I done. I so hated that my grandparents missed us and we couldn't see them. I so hated everyone missing Dad again.

We now had to walk at least 4 miles to the nearest town to go get even the minor of groceries we needed. We had to walk to Doctor appointments. Everyone saw us when we had to walk up town to go to our counseling appointments that had started up again.

My grandmother was frustrated with us children and our behavior and the bad name we were in this bottom. We had become known as hoodlums.

All I know is in this bottom, we learned of what we knew to be true to us. We knew that Dad did provide us the chance to have a mom.

She would cook for us, do our laundry, help us with homework, and she was more alert and seemed happier with Dad there. The three of us kids didn't fight as much with Dad there. The three of us seemed to get along better and not resent one another as much. We surely didn't verbalize our hate to one another as we were doing down there.

We knew we missed the family weekend visits to every one's house. We missed seeing our Mamaw and Papaw. We missed going places in a car. We missed having that stability.

My Mamaw and Mom feared Dad going to jail very much. They feared what men in prison would do to child molesters. They feared for our family if dad wasn't there to help mom raise us.

My Mamaw and Papaw feared that they couldn't help us anymore like they did when dad lived there. My mom and Mamaw feared so much. They started talking to me. They kept playing out the history that our family had "survived" through. They kept playing out the scenario of what if the state didn't do anything. They kept saying I would be OK. They kept saying that Dad would never hurt me again or any child. They kept saying how we all needed to be together. They kept filling me with so much doubt of myself.

I did see how this new freedom was hurting all of us. It was killing James, Baby J and me. It was absolutely torturing mom. It was hurting my dad and my grandparents.

I just wanted a normal life. I just wanted all of this internal separation within to stop. At 14 years old, no one should ever have to deal with this pressure of mentality from the ones you love the most. I should never have to choose right or wrong. I should never have been given the option that they gave me next.

I was given the option to runaway. I was told how to run away. I was assured that the charges would be dropped if I would do this. I was assured our family would be the best than it ever was if I decided to run away. I would be taken good care of. I would only be gone long enough so the charges would be dropped. All I had to do was write a letter stating I had lied to the authorities. They would tell me what the exact escape plan would be if I CHOSE to do this. I was instructed in a very good planned out scheme that seemed to be another struggle of hell within me while going to school to. I would sit and cry once again by myself, clinging to paper to find the answers. I just wanted to die.

Should I stand up for me and hurt the rest of my family? Should I continue on the path to right only to help myself? I wouldn't make it to have a damn family or a child no ways; no matter what I would do right? Would my brother and sister forgive me if I did do this or not do this? Would things ever be the same? Would I ever trust my dad?

Why couldn't I just let this hope of having a family just die with me? Why couldn't I just stop the pain, the thoughts, and the past history we had lived? I couldn't help but feel guilty for all that was going on around me now because I TOLD. I let the secret out that yes our DAD is a child molester. I hurt my mom by the labeling that she WAS still married to a child molester. Not only had I become a victim of child abuse, sexual abuse, ritual abuse, I now realized I was not able to make any decisions right or wrong on my own.

I CHOSE to runaway.

I decided to so I could get away from the pain, the horror, the hurt, the shame, pain and guilt. I chose to leave these labels of my family and me behind. I CHOSE to run to give my mom back her husband. I CHOSE to give my brother and sister back their daddy.

I CHOSE to give my Mamaw and Papaw their son who did so much for them. I CHOSE to follow their reasons. I CHOSE in the hope that maybe one day, our dad would be fine. I CHOSE in the hope that our family would be better for it. I CHOSE to do what I honestly thought at 14 years old what was best for my family and me.

I told my mom...who told my Mamaw, my dad's mom, that I did agreed to do it. It was the first time that mom really ever hugged me from the inside out. I felt relief from her arms and her tears that we were going to be ok. I felt that this was the best for her. I felt her approval. For the first time in my life, I felt mom understood why I was doing this for them. I felt like her daughter for the first time in my life.

My Mamaw and my mom both coached me in what was going to happen. My dad would be no where near me. I was instructed what to put in the letter. I was told where to meet my aunt and uncle in the early hours of the morning. I wasn't allowed to tell my brother and sister goodbye. I wasn't able to tell my mom goodbye the night I left. I could only take very few minimal necessities and the rest would be provided for me.

I remember walking down that long dark dirt road to the old swinging bridge that used to be functional. I recall all the images of my life before my eyes. I recall all the pain, hurt, the shame, the name calling, and the defending myself, the lies and the mysteries in my mind of what now. I knew I had to do this for them.

The abuse was about me, but I couldn't handle the pain of the only people I had in my life that I loved so much. My gosh, I didn't know at this moment how could I ever be prepared for saying goodbye. I didn't know when I would be back. I hurried down that dirt road without emotions. I was numb. Scared, cold and numb at what I was doing.

This wasn't about me. It was for them. It didn't matter what I thought. It was for them.

I finally made it and they were there waiting for me. I got into the floor board of my aunt and uncle's car. I huddled down under a blanket in the floorboard until we were in another state before I was allowed to sit up and see where we were going. They acted like this was a Bonnie and Clyde episode.

They kept reassuring me that I was doing the best for everyone involved and they were so proud of me for doing this. I was just in shock. It didn't matter. I wasn't dead and they all seemed happier.

I was gone for about two weeks or so. I was in another state with them in a hotel room. I wasn't allowed to be around daylight. I couldn't go outside in the daylight. I was a runaway. They couldn't take a chance on anyone seeing me. I never got to go anywhere. They weren't able to contact anyone back home to see what was going on. They would bring me food and I had a place to shower and TV. They were enlightening in their bad humor. But I was still in shock.

It wasn't until they said they didn't have enough money to keep me here any longer when things changed. Since I was with them all the time, I didn't have to think for myself or to myself like I always did. I had no paper to write my thoughts upon and no letters to send anyone back home. So I would just stay consumed in their words, jokes and whatever was on TV. But when the money was running out and my Mamaw had no more to supply them with their plans changed.

They were instructed to take me to a distant family member's house that I didn't even know. They were told when to take me and they would be waiting for me.

So I was loaded back into the floor board of their car and covered up and to West Virginia we would go. My aunt and uncle dropped me as if I was just a bundled load that they were finally glad to get rid of.

I was introduced to a distant cousin and her family. She was a sweet older lady with no children. Her husband was very respectable of me. Betty spoke such soft words that were very comforting to me and kept my mind occupied from the darkest lurking thoughts that would eventually consume me again. She made porcelain dolls that were absolutely beautiful.

She welcomed the opportunity to help out my Mamaw. Betty never had any children and loved them so much. So when I arrived, I was the daughter she always wanted. She made this very evident to me while I was there.

I was 14 and had such emotional trauma that she never knew. I didn't have a desire to rush back to reality because here I was safe. Her home was so nice and a real home.

She done everything for me that I never got to experience with my own mom. She treated me like a person even though, I was just 14.

I don't know what my Mamaw said to this family to allow me to stay there but they knew that I couldn't be near windows, doors or outside in daylight. They knew trouble was there but never knew why. I had heard my grandma talk of this family so much and her happy days growing up here that I didn't want to ruin their image of my Mamaw and tell Betty and her husband what really was going on. I never did tell Betty what did happen. I never spoke of the layers of abuse that made me who I was. Betty saw a well behaved, polite, thoughtful, helpful child who hung onto her every word. We fulfilled void in one another.

I was the daughter she never had and she was the humanity that I really needed. I should have never come back. I should have never left her home. I should have not allowed the want and need for my family to invade my emotions again but they did.

The comfort was a great change, it's something I had never had but it still wasn't strong enough to keep me away. I wasn't strong enough to keep me from missing my mom, worrying about Baby J and James, and I wanted to see my Mamaw again. She could always help how to cope through anything. I needed to know my Dad wasn't mad at me. I needed to be with my family who knew me.

I needed to be with what I knew especially since it was my 15th birthday. I needed my family to see I was OK. I didn't know if they missed me, I don't know what they told James and Baby J. I needed to know mom was OK. I needed my family on my birthday to let me know I was really loved.

I needed my pen and paper back to make sense of all of this. I had been gone away long enough. My mom didn't send me a birthday card, letters or a phone call because she didn't know where I was at other than I would be OK with Mamaw looking out for me. I hadn't talked to no one back home.

