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THE "LOOKING UP" TIMES

By Maine Survivors of Incest

Vol. 1 No. 1

May, 1985

✱ WELCOME TO "LOOKING UP" ✱

"Looking Up" was formed in July, 1984. A non-profit organization, it exists to serve as a statewide support, information and service-providing network for Maine victims and survivors of incest of both sexes and all ages. ("Looking Up" defines incest as sexual abuse of any type between family or perceived family members. An incest victim is one for whom the abuse is still occurring. Survivors of incest are no longer being sexually abused.) "Looking Up" was founded by incest survivors. It continues to be run by a majority percentage of survivors and aided by concerned individuals from many backgrounds.

Throughout Maine, "Looking Up" currently offers incest awareness presentations from the survivor perspective, and acts as a consultation, information and resource networking agency for everyone. This month has seen the provision of special challenge-activity days for high school survivors, and in June we are offering an all-day body movement workshop for adult women survivors. Early plans are also in the works for an adult women's support group and volunteer work sessions for concerned people. Activities for survivors are free of charge.

We have only just begun. We are seeking a major funding base that will allow us to hire full-time staff and offer innovative services all over Maine, with an emphasis on challenge-activity-oriented healing in an atmosphere of survivor-to-survivor support.

"Looking Up" is based on a philosophy that we can heal from the devastating trauma of incest. Safe and ongoing support from each other and an understanding that the courage and strength that allowed us to survive the incest is what can rebuild our sense of self-power and control. One way of helping each other is by having the chance to express our feelings, whatever they are, in a way and in a place that offers the ability to hear, to learn, to understand and to care, without judgement. The "Looking Up" Times is just such a place. We received submissions from literally every section of Maine, from ages nine to over 50, and, as you will read, from a great variety of personal perspectives. We edited only for length and occasionally for clarity, with no intent to alter the individual's expression in any way. We hope this is only the first of many issues of The "Looking Up" Times.

THE LOGO DESIGN

The logo design beside the newsletter heading came to us from E. Ziehler. She created it with the idea of growing self-empowerment that incest survivors must go through in life. She feels that "the lower figure represents the young victim's sense of fear, shame, confusion, blame and guilt. The middle figure illustrates the older survivor's feelings of fear, shame, confusion and an added sense of rebellion and defiance. The top figure shows the adult survivor still dealing with anger and fear, using defiance, and learning about relief."

Silence.
I would practice
Walking without sound,
Sitting unobserved,
Hiding,

Breathing

in-out
in-out
in-out
silently.

Terror
Screaming inside of me,

in-out
silently.

Terror
Surrounding me.

Quiet.
Be quiet.

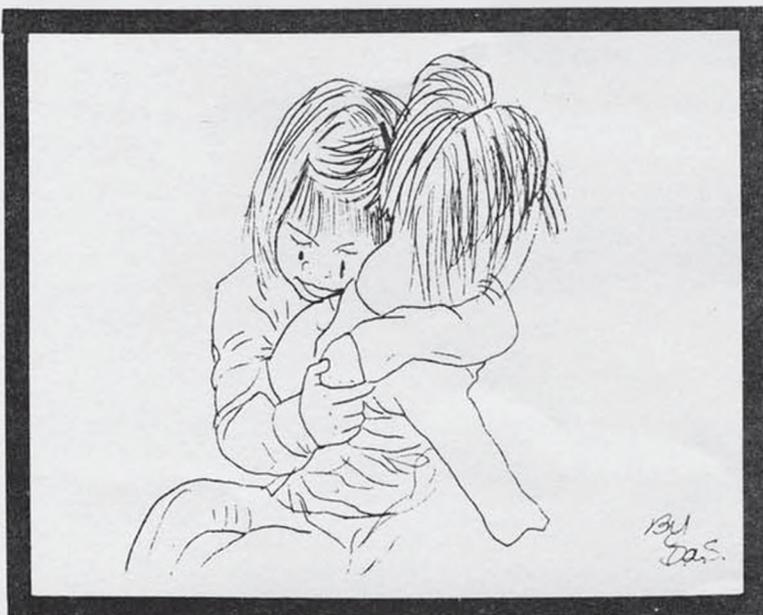
I will disappear.

in-out.
in-out.

E
N
D
U
R
I
N
G

RAPE.

-BB



THOUGHTS OF BEING
A CHILD IN A CLOSET ...
WITHDRAWN.

Sketch by DAS

I myself am a survivor of rape and incest.

The furthest back I remember is at two years old.

Although I was told by several relatives that one of my uncles raped me when I was six weeks old and several other times, I remember one specific time.

I was two years old.

It might seem strange that I remember this, but I do - in detail.

My mom, dad and grandmother went shopping.

My sisters were out playing.

