

INTRODUCING MYSELF

My name is [REDACTED].

I was born [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], nee [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

My Mother was the third surviving child of [REDACTED], nee [REDACTED]. Her Father was [REDACTED], bookkeeper/accountant to [REDACTED]. My Grandmother attended [REDACTED] in Grote St, Adelaide.

I believe the family was known to the [REDACTED] area of England. And I believe they are the first migrants. This is pertinent because it indicates an interest in girls' education. Unusual in those days!

My Grandmother married [REDACTED], whose Grandfather I believe was convicted of 'embezzlement' in Sydney and sentenced to seven and a half years in jail at Port Arthur.

Apparently, my Great Great Grandfather, the convict, was released after three and a half years. His wife had gone to Tasmania to be near her husband with their two sons one of whom was my Great Grandfather.

I reflect upon this woman and the guts she showed in managing to keep her family together at a time when there was no support publicly available.

I believe subsequently that the background details of their relationship disappeared from public view and in coming over to South Australia they managed to leave behind his 'convict' background! I do not believe my Mother or Grandfather knew of this association.

They set up a business in [REDACTED] as cobblers, which is where my Grandmother and Grandfather met. I understand theirs was a happy marriage.

The pertinence of this background information to the Royal Commission is that the original women folk were strong, capable women. They could not have survived otherwise. And in the case of my maternal Grandmother, she benefitted from and valued a much better education than was usual for girls in those days.

Prior to her marriage to my Father, my Mother had left school in Year 7 and ended up working as a domestic in the [REDACTED] Hospital. She was the first member of her family of [REDACTED] surviving girls and [REDACTED] boy, to forge a 'career' for herself. She went from her lowly position as a domestic, to [REDACTED] Hospital as a probationary nurse, subsequently to the [REDACTED] where she did her basic nursing training. She then went to the [REDACTED] Hospital) to get her midwifery certificate. And she

then went to the [REDACTED] Hospital before going as matron to [REDACTED] Hospital in Tasmania.

Here she met and became engaged to the son of a [REDACTED] minister in [REDACTED] who was anticipating a career for himself in the local bank. The Great Depression scuttled those plans and her fiancée lost his job as the bank collapsed. In keeping with the values and standards of the day, he would not marry my Mother and allow her to support him!

He finally obtained a job as a commercial salesman on [REDACTED] South Australia where he died of [REDACTED] before he and my Mother could marry.

My Mother then expected she would need to support herself for the rest of her life and decided to go to England to get another certificate in child medicine. During this time World War II was declared. She enlisted as a nursing sister at [REDACTED] in England and travelled back to [REDACTED]. She was finally called up at the age of about 39 and was posted to the hospital ship [REDACTED]. She was bombed by the Japanese in Darwin Harbour on February 19, 1942.

She recovered from her injuries and continued nursing during WWII. She met and married my Father who was a medical orderly in the Australian Army. By this time both his parents had died, his Father of miner's disease in [REDACTED] when my Father was 18 months old. My paternal Grandmother and Grandfather had met and married in New Zealand, where my Grandfather worked in the mines at [REDACTED]. My Grandmother's family had come to [REDACTED] and were also involved in mining.

My paternal Grandmother appears to have been a spunky lady. When doing the family tree, we came across a public notice she had placed in the local [REDACTED] paper threatening some local ladies with court action if they didn't stop spreading malicious rumours about her!

I'm pretty proud of this! In addition, her name appears as a signatory on a petition signed by [REDACTED] women for the vote!

My Mother never knew her Mother-in-law. But that they were both mighty spunky women for their age and times, there can be no doubt!

My paternal Grandmother returned to [REDACTED] after the death of my paternal Grandfather in 1916. Her family helped her rear her son. She died in 1930 when my Father was about 15.

He was pretty much on his own then. He came over to South Australia where his Father was buried, possibly to see if his Father's family could help him. Apparently, they couldn't or wouldn't, and my Father ended up in [REDACTED] working for a soldier settler from WWI. My Father enlisted in [REDACTED] for WWII.