When Betty gave me my 15th Happy Birthday card from my Mamaw that she mailed, I knew I had to go back. No matter what would happen. I had to go. I missed them. I missed them all so much. I was a child no matter what my age said. I needed Mamaw's words of strength and encouragement. I needed her stories of other survivors. I needed to see her blue eyes shine of how she done it and others had managed to stay in their dysfunction. I needed my sister to hate me again. I needed my brother to be my friend.

I needed my mom to question my every change of moods and I needed to know that my dad didn't hate me. I needed to know if they still needed and wanted me.

I was allowed to finally pick the phone up and call my Mamaw. I missed her voice so much. I missed her laugh, her smiles, her warmth of love that she had given me many years when I battled within. I missed her approval in her voice. I missed the need she fulfilled by letting me help her around the house. I missed my best friend. I was so happy to hear her voice again. She wasn't mad at me and she was so proud of me for running away. She felt it was time for me to come back too. It didn't matter what did happen from here on out, she heard my hurt in my voice. She knew I needed to come home.

My aunt and uncle came back to get me in the middle of the night. I hugged Betty so hard and long. I cried so much leaving her and her home she had given me. I couldn't bear to tell her the truth of any of my distorted life. No one would believe me or understand me. We just hugged each other in tear soaking faces and smiled one last time to one another and I left. I climbed into the floorboard of the car once again and covered up.

They let me out in the same place that they had picked me up at. I didn't look back. I almost ran to the trailer.

No one was out but the nightly dogs barking as if I were a stranger that they forgotten in my time away. I don't know how long I was gone. It felt like an eternity. But I was happy to be back.

I got back and it was so many happy tears. I was embraced with so much hugs of happiness. I HAD been missed. I HAD been worried about. I WAS still loved by my family. I was happy to be home no matter what kind of home it was and no matter what thoughts was in my mind. This was a home that I was somehow still proud of. I was so proud to be back.

We spent the first few days of just recalling my time away. Baby J and James had hung up Missing Teen Posters of me in town. The cops questioned everyone around us but no one knew where I was at. The case was closed as fast as it was opened since I was no doubt a troubled teen.

I couldn't tell anyone who took me and how mom was a part of this scheme because it could have been legal trouble for my Mamaw and my mom but I could tell them that I was as at Betty's house. As many teens that we knew that did have cars, they just believed me that I got one of our friends to take me there. It was many years later before they really found out the truth.

But it didn't change anything. It only slowed down the process of the justice that would be served upon my dad.

During the time I was gone, Baby J and James were having trouble coping with their sister being gone and mom was even more mentally distant to everyone. It was unbearable for them to live their in Hemphill anymore, so we moved to a house in Welch.

Dad still wasn't allowed to be around us kids. It had been almost a year or so since we had seen him. We all missed him so much. We all missed our family being together. So we moved to a house in Welch. I had missed out over half of the school year. Thank goodness I was a fast learner. I barely passed upon returning to school.

While at the new house, it was better for awhile for my mom and our family. We would sit and talk and cry about what all we had been through. They were all in counseling still yet. I was re-enrolled but never exposing the truth of my runaway scheme other than I worked solo to do it.

But the evidence of my diary, dad's prior molestation rehabilitation not working and the counselors' documented evidence of the acts that dad had done to me; was enough to convict him without me running away and lying on paper to protect our family.

But we wanted Dad back into our lives somehow. Between him and mom, they allowed him back. It was carefully planned and schemed. He would come to visit us at the late of night to our house in Welch. He would park away from the house. Our family had become isolated from all of our family due to the rumors and the false labeling of what was really happening in our family. Our social lives had dwindled away into nothing due to the teens our age not understanding what was going on other than they knew something was just different with our family. We had dad in our lives again and our Mamaw and Papaw, so nothing else mattered. Somehow we managed to sneak dad here and enjoy our time together as a family before his conviction.

Sorrow and sympathy poured from us leading up to those days of him going to jail. We all knew it was inevitable now. But I had been forgiven by my family for telling the truth because I did runaway. I tried to keep our family together.

The counselors and dad's lawyer tried to prepare us for what would happen. Dad had two choices. He would plead guilty and serve 5-10 years in prison or plead not guilty. It was revealed that if he didn't plead guilty, that his wife, his 3 children and other family members would be put on the witness stand to testify against him. It was also stated that there would be a chance that if my Papaw's molestation history came out in the court of law that he could possibly be prosecuted for his crimes against his own daughters. Since dad had no defense to get out of this one, the evidence was against him, he only had two choices to make.

He did plead guilty to protect my Papaw, my Mamaw and our family. It was the first time my dad openly admitted he was wrong and apologized to all of us for the pain he caused us. No lawyer, no counselor or amount of comfort can help a family grieve the loss of a loved one in a situation like this.

No one can understand the hurt and pain and confusion that arises from the public humiliation and public criticism and the community involvement of slander that does become announced in a victim's life when something like this happens. It was one of the most hurtful and relieved moments of my youth to recall upon on.

No matter how much you beat a dog, these four legged friends love you. No matter how many times you abuse a dog, they look up to you for food. They look at those same hands that hurt them to hold them and pet them when they are being good. They look up to you with loving eyes no matter what you do to them. You do love them even if they hurt you. These dogs still need you and want you there. You are the only definition of love that an animal will ever know. You are the master.

You have all the answers and are the only comfort they will know. An animal loves you if you love them or you hurt them. An animal loves you unconditionally. They will protect you even when you abuse them.

In a family of Incest, this becomes a human bond and these values are what you are taught. That's just what it is and that's just what an Incest family was to me.

Here we are once again at another broken point of our family that was now evident to everyone who ever heard our name mentioned. They all knew that we were infested with Incest in our family. They all knew our dad was in jail. They all knew that my mom and us kids had suffered incredibly at this hidden secret of lies we all led.

At the time my dad went to jail, and no one asked what really the truth was. There was no one that cared to know. No one wanted to get involved to help 3 dysfunctional teenagers and with a woman who truly had layers of medical problems.

Some family members sent cards of sympathy and words of encouragement. Most of our family just ignored us if we had tarnished the good name we had supposedly come from. We would now be outsiders to all the family gatherings we use to enjoy. We were not openly invited to some of our closest family member's home that we enjoyed so much at one time.

There will always be questions that will never be answered by me, by my mom, for Baby J and James and most of all the outsiders looking in who carry on their own talks of our family.

We had truly become a target of bad in Welch and the educational system of McDowell County I am sure. Dad was a janitor at a school that the Department of Health and Human Services employed this child molester at. My dad was now permanently labeled as a felon.

We were a prime example of falling through the cracks of the law system. We were everything that the counselors couldn't really help us with even now. The counselors were still not adequately trained to properly help assist us with this new element of trauma to endure. They wanted to load us up on medications to help ease the depression and anxiety that we all had to cope with. We were living the reasons why most families and victims never seek out help. We had become the reasons of why, you don't speak up and out.

I now knew why my grandmother had never pressed charges against my grandpa. I knew why the daughters had stayed in their families and just survived.

I use to sit and battle myself at why couldn't I do this? Why couldn't I just get through those 18 years and get out and far away?

Why did I have more hope to heal this disease? Why did I want so much more? Why couldn't I listen to my Mamaw more and my mom more? Why didn't I really listen to my sister and brother needs first?

I knew what was right. I knew this was wrong. I knew that someone had to be made an example of and why it was so wrong for Incest to be hidden, why Incest was so damaging, I knew that even if there was one survivor who wasn't going to be afraid to stand up and speak out; it was going to be me no matter the repercussions. That's why I did.

This is a secret of my heart that I have never been able to fully detail and explain until now. I have been able to unravel the inner world that I survived in through my eyes and perception of those around me. I wanted more than survival; I wanted to live at all costs. Death wasn't an option even though, I thought about it so much. I wanted to hurt and harm my dad so much but I never could. If I would start the thought processing of hate, then I would end up starting a trail of family members that would go back so many generations of abuse. I couldn't hate. I could only cope and love.

How do you still have the desire to love and be kind and be good when all you knew from the above was a lie? How can you possibly feel anything for anyone when it's all a double edge sword? Why would you want to? It's a human privilege to be able to feel true happiness for someone. It's a human privilege to share in the smiles of others. It's a human privilege to enjoy laughing from the inside out with someone.