My uncle lived with my grandparents when I was eight or ten. Our family always went to visit them every weekend and sometimes two or three times a week. He would always ask me to go upstairs with him to play. When I used to go upstairs with him I never knew that he was doing something wrong to me. I don't remember everything that happened to me. I remember he would always say to me, once we were upstairs, "Aren't you cold?" And I, like a fool, would always say yes. I would get in bed with him. He would always shut his bedroom door when I got in bed with him, but I never knew why he did that. Sometimes I wonder why I can't remember everything he did to me. I remember one time when I was about 13 or 14 I was home alone and he came down to see my father. When he found out my parents weren't home he asked me if I knew that what he did to me when I was younger was wrong, and then he tried to get me to have sex with him again. I asked him to leave. I was lucky, because my parents drove into the driveway when he was getting ready to unzip his pants. My mom always tells me hatred is a terrible thing to live with in life. Sometimes I have tried to tell my mother why I hate my uncle so much, but I never have been able to.

From The Children

"I WISH MY PROBLEMS WOULD GO AWAY.
MY LIFE'S A NERVOUS WRECK.
MY PROBLEMS ARE ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE.
I JUST WANT MY SELF BACK."



"MEN THAT TOUCH YOU DOWN BELOW
ARE JERKS"

"I am an incest survivor.
It's been a long time,
but it's left a lot of marks."



Just as you reached the
Scene of the attack,
You took a step and
Then turned back.
I couldn't run nor escape;
The horrible thing,
The thing called Rape.
I am hurt in ways
That are as such:
The pain is definitely
Just too much ...
I'll never forget,
For I'm full of hate.

Be still my heavy heart, be still.
Bound up with chains
And locked with locks,
Filled with emotions
of which I know not.
His cold white hands have touched me,
Tainted the very soul that lives within
me.

I stand alone,
so very much alone,
Forever silent of my Tale of Terror.
His tongue began to touch me.
My body filled with warmth.
A strange explosion of sensations
Emerged from the very center of my body.
Filled with an explosion of pleasurable
pain.
A pain that would last a lifetime.

I stand alone,
so very much alone,
Forever silent of my Tale of Terror.
The guilt and silence filled my heart.
I must have been so bad.
I wonder what it is I did.
Were my breasts too large,
my eyes too blue?
Our secret meetings continued
day to day, week to week.
How sick the thought of it makes one
feel.

I stand alone,
so very much alone,
Forever silent of my Tale of terror.
The very man I used to love
Has turned on me,
Tainted the soul within me.
The anger starts.
It builds to rage.
How quickly it gets out of hand.
Oh, God, help me contain it.
I want to burst,
Just let it out.
How can I ever repay this wonderful
favor
The man I love has done for me?

I stand alone,
so very much alone,
Forever silent of my Tale of Terror.
I feel his penis rub against me,
Once again within his clutches.
Oh how powerful the clutch is!

His harsh voice pierces my silent
screams.

"I'm only doing you a favor."
He starts to dream.
I want to scream.

I stand alone,
so very much alone,
Forever silent of my Tale of Terror.
All my friends so distant now.
They seem as children, young and
innocent.
Can they see my tainted soul?
Why is it I haven't been bold?
Have they changed so drastically?
No, no, I think it's me,
locked within my silent walls.
Why live this way?
I must get out.
If only I could die.
I go to church to pray and pray:
Please, Lord, please take me away.
I want to die,
Not live this life.
Please, Lord, please, take me away.

I stand alone,
so very very much alone,
Forever silent of my Tale of Terror.
His clutch grows weak,
The man grows old.
Now should I speak,
Should things be told?
His clutch grows weak.
His control still holds.
The anger wages on within.
I can no longer live with such a sin.
My anger lashes out at him.
I want to hurt him,
Hurt him bad
For all those wonderful times we had.
My tale is told.
My story's old.
My anger's out.
No fears about,
yet still I stand alone,
so very very much alone.
The Tale of Terror's now been told
And yes, my story's old,
But still I shed not a tear.
Instead a smile from ear to ear.

I stand alone,
Chained by chains, Locked by locks.

- Sheila Martin

— SURVIVING —

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A VICTIM

The temple has been ransacked.
The goods have all been pillaged.
A child of God has been defiled.
The second-hand store is closed.

dull
a coarse sweet fragrance
it oozes out
through scars to be
down ridges of flesh
past forests of hair
to pools on the floor
red life
seeps out of me
pain and anger
void and full
ready to burst
it breaks the dam
oh sweet blade
broken glass
rusty can
red armies in the night
yet no pain
no hurt
relief as you come
so odd
those holes
so long so wide
but no feeling
i love to watch you flow ...