The attraction between my Mother and Father was founded on my Mother's appreciation of his sense of humour. Apart from that, they didn't seem to really have much in common. My Mother was a [REDACTED], my Father a [REDACTED]. My Mother valued my

Father's integrity and scrupulous honesty as well as his generosity of spirit. And in my Mother, my Father found a gutsy, courageous and forthright woman. As you can imagine sparks flew and they clashed frequently.

They also were unfailingly loyal to each other. This became particularly necessary when my younger sister got Polio in the 1949 epidemic. While Polio certainly got the better of my sister physically, (she still wears a calliper and is now [REDACTED]), it was also responsible for creating another feisty woman. You have to be when you face disadvantage. Speaking for myself, I picked up some of the character traits of my Father – honesty and integrity being at the top of the list. Like my parents, I am outraged at injustice and that includes injustices done me!

NEARLY 60 YEARS OF MARRIAGE

I met and married my husband, [REDACTED] in 1966. He was the oldest son of [REDACTED] immigrants. And it is through this association that I wish to bring to the attention of the Royal Commission issues of domestic violence that have outraged me.

I converted to Catholicism, from which I subsequently formally withdrew as I could not accept the teachings of this Church any longer. My husband ceased his involvement with the Catholic Church at the same time. He no longer considers himself a Catholic. [REDACTED] was the oldest of [REDACTED] surviving children, [REDACTED] girls and [REDACTED] boys. One of [REDACTED] brothers was earmarked from the age of [REDACTED] for the priesthood, and one of his sisters had professed interest in becoming a nun. She still is nearly 60 years later.

All of the girls retained a practising Catholic faith, and only one of the boys did.

That person took his first vows as a [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] in Victoria. [REDACTED] Weeks after doing so, he sexually violated [REDACTED] young boys in his care! This was detected after a complaint had been made and [REDACTED] brother was told to leave the Seminary. He was directed for employment to the State School sector in South Australia and transferred back later to the Catholic system. No questions were asked, at all! No subsequent allegations of sexual molestation were made. And he remained undetected as an offender until, as a result of the [REDACTED]' investigation into child sexual abuse, three of his victims in [REDACTED] made a complaint against him.

He was summarily dismissed from the Catholic Education system at this point. The three boys, now men, received some reparation from the Catholic Church. [REDACTED] brother was asked if he wished to contribute and he said no. One of the complainants asked if 'Brother [REDACTED]' had contributed, and on being told that he had not, was so incensed, that he reported the matter formally to the Victorian Police.

[REDACTED], eventually pleaded guilty in the County Court of Victoria and was sentenced to nearly [REDACTED] jail which was reduced on appeal [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] and I

had accompanied [REDACTED] [REDACTED] on every occasion he was required to attend Court. We were able to hear everything to which he pleaded and every allegation that was made. It was the first time we had ever heard any of the truth behind the allegations and convictions.

I am pleased to say that I had an opportunity on the last day of [REDACTED] trial to speak to his principal victim and to tell him how very sorry I was at what had happened to him at the hands of my [REDACTED]

This man graciously accepted my remarks.

Although [REDACTED] applied for parole, it was not granted and [REDACTED] served almost his entire sentence.

In short, [REDACTED] lied and lied and lied. We are aware that we cannot believe a word he says, and never could!

We no longer speak to any member of [REDACTED] family. Our relationship with them finally collapsed when my husband and I received an email from [REDACTED] accusing us of not attending a family working bee if he was going to be present. It was not us who made these comments, we weren't going because it did not suit us!

By this time we had had enough. And our relationship with all of [REDACTED] family ceased in March [REDACTED].

Some years earlier, roughly [REDACTED], while working as a lecturer in [REDACTED] at [REDACTED], [REDACTED] encountered quite by chance a former sister-in-law, the ex-wife of one of his younger brothers. He invited her to have a coffee with him in his office. She was enrolling one of her children in the [REDACTED] program at that college. To [REDACTED] astonishment she offloaded a tirade against her former husband. What [REDACTED] learned about that relationship shocked him. He was almost speechless! As well as verbal abuse and threats, there was physical threat after [REDACTED] brother had apparently chased his wife and two daughters and a younger son around the little cottage they were living in, threatening them with a tomahawk!