It's a human privilege to feel some one's else triumph over horror. I wanted to feel the pleasures of human privilege.

Since dad was now in jail, the only thing the rest of us had to do was sit and cry. Just try to manage to have a daily life with this permanent loss we were facing. We could talk to Mamaw and Papaw again but it was hard to go see them. We still lived in Welch and they couldn't come and get us.

But we had another option now. Since dad didn't live in our home at Eckman anymore, we were free to move back up there to the trailer that we knew as home. Even if it were the place that I got abused in and the same walls that housed the basement that the abuse began in; I could handle it just to be home again.

We all could deal with anything that faced us in the place we knew as home. We could face school again. We could manage no matter what would happen in the stability we had known and loved there. It didn't really matter where we lived honestly at that point because there is no words to express the loss of a loved one that is incarcerated, when you were the one that put them there.

Even though, they done wrong and you want them to pay, you still miss their presence in your life.

When it is evident every day around you, that the rest of your family wants the same thing; you grieve, you hurt, you blame, you want what you can't have and you blame yourself for what you think you destroyed. I truly know better now.

I know that this mentality and these emotions were all just tools of disguise that they used to control. They used words of manipulation to play upon the mind of a child to control them and to victimize them. Even if a victim knew they had been wronged, they inevitable will victimize others around them to protect those they love the most; even if they don't realize they are doing it.

I should have never been asked to runaway. I should never been asked by my mother and my dad's mom to escape. I should never have been given an option of lying like that. Not only did they not believe me by asking me to consider something of this nature; they victimized me with the same mind control they used to protect their wants, their needs and their abused lives by not allowing the truth to stand.

It didn't matter, the truth stood after all. It didn't matter that I choose to be promiscuous for awhile in the days of Hemphill bottom or that I got into fights with girls or that my school grades had fallen because of this emotional roller coaster that I was on. It didn't matter that our family was labeled.

It only mattered to them to cover up and not bring dark light upon our names of what the real truth of the matter was.

There was years of incest that followed dad into that prison cell when they slammed that door with him. My dad was paying the price that everyone else had gotten away with. My grandpa was now a changed man from the monster that he was and so many other family members that had molested and got away with it too. They never had to face the public ridicule. They got to keep their wives, their daughters, and their grandchildren in their lives. They got to live and take control of everyone and everything around them.

My dad's childhood had been taken away from him but he still chose as an adult to wrong those closest to him.

I simply chose for it all to stop. I just wanted it all to stop. I would sit at my Mamaw's round kitchen table at her house and listen for years on top of years, of how this uncle did this; that uncle did that; my Papaw done this, and my Papaw done that to their families.

I heard how they all coped, survived and moved on with their families. Why didn't she stop it? Why didn't my aunts stop this?

Why didn't anyone stand up for those children, to the law system, for their own families that they would have one to day to erase this disease that had plagued so many of our generations? Why?

I know it wasn't easy by example. I have forgiven them all a long time ago. However, the mystery of the mental anguish of this disease will never be fully known until more victims come forward.

You can never be fully healed from the layers of this disease but you can really love, really cope and you can actually live. You can share in the comfort of not being alone anymore. You can embrace the strengths you have obtained due to the cruel inhumane examples of what not to be. You have greater strength to overcome anything bad in your life and really enjoy the good. But you have to love yourself when no one else does for it to happen. You have to believe in yourself that you have the will to do what so many other chose to do as wrong. You don't have to wrong yourself also.

From the moment we moved back to the trailer on the hillside at Eckman, it began a new journey of dysfunction, freedom and coming to terms all the whirlwind of the last two years or so of our lives.

We now didn't have a car. The nearest town to Keystone was a good 25 minute walk and even on a bicycle it took 10 minutes to go less than 4 miles or so. We didn't have a telephone. We could walk to Mamaw and Papaw's house which was only about 10 minutes or so to get there. We could go to the post office and get our mail. But more than anything we were back on a hillside from the prying eyes and whispers of those around us in nosy neighborhoods. We were always accepted in Eckman. We were allowed to be ourselves and nobody questioned what we were doing or where we had been.

They all had their own lives to live to be worrying about ours. We were home.

Since dad was in jail, we were given the option to see him by our grandparents and mom. We had the option to write him in jail. We would cry for him. We would miss his need in our home. We would miss him to be apart of our lives and routines. We all thought we were strong enough to deal with all the changes that would come our way when he was in jail. There would truly be nothing the same or left of what our family pretended to be when he got out. This was such a fast paced time of our lives that led us into adulthood.

We were able to have the freedom to not to answer to dad. We were made to go see him because we thought that this is what we needed, what we wanted as a family missing their dad and husband.

We thought this is what we had to do so our grandparents would help us financially when we needed it. We didn't realize that we had a choice to go or not to go.

We didn't fully realize that we had a choice to go on with life as it was now and learn how to be adults. We still thought these adults knew what they were doing when they subjected us to this man that we called dad who was now in prison.

So of course, the tears poured and we all agreed that yes, we needed to see dad. We needed to support one another; we needed to be strong for this man who was behind glass. We felt guilty for trying to have a life on the outside while he was caught up in his thoughts on the inside.

We really thought we were at fault for him being there. We hurt just as much seeing him behind that glass window as we did going to an empty house and he wasn't there. It was such an emotional trauma filled time for every one of us that led into our adult years. It was becoming very evident in the letters that was exchanged by our family how damaged our minds, hearts and souls really were.

Dad would write letters to us of how much he missed us, how much he hated himself, how he wish he were dead. We would all write him letters telling him that we loved him, telling him we were sorry he was there and how much we wanted him home.

Our grandparents would make the trips to Welch worthwhile. When us kids would load up in the back of Papaw's old Chevy pickup and take the drive to Welch to see our dad behind those plate windows. It's the only place we got to go beside school and sometimes we would stop beside the road at Welch and eat picnic lunches or they would go through the drive through of the local restaurants so we could eat fast food. It was a truly enlightening and family experience for us. We never got to eat out when dad was home because we couldn't afford it. So this was a privilege to look forward to even if meant we had to see Dad.

We were always taught to respect and listen to our elders and never question anything they told you. You would just do it. This was evident in our many days spent traveling to see dad. All of us kids would try to use the chance to tell Dad of how good we were doing in school, or a new skill we would learn to fix something when something would break at the house or that someone actually came up to the house to visit us on that hillside. We tried to use every daily occurrence of happiness to share with him of what was going on in our lives.

No matter what we did, it wasn't good enough.

It was very evident in his letters or his tone of voice we would hear how disappointed he truly was in us for continuing on living our lives while he was behind those bars. He never fully saw the error of his ways. My Mamaw would send him bible verses of encouragement.

My mom would always write and talk to him and give him hope that he would be a family again as soon as he got. The three of us kids would constantly reassure him that he was our Daddy and we did love and need him.

It was such a disgusting form of mental abuse that I had to endure as a teenager that I wanted nothing more than just to be free of this hell for once and for all. I couldn't have my grandparents in my life without my dad there. I couldn't have mom's approval of anything I did without honoring her many requests for us to see our dad. She always said she wouldn't force us to see him but the tone in her voice and in our grandparents were too strong for us to stand up and say NO. So we did it.

We were still under their mentality. We were still being victimized even without this man under our roof. He was still controlling our emotions by laying his shame, his guilt and his hurt upon all of us. He was still in charge even though; mom was technically the head of the house.

This all would soon change and the reality of our damaged family would become so evident in our own lives that I am not sure how I ever found myself in the end, but I did.

The three of us kids would occupy ourselves doing what we wanted to. Mom seemed happier being back in our familiar home. She seemed to enjoy being a parent and was ready for the challenge of raising her 17 year old son, 16 year old daughter and her baby daughter who was 14; on her own.

She was finally able to have her own room that was short lived, because my sister moved in with her. I had my own room and James had his old room back.

Mom felt that now we were almost grown so we would all be ok from here on out with the exception of the occasional emotional spout of our disagreement of going to see dad or our verbal guilt of not going to see him; but other than that. We all were becoming consumed in living again.

We started school again. We all were faced with going to Mount View High School. I hated the thought of it. This school was the only high school that we could go to. The problem was that it was the school that every child that ever knew us in all my years of learning, was going to be there.

