

My name is Sharyn O'Reilly, I am 72 years old, and my brain just opened 3 years ago to the continual sex abuse by a respected person of my community when I was 2 1/2 to 8 years of age. The abuse stopped when I moved to a different local. But the trauma was great and moved with me. I kept the secret well hidden.

At 2 1/2 I was too young to verbally express myself and didn't live in a well defined home. I did, however, act out any way that made me feel better - I was seen as a difficult child. I continually ran away from home (even if it was next door) beginning at 2 1/2 years of age. The police were often called. I started fires and abused myself.

To this day I can't sleep unless lights are on. I'm always on alert and watchful that no one will harm me. I wake often and have never had hours of solid sleep.

I am living in a failed marriage with my lack of trust. I never wanted children - I had the feeling I could never keep them safe. I did have 1 daughter and I can see how she carries my fears. My family has been affected by my actions and reactions in life.

I have been to emergency rooms with panic attacks several times, psychiatrists, and counselors always saying I'm "looking for peace of mind." I have never felt safe enough to let go of the heavy baggage I've carried.

I'm beginning to realize how I've hated myself for not being strong enough to fight.....

I still can't grasp I was too little in size against this man. I carry a lot of guilt.

I'm beginning to see what an angry person I have been. During a class at Smith and Wesson for the use of fire arms I began to think maybe as I shoot a pistol the anger will come out of me. It doesn't work like that. I was a good shot but I have to relive the horrors of the abuse and put the responsibility of it where it belongs.

My mind opened when in Rome 3 years ago and shared moments with Pope John- my request for me was " I'm seeking peace of mind". When he squeezed my hand I started to sob and haven't stopped since that moment. I don't know what psychologically took place but my body began to feel the sex abuse 67 years after the occurrence. Reliving the sex abuse leaves me with many days and weeks of reoccurring panic attacks and sometimes I can't even eat or drink or put anything in my mouth. I still suffer mentally and physically.

For me another awakening came when the TV media was relating the public's dismay of a judge named Cashman giving a 6 month sentence of incarceration to a man who had sexually abused a very young child over a 4 year period. Six months is equal to 180 days. I've been incarcerated in my mind for 25,335 days.

I've come to believe that my brain is a magnificent part of my body. It kept me safe for 68 years from feeling the sex abuse and reliving the fears. If the horror of it all came out at one time I might have landed in an institution or killed myself. Today, in counseling, I just can't make myself go up the stairs in the abusers house. I just can't do it. And so my horror hasn't ended..... going on 73 and just trying to be brave enough to face what my brain may or may not release in the coming future..... there's no special date to recall the trauma and the sex abuse...we're all different.