When the family had gone to Court for a divorce, the children made it clear that they wanted nothing to do with their father and we found out subsequently that the Court had issued an AVO. We are told that on this occasion [REDACTED] brother shoved his fist through the office wall [REDACTED] there, probably contributing to the issuing of the AVO. It is our understanding that after this, his brother paid no maintenance to the support of his wife and children, at all!

We think this was made possible by only working for cash jobs or in a situation where his new wife could be paid their salary.

What is significant in this situation for me is, that while all of this was playing out in Court, we visited [REDACTED] ageing parents. [REDACTED] Mother appeared to know something of what was going on with her son and made the rhetorical comment to me, “Why should [REDACTED] ([REDACTED] brother) pay maintenance for children he is not allowed to see!?”.

I was aware at the time that she failed to ask the question, “Why is [REDACTED] not allowed to see his children?”.

Much, much earlier when [REDACTED] had declined an invitation from his Father to accompany him to a [REDACTED] Men’s Association, [REDACTED] came home and told me that his Father had said that in his opinion, [REDACTED] needed to ‘knock me into shape!’. [REDACTED] had had his own experience of spite and malice from his Father. In addition to that, for over 7 years, first as an apprentice and latterly as a tradesman, [REDACTED] handed over his entire pay packet to help his Mother house, clothe, feed and educate her large family.

No member of [REDACTED] family was ever told of this and no expression of gratitude was ever made by his Father. This affected our capacity to buy our own house.

Early in the piece I came across, quite by accident, another scene that was deeply upsetting. It was a family social occasion. Most of the family was out the back around the BBQ. I had gone inside for some reason and was heading back out when I came across [REDACTED] [REDACTED] looming over a terrified 10-year-old girl! Terror was the right word! I had to pass this scene. I couldn’t avoid it! And I couldn’t pass this scene without, in good conscience, intervene! I knew exactly what was about to happen. And I said to him, “If you are going to hit her, you’ll have to hit me first!”. I can still remember his hesitation. He wasn’t sure what I might do. I was after all the same size as he. He put his hands down and backed off. I told her to go outside and I followed her. The only person I ever told about this incident was my husband.

I learned a fair bit about violence though.

Firstly, I knew I would intervene if I had to! Secondly, I knew I didn’t care if he hit me, because I knew without any doubt, I was so enraged I would give a pretty good account of myself. And thirdly, I knew I didn’t want anyone intervening on my behalf. I would stand up for myself, and whoever else I needed to protect. I felt strong and powerful. And I know that feeling counts for a great deal when standing up on principle against a coward or a bully.

As [REDACTED] [REDACTED] aged, he became even more belligerent. [REDACTED] Mother was frightened of him and terrified that someone might ‘upset him!’.

Eventually, [REDACTED] Mother died. The story we heard was that he had given her such a tongue lashing that her last words were, “I can’t please you anymore! I wish I was

dead!", whereupon she had a stroke and died [REDACTED] later in the [REDACTED].

Not surprisingly, no member of the family stepped up to look after [REDACTED] Father and I said I would try!

At that time, we had living with us, my daughter and son-in-law as our daughter was studying at university. While my husband was still on holidays from [REDACTED], I could just about cope with [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. But the three weeks he was with us were noteworthy for the three times he announced, "I have rights!"; and for the time he threw the newspaper at my daughter and yelled at me when I asked him if he would like me to take him to visit his wife's grave on her birthday.

He said that his dead wife would have wanted me to take him to [REDACTED] instead!

As the time was rapidly approaching for [REDACTED] to return to work, and I wasn't certain his [REDACTED] would do what I wanted him to do when [REDACTED] wasn't around, I decided I needed to talk to him about acceptable behaviour in my home!