James and I tried but the evidence of the damage done by our family's public display of Incest was so misunderstood, we were ridiculed, picked on and unable to cope with being the social outcasts we had become. Baby J was able to cope better than we did, for a little while.

But our educational system had an option that saved my education. My mother decided it was best to let James quit school. They signed him out of school. That's what they chose as best for him.

I didn't. I wanted to try. I wanted to regain that feeling of accomplishment that I use to have that made me so proud. I wanted to reclaim the trust I use to have in my teachers. I didn't want students or anyone else to stop me from doing what my mom and brother couldn't do. I wanted to graduate no matter how many battles that I would face emotionally. This is what I chose that I wanted.

I was offered the opportunity at a new school system they were trying to help students like me. It was for students who couldn't function in a normal classroom setting. I was willing to try it.

The school was called the Alternative Center. It was housed in the Elkhorn Jr. High School that I had attended when Paul confronted me that led me back to those hallways again. I was ready to go back.

I was so amazed how they had used two class rooms and turned them into a classroom of various grades, various subjects, and how they were able to help someone like me. I was happy to be settling back into a want of school again. It wasn't always easy. Some of the students that came in there were of troubled backgrounds that lead them to cope with others by using violence. Some of them were there only briefly because they were there for getting suspended from Mount View and this was their only option to an education.

We only had two classrooms and two teachers we saw all day.

You would get accustomed to seeing the same faces and then they would return to Mount View. Then you saw some like me; that knew this was the only place I wanted to be.

Both of these teachers were just the reassurance I needed to survive and know I was going to be OK. I didn't need to tell them all that I had endured mentally or how much emotionally I had battled just to get here but they welcomed me in their classroom with open arms and open books. The principal and guidance counselor were still there that had known of my battles. I am sure they shared in the latest with these teachers because they did nothing but encourage me, support me, strengthen and educate me.

I was able to face the students that would come in and out of there. I was able to concentrate on my studies again. I was able to look ahead.

It didn't bother me about dad so much these days. I was growing in separation from what I had known all my life. I was starting to look forward now.

I could go visit my grandparents with no mention of our abuse. I would sometimes have to endure the talk of how dad was upset we didn't see him or how come we don't write him as much these days.

But I was able to cope. I was able to start living once again. I was gaining me back what I liked and enjoyed. I could read and not cry all the time. I was allowed and encouraged to write in my classes. They saw I had talent. My teacher encouraged me to write a poem for a club she was a part of. I did it and won. My grades were good again. I had plenty of reasons to believe I would be OK.

Then this one boy came into our classes. He was one of the nicest sweetest guys I had met in a long time. He was the first real male friend I had allowed to come back into my life since the whirlwind days of Hemphill. I started letting him take me home in the evenings after school.

We soon started having a sexual relationship that was short lived because my sister transferred to the Alternative Center. She couldn't handle all the pressures of main stream Mount View either. I couldn't handle her black mail again.

But it was the first time in my life I had enjoyed friendship of that nature with someone of the opposite sex. I felt I could finally control my mind, my body and my thoughts for me.

I knew I enjoyed sex but at this point, I realized I could do it for me and not have any motives but sharing a nice experience with someone I enjoyed their company of. It was one of the greatest realizations I had that I was going to be OK and could make it just fine as an adult.

I would be able to say yes, I wanted to explore in male relationships again. I was able to allow females of my age to come back into my life. I was able to think ahead of what I would do with my life.

Then we met my future family that would become even more entangling than I will ever be able to explain.

For you see by now, the three of us kids had allowed ourselves to constructively start to grow. We allowed ourselves to enjoy our friends we knew before we left. Jewel and Jane were now back into our lives as well as some of our friends from the Alternative Center. The pressures of battling James to go to school every day was lifted and he seemed happier being home.

We would mostly hide any hurt and just enjoy the company we now found that was staying at our house when our friends would come up. Mom was staying occupied by managing to clean up the mess of three kids who felt clutter was just a way of life. She was happy to share the walks to the doctor appointments now because we all felt so good being home.

We would talk of all we loved being back here. We all loved the freedom we were given this time and making the most of it. Mom was looking forward to us being adults and growing her family.

There was always different dates coming to get Baby J and me. James was now was dating Jane. Mom had the pleasures of thinking about grandchildren one day and she really thought we would all be OK. Baby J and me would stay gone on the weekends or bring a house full of gal pals to the house on the weekends.

We included her and James on our many slumber parties we would have. We all seemed to be coming full circle.

Since Dad wasn't there we were able to play with his CB radio and talk to Mamaw and Papaw on it. We could listen to the many conversations that truckers would have and we would even talk to some just to have something to do to make the time pass by.

But what would happen to us now changed our whole lives into the adults we would become and mostly who we are learning about ourselves today.

While exploring the airwaves of this magic radio, we knew as a CB. We found a local fellow who lived in the next community over.

We all began daily conversations with this mystery man. We would talk of just the now and current issues at hand of his lifestyle and ours. All of us would take turns communicating with this new found friend we had met on the airwaves.

We all got introduced to his friends that lived with him and we always shared the magic of the CB with anyone there at our house to meet this mystery man on the airwaves to.

We found out that we didn't know him personally but we knew of his younger brother and sister from ours days of elementary school at Keystone. We thought it was cool even though, we didn't know him; it seemed as if we did.

I am not sure how we all came about actually meeting Davey and his crew and his brother that I vaguely remembered in school, but we did.

It didn't matter that Davey was 10 years younger than my mom or that there was boys at his house who would come to visit us too. It mattered that Davey was a male role model for us again.

We had someone to help us when things broke or we needed to go to the store. Davey brought such an enlightening character to our home. For you see in our time there, the road had completely started to diminish. It was too much for us kids and mom to keep up. The coal heat was too much work for my mom and brother to maintain. It was really taking its toll on how much we missed and needed a man there to help us.

Baby J and me were so busy with school, our friends and dating that we didn't really notice the effects of our home around us. We were just happy to be living. I was so busy with all the above and seeing grandma and grandpa too when I could; I didn't have time or want to make time to help out like I should have.

So James and mom took this burden. It wasn't until our family became acquainted with Davey and the many more visits we would have did we realize just how bad our home's physical shape had gotten. We all welcomed him into our home. We welcomed his friends and his family.

Davey never treated us as victims at that time. He treated as if we were good people. He looked upon us as fun to be with. We were the family he needed and he was the family we needed.

Dad only let his anger be known of what our lives had become when we tried to see visit or write him letters. It was a packaged deal, for us to see our grandparents; we had to accept our dad in our lives.

We all chose to enjoy Davey and his many tales of the interesting life he led. We enjoyed trying to take a break from the always hurtful contact with dad and trying to visit dad. Davey had a car, he had an income, he was an escape to all of us including mom. He gave us all a sense of family again.

He introduced us to his younger brother Chris. I never personally talked to Chris in elementary school. I had known everyone in our school even when they didn't know I existed. I always made it a mission to know every one's name no matter where I went just so they would never be anyone left out of to me. If I knew them, that was my way of knowing everyone was somebody. But this was a long time after elementary school and I still remembered the rat tail he had that was almost waist length down his back while the rest of his head was shaved. His facial features hadn't changed but his hairstyle had now. He could have easily been mistaken to play in a rock band with his long hair and his camouflage and rock t-shirts and the leather jacket he loved to wear in the winter.

We all found our bonds of friendships with each of them. Chris became another welcome addition to the family. He had graduated high school and was having problems living at home with his mom and sister. They were very judgmental of Davey and Chris getting so involved in our lives on the hillside. Chris chose not to be subjected to his mothers' verbal comments of his new friends. So he decided to move out.

He didn't want to live at Davey's due to the brother conflict of living. Besides, Davey had Daniel and Davidson living with him, his other friends.

But Chris wanted to help us out. He wanted to get to know more of our family. They were all intrigued by our family's history that we had shared with them. They all had something in common with each of us. Chris could help James around the house and do things for mom.

He could drive when his mom would let him use her car but those privileges stopped when he moved in with us.

We welcomed the new and different into our home that we had made now with just Mom, James, Baby J and me there. We weren't so concerned with Dad's judgmental ways. We all were coping better with the reality that dad wasn't coming back for awhile. We knew we had time to explore finding ourselves even more.

Jane had moved in with us too so our family had really begun to expand and now Davey and Chris both wanted to help us in ways we hadn't seen such kindness in a long time. It would be revealed many years later how much this circle of dysfunction would really grow again.

I can't fully elaborate on what would happen after meeting Davey and Chris because it's not my place to tell the story of how the impact of abuse affected my families life and the choices they made. I can only share the personal journey of what impacted me and the decisions I had made into young adulthood.

When I met Chris, I had met a friend for life. We instantly became the best of friends. I was still in school. We found simple pleasures of walking those roads I use to hate so much.

We enjoyed riding bicycles to my grandma's house. We found comfort in sharing our lives stories even though, I never shared the horror of the tales of what made me. I didn't have to. He accepted me. He just wanted to be my friend. I was almost graduated from high school. My grandpa allowed me to use his car to make my drivers license. I could now have the privilege of driving if needed too. I now had a family to look forward too.

Mom was so happy having Davey there in our lives. James and Baby J were happy to have the lame humor back in our lives that Davey so enjoyed too. We all laughed and shared so many good times together in our roads of self-discovery.

It wasn't as evident these days now that we were abused or damaged people. It would only be mentioned when a letter would come in the mail from dad or we talked to our grandparents.

Davey and mom talked about the shape of our living conditions in this trailer and this hillside and how winter was approaching us again. They decided to move us in with Davey and his big two story house at Landgraaf.

He would be able to take care of us more and Baby J and me could still go to school without transferring, so we chose to. It was pretty evident to everyone around us what was happening between my mom and Davey's relationship.

I didn't mind because I had found a new fulfillment in the best friend I found with Chris. Chris didn't want this. He thought we could fix the issues at this trailer but we couldn't afford to. The damage of years of neglect to the structure, the road and the heating system was more than we could afford to fix.

So we moved in with Davey and this began a new road of separation, self-exploration that we all would face now.

Our family was now separating from the once controlled environment we lived in. It was becoming a house full of adult minded individuals who were becoming of age to choose their own paths.

We had quit going to counseling. We had quit seeking the approval of our dad or our grandparents. We had started on our paths to finding ourselves.

I graduated the Alternative Center on January 20, 1995. I was the first student to graduate in this new school environment that our McDowell County educational system provided and it worked for one person, ME.

Since my grades were good and my credits were all in, I had the privilege to graduate my classes early and I choose it. I never got to experience a Prom, or ACT and SAT testing and I got to miss out on the many privileges that most students do have in school. But I did it, I had graduated.

Chris had been there with me on those years of my final attempts of graduation. He was the most proud of me. He was my encouragement to help me to believe in myself.

He was the best friend that got me through to see that I would be OK as an adult. He tried to date me many times and I would softly reject each time.

He would stand by me as I would date this guy or that guy and always be there to hold me as I would cry when each one would break my heart. He was the man that I knew that you married and not just simply date.

I knew that I had to be strong enough to be the female that he would have. I knew that I would try. I would really try. After his many attempts of getting me to date him, I said yes. We had a year and a half of courtship when we finally said "I Do"; on March 13, 1995. Our beautiful baby girl was born on September 20, 1996. I had the dream I always wanted as a child, I was now a mother.

It's not my place to fill in the gaps of every one's lives that we chose at these years from here. I can only tell you the generalization of what happened. I am only sharing with you the story of what I became to get you to the final revelation of this chapter of my life that I am closing for good now.

I would like for you to see and know that Incest survivors can face their perpetrator and move on to really live life and enjoy the beauty of what it should be. You can learn to breathe and be happy in who you are and share the beauty of your strengths with those around you who wants to be a part of your new found life. Never give up on who you are for the beauty of your own DNA is still a miracle in itself no matter how many layers you have in it.

My mom did divorce my dad before he got out of prison. She married Davey after Chris and I were married. So the family joke became that my sister-in-law was also my mother. My step-dad was also my brother-in-law and our daughter had an Aunt Grandma and Uncle Grandpa.

My mother signed my sister out of high school and she married the father of her child. My brother and Jane didn't get marry.

Pretty much from there is began a whirlwind of emotional hits and misses when family would visit Chris and our home no matter where we lived. We always were haunted with the after effects of the trauma I grew up in.

There still were struggles for me to allow my dad, my Papaw, and my Mamaw back into my life. This created controversy with my mom and Davey and their lives. This doesn't begin to detail the lack of communication and issues that would arise with Chris' parents. His parents had a mother and a daughter married into the family to call Daughter-In-Laws. You can only imagine.

Baby J was distant from me due to her marriage and her new found lifestyle with the family she chose in making. My life became consumed in just maintaining a home with my husband and our soon to be status as parents.

My husband had openly allowed my grandparents in our family. My aunts and uncles that I had been distanced from in our lives were now back into our worlds and when you add the element of mom's disapproval of dad being mentioned again in our lives; there was a lot of mixed emotions and a lot of family conflicts and discussions that took place between all of us. There have been so many lessons of right, wrong and trials and errors for all of my family involved from here on out. It will never be the same again.

There were some very good times as if you were visiting great friends but in the corners of my mind, it was truthfully illusions in a sense. I tried to maintain closeness and friendship; but I won't allow my daughter to be subjected to lies, deceits and secrets anymore.

I have found that being a mother to me is protecting her at all costs. I juggled too many years in deciding what was right or wrong for me. I am tolerable to my family. I love my family deeply but I do restrict my visitations and closeness to them. It is for my personal protection but most importantly, my role as Mother.

I learned many trial and errors after our daughter was born. In many aspects, she was the healing element we all needed and just how far a mother will go to protect her child that she truly loves.

My Mamaw and Papaw didn't have the privilege of seeing a new baby in their home but they did get to see our daughter upon birth. Our daughter was welcomed with open arms. My mom so enjoyed being a grandma and even Davey humored the fact of being Uncle Grandpa.

Those precious years that my daughter did get to know the good in my family became so short lived in her youth that it is only a distant memory to her now. But she was the evidence of healing for me. In raising her, I have found me. I still do. I grow with her and learn all I can to stay two steps ahead of her. No one can tell you as an abused child that grows up and have children; if seeing your abuser is good or bad for you. It's your decision.

I have personally seen the good and bad from other survivors' stories. It is your choice as long as you protect your child from the abuse that was done to you.

From the day, I was pregnant until the day she was born; I knew I would try when I thought I couldn't go any further. I would reach higher than anyone says you could climb. I would stand against all odds even if the world around force me to stand alone.

I would do all I needed to be the mother she would need. The mother she would want and make her proud to call me Mommy, not because I gave birth to her but because I was a person that she can count on to be there for her when the rest of the world wasn't.

As I would hold my daughter up to my breast as she would feed when she no more than a few days old; I would just talk to her and cry to her and thank her so much for coming into my life.

She was the missing element I had waited my whole life for. She was the reason I truly had survived until now. She was the reason I knew that I wanted to do more, to be more, to live more and the reason I had to stop all the bad that I was ever subjected to. My daughter is the air that I breathe in life that has kept me alive even when I had no idea what being a mother would entail.

I wanted to give her all the good that I had carried with me all my life. I wanted to give her all the beauty of life that I never had. I wanted to be strong enough for her when no one was for me. I wanted to be her voice when she couldn't speak. I wanted to be the strength she needed when no one would stand up for her. I wanted to take her tiny hands and always walk with her no matter where she went to guide her to her hearts' dreams. I wanted to be the light to her little blue eyes that would let her know that mommy would truly take care of it. I wanted to be given a second chance at the childhood I never had through the life of my daughter. I was able to do that and so much more now.

For you see, being a mother was all I ever wanted. I wanted to be what others were not strong enough to be to their flesh and blood. It truly doesn't matter that she doesn't have her great-grandparents in her life. It doesn't matter that she doesn't have her aunts and uncles in her life like I did.

It doesn't matter that she doesn't see the faces and places of the controversial county of McDowell County as her home anymore.

She only needs to know that her mommy loved her enough to not subject her to lies of abuse. She needs to know that her mommy stood against all odds to become the productive adult that I am now. She needs to know that her mommy chose a life with a man that is a great father to her.

She only needs to know that her mother did graduate high school and even though, it took a village of very special people and places to get me to this time and place that my heart has come to know, she only needs to know that she isn't missing out on anything from the lies, the hurt, the pain, and the beauty of what makes her mommy a survivor today and a true lover and liver of life. She only needs to know that the real journey of life began when she was born.