The outcome was that he began to mock me and make signs of the cross. I had asked my daughter and son-in-law to witness my conversation with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] on this occasion. Because he had previously spread untruths about actions we had taken that had come back to us via other family members. I didn't want that to happen again, so I had asked my daughter and son-in-law to listen in the passage.

At this point, I was confronted by a thought that crossed my mind with red flags and alarm bells ringing!!

That thought was, 'that when everyone had left the house for work the following week, and I was alone with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and if he started yelling at me again like he already had to my daughter and his wife, I could hit him and it would be his word against mine!'.

I don't lie! And I thought, "You bastard! I'm not going to let you do that to me! You're going!".

I laid down the law, told my husband and his sister [REDACTED] what had happened and that he was going out of my house the following day! And I would leave and not return until he had gone!

That was graphic enough for my husband and his sister to act and they got their [REDACTED] into [REDACTED] Hospital for respite until a place became available for him at [REDACTED].

We understood from the [REDACTED] that he was dictatorial there. And even worse, when he was admitted to the [REDACTED] Hospital for treatment, he was abusive to nursing staff on the ward.

CONCLUSION

There are two principal focusses here.

One is – What makes a bully?

And two – how do you stand up to these bastards?

The second part first.

It has helped my sister and me to have been descended from a long line of gutsy, feisty women. It didn't make either of us very popular in mainstream society. Neither of us conformed to social norms or cliches and neither of us wanted to.

Speaking for myself, I have always felt more accepted by and acceptable to men. The current stereotypical woman for me is derisible. I don't like who they are, I don't like how they act and I don't like how they treat me! That is not to say that I find the men in my life much more charming. But I definitely think I have a much better chance of being treated with respect by many men who seem to understand that who I am differs dramatically from womanhood portrayed by Hollywood and featured in magazines. I don't think it is because I'm special or fancy in myself, it seems to be more that the stands I take are about issues of principle that affect humanity. Humanity for me is Homo Sapiens.

We, all of us, should strive to be better than we are now - splintered into little interest groups. Although it might be thought that I am a giant ego myself, I don't see myself that way! And I am very wary when I find myself up against other people's egos.

And I don't think the Royal Commission should downplay the value of men or trivialise the input of women.

As I said at the beginning of this submission, I am aware of how much I owe my female ancestors.

Incidentally, I'd love to hear men talk about what they owe their brave, forthright and stoic mothers.

Some do! And it is a delight for me to hear how the one respects the other. At the end of the day, and that seems to be looming up rapidly, if we are to survive as a species we will have to pull together instead of apart!

Now that is a challenge!

And while I am about it, do not underestimate the role Enid Blyton, that much maligned author, has played in setting up as role models for impressionable children the ideal of kids, male and female, pulling together to help and encourage each other.

And in Blyton's stories these kids learned about encouraging each other, supporting each other and backing each other up. That, by the way at a time of very great threat to the children of England. Many of them yanked out of their city homes for the relative safety of the countryside. Fathers not around, mothers trying to do the lot, and on the whole, making a very good fist of it.

The other significant issue that I don't think the Royal Commission should lose sight of is that the maleness of religion has been the authority and justification for most of the sexist behaviour of huge swathes of humanity, where all the rights and authority belong to the male with the women completely subservient.

If you ask me, it is religion which has authorised the division in humanity between male and female; where women are only seen as sex objects or servants.

You can't get much more sexist than to have your deity, a male! And given my own experience with my husband's family, things are not going to change whatsoever until the basic structure of religion acknowledges that it is pure 'confirmation bias'.

I am outraged that my Mother-in-law's last reported words were, "I can't please you anymore! I wish I was dead!"

Outrageous that she should ever have thought that her role was to please her husband and not the other way around!

Sadly, I seem to be the only one in that family who thinks this way.

I wish you well in your deliberations. I have one granddaughter, two grandsons, two great nieces and four great nephews. I love them dearly and want a fair and just world for them to live in!

I want this for everyone!

And I know that it is possible!

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