The greatest thing about all of this is that by living and growing with my daughter I have embraced the true strengths of my own heart to overcome the separation of everyone I knew and left behind. I carry their good traits with me and one day I will share this wonderful survivor story with my beautiful daughter just as I have with you.

I followed my heart into adulthood as a wife and mother. I have traveled through many hits and misses of my own rights and wrongs.

There were repercussions that have followed me due to lack of knowledge, lack of experience, lack of completeness that I had growing up. Even as a mother, I still am human making mistakes as I go along but trying with the best of intentions and always putting my daughter first.

The roller coaster of the adult life I have led up to this point is just as colorful as I have shared with you through now. But now, the choices I have made are ME!!! "The I in Me" is my dream that I have wanted to share all of my life.

Please be careful of the speculation that you judge of another is all that I ask of any one that reads this book. We are all survivors of life's circumstances. Some of us just have different diagnosis to contend with but we all have more to learn about others and ourselves. I hope I never quit trying.

Learn to trust the truth within and love yourself so that you can have the opportunity to truly love others...in living we are never guaranteed another day of life to get it right. So start right now on enjoying your own forever and a tomorrow...to a life of what you CHOOSE.

Chapter Twelve
What is your childhood truth?

I have added this last chapter to offer insight and a closure for you. More importantly, I hope that you are able to understand your own childhood truth too.

We all have a beginning of our life that helps us, molds us, shapes us, creates us and contributes to who we are as adults. Those first 18 years of our lives will have great repercussions on what we become in our adult lives. The decisions of our adult lives are weaved on the very ingredients of humanity and the characteristics of what shapes us from children to the adult individuals we are today.

Whether you are a male or female survivor of child abuse, you will seek the comfort and knowledge you receive from the tools of survival you received from the very place you called home while growing up from a child into young adulthood.

We all choose what we want to do in the end no matter where our roots start, but for some of us it is a lot harder to get there on our choice of destinations.

There are adults who have been blessed with a comfort of a loving family, the stability of income that shielded them from the poverty of the world and the truth of how gossip becomes evident about the ones less fortunate.

It's not meant to be this way but when you are judged, characterized or labeled because of the very roots you didn't choose, this does happen. The real truth is that it does happen to many survivors of child abuse.

This is more evident in the female gender and that's why I feel so confident in speaking what some feel and won't or don't speak about it. The truth always sets you free no matter how many tries it takes to get you there, it will.

I have always been somewhat controversial to the same gender of my life due to the obstacles I have faced that so many don't. This isn't to talk bad about anyone, if you were blessed to live a life and can't relate to what I write; that's great.

But I would like to offer comfort to those survivors of life like me, and educate those who don't understand the other side of life too.

There shouldn't be so many boundaries when we all should have the same freedoms, the same liberties and the same opportunities but when you are a child of abuse, you really don't have a choice to decide.

You don't have the gift of choosing. You don't have a voice and most of the time, it's just easier, to choose the delusion, choose to stay, choose to not fight the wrong and make it right. These are your family members and your loved ones.

You love your parents even if they hurt you, beat you, neglect you or hurt you. The bonds of family are one of the strongest there is and I believe it is even stronger in a dysfunctional family. You do not fit in with others as your peers because they can't relate to you. It just seems easier to choose the dysfunction.

Just think back to when you were a child, do you remember your parents or the adults in your life as loving and giving you praises of good? Did they hug you when you were scared, hurt or worried? Do you remember having favorite events that you all looked forward to together?

Do you remember your own childhood as a place you want to be again or do you run and hate ever aspect of what they did to you?

You were just a child being led into a world by the individuals who chose you to continue on their legacy. A child doesn't have the ability to change their circumstances of abuse or neglect or good times they are in.

It is not until many years later as an adult survivor, will a child abuse victim be able to see their truth. These structures of youth will affect every adult and their decisions that they make.

I want to give you insight into how lacking even the simplest forms of general emotion, affection and how the lack of building blocks in a child's life carries into their adult life. It does affect what may seem like a normal person when in fact; they are amplified by this "child within" and what some do feel.

I am sharing this with you to help you. I want to help those understand how the impact of abuse carries into adulthood and how you can overcome any internal thoughts to reach peace.

Everyday, from those beginning days of being a child when you were first hurt to the end of the abuse, will be an obstacle to overcome. It was for me. But the best form of therapy I have received is accepting the truth about my childhood and this story that you have just read.

I am a happy, caring and selfish adult who protects herself now and her daughter above everyone else. I do it with a loving smile.

I would have never been able to accept the truth of knowledge about being an adult without the love of my teachers, the good I saw in others, and wanting to see the love in actions of the older adults I had to look up to. I wanted and needed this adult truth.

All I wanted as a female child was my mom. I wanted a mother to teach me how to be a lady. I wanted a mother that would teach me all the skills I needed to be a productive adult.

I wanted to be the kind of woman when I was grown to make my mother proud of me. I wanted my mother to be my best friend. I wanted my mother to tell me she believed in me and I could believe it. I wanted my mother to protect me at all costs. I wanted my mom to hold me and to believe her when she said that she had taken care of everything and I would be OK.

I never had this closeness or this privilege of being a female and feeling what mothers and daughters should. Because the truth is, she never had a mother to comfort her, love her, and guide her as she needed either.

It's a rippling effect that has strong and damaging consequences on the generations that follow. The root truly is the "child within" that has never healed. The "child within" who never sought knowledge on how to mend what is evidently broken and the adult of the future does suffer.

It's not split personality by no means. It's just a part of human emotions that becomes amplified and skewed due to the process of lacking truth in family bonding.

How can a child grow up with complete inner peace when they live their life shadowed by the horrors of what they secretly carry within? How can a person find stability in their own heart to trust their self when all they saw were lies, deceit and the worst form of adult authority from the very earliest days of their lives?

Why would anyone as an adult now want to stop and reflect back upon those earliest days and face what they have managed or seem to control all these years? Will your childhood memories reflect a reality that was perfect, happy, and hurtful or did you have a despised existence that you are afraid to admit the truth to?

The reality that comes from the inner battles of the mind from someone who has been hurt as a child, are very real. The emotions of pain still exist. The tears still flow no matter your age now, as if the abuse is still in front of you.

You think, how can I possibly continue on? Why did I choose to? How can I mend the pain within for the child that still cries for no reason when you aren't exactly sure of why you are crying for anyways?

No, you are not crazy. It's very real. It's very scary. It's a bottle waiting to explode of what you should of said, what you should have did, what you should have done back then; but didn't. It's OK.

It's never easy going back and don't go back into the furthest fear of your heart without taking someone you trust with you. The support of people in your life will help you to overcome, to mend, so you can begin to live.

It's a lifetime process to overcome child abuse. But you can. You have made it this far. You should feel that you have done what so many chose not to do.

As a survivor of some of the worst emotional and psychological damage known to our time, I can tell you that it would easier some days to put my head in a pill bottle or drink alcohol until I felt numb. I have imagined how nice it would be great just to sniff a line of cocaine or push a needle in my arm to deviate the pain for just a minute.

But for me, it's hard and hurtful but very comforting to know that I didn't allow myself to continue making myself a victim of circumstance. Drugs, sex, alcohol and careless behavior will only add to the many layers I have. Why would I want to give my mind and body more layers than I already have?

I have been drunk on alcohol. I have smoked pot. But the thing is, I control what I put in my adult body now. I don't use it to escape from the burdens within that still bind my heart, body, and soul on the bad days. I still fight to overcome the PTSD triggers when they flare-up.

If I die tomorrow or my brain gives up my life to epilepsy or my heart no longer wants to be beat for the inner stress I have overcome; then so be it. But I will die trying. I will die reading. I will die researching just to learn the mentality of what it does do to children and adults when we suffer for many years at the hands and mind control of abusers.

I would love some days to walk away from every adult responsibility I have sometimes. I would love to just succumb to the death of my life by my own hands. I would love to just crush a pill and put it up my nose to just ease the pain for a bit. I would love to find that magic outlet and let the sensation of control belong to something else for a little while.

But the truth is; I choose to fight for something in me that no one else did, and that is to protect me and this "child within" that no one else chose for me.

I choose to fight everyday with the tears, fears and letting these layers go that I feel and actually understand WHY? I want to understand why this incredible emotional roller coaster of finding me is really worth pursuing for the life of me. I want to do what no one else has done. I want to overcome to live. I want to help others out there to let them know they are not alone. I want to be that one person who will stand up and speak out the truth about the wrong that occurs in our society of humanity toward children and the adults that we become.

I want everyone to know that you are not alone in trying everyday to stay focused in helping yourself. I want to be that one person who might help even one person to understand that as ugly as our secrets of life are that we hide, there are more abused child victims out there in this world that need our help. I am not someone who knows it all. I am not someone that you can read this story and say, it happened to me too; I will use her examples and help myself. We all have to help our self for the abuse we suffered.

These dark mental secrets that I have confessed; are what every victim of abuse has suffered or thought of about one time or another. That's the truth of ABUSE!

We all have our own elements of hidden truths within that we have to work through to help ourselves. We all have to find our paths to recovery.

But there are choices, there are options and you can overcome. Every ounce of release you find in your recovery just makes you stronger and you will live. You will get beyond survival to living.

My emotions do change as frequent as the wind. I have caring friends who love me. I have great support from other survivors. I want to know when I am low. I want to know when I am high on naturally living life.

I accept that I am under-medicated. I use no prescription medications to help me. I have seen too many demise at the price of a psychological pill. I chose to accept my triggers as a part of who I am.

I choose to acknowledge that I am different. I can relate to all individuals that are: rich, poor, educated or uneducated. There isn't a story out there that I can not feel compassion, hope, empathy and a desire to help. I never want to compromise my soul for medical techniques that camouflage my recovery.

My mother never did understand this. My mom doesn't understand a lot of what I have shared with her. In therapy, it was recommended that a survivor of child abuse could write a letter to their offenders who hurt them as a child.

This was a technique to help survivors write what they couldn't speak verbally, if they chose to for their own healing.

I choose to. I wrote my grandparents, my dad, my mom and my brother and sister. I wrote how I loved their strong traits that I did get from them and to say Thank You to them. It was also asking for forgiveness for the pain that I might have caused them and how my ability with good intentions sometimes might have hurt them. For you see, you can never truly help someone unless they help themselves first.

I gave them all the terms that I had learned: PTSD, Ritual Abuse, Incest and "The Child Within". I left the option up to them to research and learn just as I had but they had to do it for themselves and seek out their own truth. I got tired of the battles of screaming and not being heard.

At least in a letter, I was able to speak from the heart without fear of being hurt, being called stupid and how not being heard as the adult that I was. I wouldn't hurt me further and they couldn't hurt me. I told them I loved them, thanked them for my years with them and asked them for time, patience and distance from them. It was a friendship note of appreciation as much as it was a goodbye letter of family separation.

It was my time, my patience, and my distance to learn who I was. It was my time to start my mending process that was disrupted from my earliest days.

It was my time to live. It was my time to learn how to be an adult, a mother, a wife, a responsible person, a productive employee and most of all, how do I begin to love myself enough; educate myself enough and how to fully reach that point of learning what I hadn't learned in life so that I could live and not just survive anymore.

I was able to accept this life that was mine that I had been born into. It was not easy. It was worth the time, emotions and investment in me to begin healing.

As you venture into the truth of your own childhood, who was the one person that shaped you into the person you are now? Who was the one person that you felt love and hate from, if you were abused?

Of all of my relationships to face the truth about, my mom and my Mamaw were my biggest influences. I will share this controversial analysis with you only to help you seek out your own truth and to realize that we are not alone as survivors.

With my mom, it was always a distant relationship. Even under the best of our circumstances; she was the most distant person from me. I don't know how she perceived me from her earliest days. She says she loves me. I believe her. She says she wants me happy. I believe her. She says she is proud of me. I believe her. She is my mother. Why wouldn't I believe her? Did her actions speak louder than her words? YES.

My whole life, I have lived trying to figure out this puzzle of resolution for myself but more so for my mother too. In learning the prior generations of dysfunction my family has always known, I have seen hers. I can't help her to mend herself, only she can do this. We can never help someone that doesn't want to help themselves but we can learn from them. Of all the family members in my life, my mother is the only person that I chose to help when I can. She is the lady that brought me into this life.

I know she didn't purposely choose for the man she married and loved; to molest his children. I know she didn't know any of this distorted history that my dad's family had. I knew she saw the visual closeness it seemed of this big family he had. I know she saw hope in the many years that his parents had been married and the strength in my grandmother that she could cling to so she could gain strength too. I knew she saw my grandfather as a father figure since her father died when she was only 12 years old.

I knew she saw their financial responsibility that they had in raising 7 children and how they all had graduated high school when none of her siblings or she had. I knew that she saw what she lacked in her life growing up, and I knew she realized how she gained this in my dad's family.

I know she saw the pretty pictures and his ability to have a slick tongue to coerce her into this life too. I seen this entangled web since I have become an adult.

I know her religion was always important to her and since my dad's family always embraced religion as a first language, she embraced all she never had in my dad and his family's offerings. I know she was just as much in shock as the rest of the world when she found out the truth the hard way.

I don't blame her for the state decisions to allow him back into our home. She never had the very elements of motherly love either.

Somehow in all of this, my mom and me are so much alike but so different. She seeks her mother's love and her approval and she is an adult mother and grandmother herself now. I can look into her eyes and see this feminine void of life just as I do my own.

Woman by nature are so complex. Most of us, all go along to get along. We have a few close women we trust. We have our children, our husbands, our jobs, and our homes that consume our focus. We seek the approval of everyone around us to live up to the standards of others.

If most women are honest with their self, they'll admit to gossiping about someone who has more, who has less or is more physically attractive than themselves.

Women will bash the talents, skills and creative energy of another because they are scared to embrace their own. But most of all, women and the relationships they have with their own mothers and female role models in their life will depict how well they relate to other women around them in life.

Men make it very easy for women to hate and dislike other women.

Men by nature do have an eye sight view into finding beauty into even the most unattractive physical traits of women. But can you really blame men?

Women come in so many sizes, styles, varieties and colors. Women don't have the physical variations to gaze upon as men. But is that any reason to automatically hate or dislike another person? Women are more in depth by nature. It is just what women are. Men are not. However, the roles a man takes in our lives; will make or break the women we are just as our mothers do.

In being a female this carries so much more emotional, mental and physical weight on us; than most of us admit. Women don't share with each other the stories they were taught not to talk about.

Women don't open up the realities of their burdens because they are seen as weak to one another. Women don't open up their hearts because it's viewed as making your self seen as a victim instead of a survivor.

I have been hurt the most by the lack of words that I did not speak in my life and the actions that followed. I do not fear any repercussions of this book if one person heals from it or if it helps one predator to heal their own child within or it helps one person out there that doesn't understand child abuse to comprehend the magnitude and the duration of this disease. If this book helps one person to understand how their adult choices will have repercussions on the generations of tomorrow, this book has done its job to help someone.

And more importantly, if it helps one woman to understand, that she is beautiful for whom she is no matter where she came from in her childhood days.

Most women who have been abused continue in the same victimization process because they do not realize it and they will unintentionally or intentionally victimize other woman as a way to help their short comings of their self.

Just imagine, if the chatter of women were of constructive conversation, how much more pleasant and quiet would the world be? Just imagine if you can if there no more conversations of weight issues, make-up techniques, fashion labels or the need to be the greater woman; how pleasant would the world be based upon truth in conversations to help humanity?

My mother never had many close friends through all my years growing up. She would go to church and family gatherings or the occasional visitors to the house but looking back; I don't think she ever seen herself as an individual person. I don't know really who she was and that she knows who she is.

She tried her best to guide us kids and me.

But when you are a child, looking up to the only female in your daily life and she uses prescription drugs as a release of life; how do you catch her in a sense of normal to even begin to talk to her about the things that matter?

I always felt that my mom resented me and hated me. I always will. I didn't destroy her marriage because I was a child of incest, however, I was the final person that destroyed her life of just being married, just being a mother and being secure in what she knew back then.

When my dad molested my sister and me and the state allowed him back into our homes; it should have been the end of story.

We would have probably grown up, still semi-normal, what ever that is and she would still be married to this man today and they could grow old together and have the grandchildren come and visit. She was in control of what she chose up to that point.

But when my dad molested me again and she found out, I believe it was harder on her than their first separation of his molestation attacks. For this time, she seemed constantly angry at me. I heard so many times, that "Sissy has a problem. Sissy is lashing out and I don't know why? Sissy has an attitude again?" I heard so much that Sissy is the problem. From the age of 10 until grown, I have heard these words more from my mother than anyone in my family has spoken to me personally.

She seemed to resent me from this day forward. I don't think it was that she blamed me for the abuse that took place the second time, but I think she feared and blamed me that I was different. I spoke the truth.

It may have been that I was always somehow seeking above and beyond than anything in my immediate family had done. I wasn't one to just settle and accept what was in front of me like everyone else did. Even if I fall down 100 times making an honest attempt to try harder with the best of intentions, I will fall down 100 times to get that one time right.

I didn't vocalize my anger, my hurt, my pain or my emotions to anyone but my actions did speak so much louder than if I screamed. My grades were good, my ability to help family members and the elderly and the social outlet I had for my release was of actual good constructive ways to mend. Hers never was.

My social life was blossoming even in the smallest form. I never saw it as socializing but I saw it as coping and clinging onto making good all that was so wrong in the house and the world I survived in. My mom never did. She knew I wanted more. She did know I wanted to be more. She knew I secretly wanted to be everything that she never chose to be or wanted to be. She knew that she couldn't punish me for finding and making right in wrong.

I so understand the decisions she chose given her background of life, but why wouldn't she just hold me? Why couldn't my mom tell me she was proud of me for all I had done and make me believe that we would all be better people because I did chose to tell on my dad?

Why would she subject me to just covering up another lie of Incest of my dad? Why would she want me to be a part of her plan for a happy life for her when I was dying in mine?

Why couldn't she just respect me for the decision I made to protect my own children one day as one mother to another mother should? Why didn't she ever sit and talk to us kids and tell us what she would do for us?

Why didn't she ever reassure us that we would be OK? Why didn't she just forget everything she had known to do better in her adult life then what she just accepted as an OK?

I do have resentment toward my mom, but not because of what she didn't do for me; it is what she didn't chose for her own children.

It was a long time before I was a mother that I knew I would be a great mom and would protect my child at all costs. This is my "child within" dream. I knew I would always look at the wrong around me and want so much more for my children one day to make it right. I knew that if I died trying, I would try in my last breathe for the children I might have someday.

Before I even began menstruation, being a young child, I knew being a female; that my body would be privileged to carry this important role one day. I would be capable of reproducing another life within me.

I would be able to carry the very soul of another within me. I had the hope that one day, I would be able to right so many wrongs when my time would come to be a mom. I mentally felt at my earliest days that I was older than my years due to the very existence I had around me daily and the decisions I was forced to face.

How could I respect my mother and love her and be there for her when she lacked so much for me? I saw this as an opportunity to even help my mom.

I wanted to show my mom how to be a mother. I wanted to help my mom know what she was never taught just like I had been. I knew I couldn't fill the void of a mothers' love because I had that same void.

But I always wanted to be her friend, to help learn all I had and to help her help herself. I never could. I still can't. I just tolerate the bond we have now still seeking the relationship we will never have.

I feel as if I painted a wall around me with the female gender. I refuse to be a part of the good girls' club who talk and mock everything around them now. I refuse to get personally close to gender of any kind that uses another's story as an instrument for their twisted motives of personal and professional life just to maintain a conversation. I refuse to let anyone be a part of my life that can't respect me for who I am. I don't have to. I teach the same values to my daughter now.

If someone really loves you, they love you unconditionally through good and bad. They praise you for good and they constructively criticize your bad and respect adult accountability. They offer opinions and they offer comfort. They hug you when you need it and they laugh with you to feel good. It's only when a person treats you like a real friend should you allow them to be family. I chose not to be a part of society's circle of picture perfect fantasies and guidelines of fakeness. I choose to be different now.

My mother taught me how an emotion of the good of heart gives you tears that amplify how great it is to feel. My mother taught me how to pop a pill to hide from reality when things were bad. My mom taught me that silence is the best tool of disguise you can have. She taught me that if you dress for success and look like a lady every day, people will perceive you as this and nothing is said.

She taught me to not to trust any females when it comes to the games women play due to her ability to shield away from them. She taught me that religion is a shield you use to disguise even the ugliest of secrets. She taught me how to lie to myself to make life easier for me about the ruins I did have to endure as a child. But the truest gift she ever gave me due to trial and errors of our own relationship was how to be a mother.

She never knew the strength I gained from her and her weaknesses that have gave me such a strong desire to be more to my own daughter now. She doesn't see the very drive I have in my heart to mend is because of her lack of trying. She never sees all that I have done and accomplished in my adult life.

She doesn't see the tears I juggle everyday to just show her that yes, you can. It's never too late. You can really do it. I miss the void of my heart of a closeness I have never known with my mom and as much as I love my daughter and for all the good I have done in her life; I will always have that void of not knowing with my own mother.

A child doesn't need two parents to become a happy adult. A child only needs one person in their life to believe in them. A child needs someone to teach them emotionally; mentally and physically how to love their self by the examples they are shown.

A child will always have a void from the what ifs in their life from the very things they didn't have growing up but when you take away the heart of a child from the earliest days, a child will spend the rest of their life chasing a void even if they don't realize it.

They will reach out for every ounce of comfort, every amount of healing, every dose of normalcy they can find to fill something that they should have been given from their very first breathe of life.

A child doesn't ask to be born. A child doesn't choose who their parents are. A child doesn't expect the adults in their life to be perfect because no one is. But a child does have the right to be loved, feel loved, and to be guided without abuse from the ones closest to them. A child deserves the TRUTH of life from their parents. It is our responsibility to give truth to our children. If we provide our children with truth then we are giving them the building blocks that will secure them the rest of their lives.

The next time you make eye contact with a stranger, stop for just a second and ask yourself; what is that person lacking in their life? What has that person had to endure to get to that point that you make visual contact with them? What has that person survived through or almost died from?

I guarantee you when you start looking at a person from the inside out of their heart and not reflect on the external window dressing that you see; your own views and perspectives of another will change too. Since I have become a mother, I have had to endure some of the hardest challenges known in being a parent.

However, I was never prepared for the truly heart warming and rewarding gifts that I have received.

That's what any parent should feel. That is what any parent should truly want for your child. If you don't feel that strongly about your roles as parents, there are tons of books out there and therapists who can constructively help you to help your self so you can help your child.

Your children are worth every amount of investment that you make in yourself to overcome for them. They are more than just the future of our lives, they are the reflections of what generations before us have handed down to us, isn't time for someone to stand up and make that change? You deserve it for yourself and so does your children.

The good and bad of truth are detrimental to the world only when we silence it and ignore it. It will not go away. The truth will stand when humans won't.

If you are not a parent, but an adult; you have a responsibility to the future of tomorrow around you also. An adult has the responsibility to be kind to those around them even if society isn't kind to you.

Life isn't just a text book of instructions that can be documented of how to live. The only way to live life is getting out of the comfort zones that we conform to. It's the wonderful air that we all share on this great planet that makes every one of us special and worth helping each other along the way in sharing the joys of truth in life.

Biological age is never a reason to give up trying. Diagnosis and surviving life's circumstances are never reasons to quit trying.

If you have been wronged, make it right by doing what no one else done for you. Accept your adult responsibility to protect all children. If one child dies or is hurt by abuse, it is society's fault.

When child abuse continues from generation to generation, the damage grows and WE ALL PAY. Just think about the truth of your childhood and apply the good to your adult life and change the bad. It is not easy but there is no greater release of healing than this.

Best wishes and thank you for sharing the truth of: "The I in Me".

“I” is a word that you will read more frequent than most would expect to see. But in giving you “I”, I hope only for you to see your “I” in you too. I only want to show you what pain, hurt, shame, guilt, betrayal and broken love can really do for you. When you are strong enough to release the “I” in you, this book will be waiting for you.

Cynthia has struggled for three decades of her life piecing together the puzzles of a life raised in an Incest and Ritual Abuse family environment in the southern hills of West Virginia. Her silence that occurred in her years of abuse has given her the adult courage to speak the truth of what others said she should never tell society.



the I in ME

Born November 16th, 1976 in Welch, West Virginia; her journey of McDowell County would subject her to: ten schools, eight homes in five cities, two shelters and labeled a runaway before her high school graduation in 1995.