- BB

Dear Dad,

I don't know where to start. How could you do this to me?! You tortured me during my very difficult teenage years with not only the incest but also your constant teasing and tickling. You left me with the feeling that I was not worth anything and could do no right. I was completely humiliated and devastated! My only option for defense was to run and cry. Do you remember the time you told me I was a fast runner? Well, I had plenty of opportunity to enhance and use that running skill. The only place I could get away from you was to run in the fields and woods behind your house. However, with the incest that didn't even work, so you caught me in the end.

You left me with not even the option of confiding in a house full of people. You did this by giving me the feeling that I wasn't supposed to tell. I don't remember you actually ever telling me that. I just remember feeling that if I did tell, then everyone would know how bad I really was. I must have been real bad because fathers don't do those things to good daughters. Because I was unable to tell this monstrous secret, I felt so trapped. Trapped both emotionally and physically. Those feelings of fearing to be trapped, of fearing interactions with others, and of worthlessness were so strong then that I was too scared to reveal that I had been molested by two other people besides you. Those feelings are also with me today. They take form whenever a new situation arises. I can feel the little girl inside me just wanting to run as far away as possible. I am the constant victim of those feelings. I should not be as afraid of the world as I am.

You tortured me not only in real life but also in my dreams. I have had years of nightmares, and they have been especially scary. My nightmares were particularly prevalent and terrifying when [my daughter] was born. The thought of having you touch her or be with her scared me to death. I wonder what it would be like to be able to enjoy her growing up instead of being afraid of it.

(continued on page 11)

What's going on? Why am I always feeling hurt and sad, even when I should be happy? Why am I constantly afraid of what other people might think or feel about me? I know I am a good, decent person, someone who's there when you need her, but why don't I feel that way inside me? When someone tells me what a good job I've done or that they value me, why don't I ever believe them? Why do I worry about every little thing and find something wrong with everything? Why can't someone come along and take this terrible weight off my shoulders? Why, when the tears begin to come, do I stop them? Why can't I make simple decisions without fear that I'll make the wrong choice? Why, when someone asks me a question, do I feel they are pressuring me? It's not fair that this is happening to me; I've done nothing wrong. All I want to do is live a normal life!

Why have I had to pay all through my youth for something I didn't do? Why did he do it to me? Why didn't someone help me? I just want all the pain and the memories to go away. I am going to get better. I owe me some happiness. I'm going to help me. No longer am I going to let this incest destroy me. I need me.

These are many of the questions and feelings I've experienced recently in facing my molestation and how much it has affected my life. It helps me a great deal to know that others feel this way too. I can, now, put my life together. It won't be easy, but I can do it! WE CAN DO IT!

- Kathleen Lewis



I was 16 and like every other 16-year-old girl, trying to find out what adulthood was all about. I trusted most adults. Especially those I was taught to trust without question such as teachers, policemen, ministers, etc. Our minister had been in our town for about five years and had always made me feel special, smart and adult. That was important to me as I didn't feel any of those things about myself. I mostly felt stupid, ugly and angry. The night he began to fondle me and guess at my virginity just seemed like it was supposed to happen; that I could be used as a tool, especially to someone as trustworthy as he seemed to be. In fact, most of my relationships continued in just that way. I was a tool for someone else's pleasure. That way I'd be special. The shame I felt was unbearable: berating myself for being "too seductive" or "asking for it." Women get these labels all the time.

Now, as an adult 20 years later, I have been able to shed these ridiculous labels and with them the shame. Talking and sharing with other women in similar situations has helped.

Society does harsh things to little girls. We're taught to be seductive and cute and slapped for the same when adults take advantage of us.

I wish when I was 16 that someone liked me without expecting something. I also wish a woman had shared her experience with me like I am sharing. It would have made the struggle a lot easier. What happened to me was not my fault. I finally believe that now. I survived.

- Marcia Weston-Altman



REVELATIONS OF AN INCEST SURVIVOR

Incest is the destruction, the mutilation and the death of a child.

Victims of incest suffer total helplessness because it is also constant subtleties that pervade their entire lives. As a form of brainwashing, incest completely undermines the victim's sense of self-worth until it is destroyed.

In addition to being made to feel immensely guilty and responsible for the incest, victims are made to feel they are not good for anything else and that sexually pleasing the perpetrator is their sole purpose in life, regardless of the victims' unwillingness. Perpetrators make victims feel totally helpless and useless.

With loved ones assaulting them, victims are made to feel dirty, evil, guilty, responsible, powerless and completely humiliated. All eventually cope by accepting themselves as lesser people than they were.

Victims feel they cannot tell anyone. The only way to survive is by not feeling. Victims stuff their feelings and refuse to face them. They are incapable of working through them. Survivors become emotionally constipated, reduced and handicapped.

Growing up in a no-win situation makes survivors professional victims who spend their lives stuffing feelings of guilt and shame; of being evil, betrayed, used and abused. They are handicapped with a total lack of self-esteem. Constantly striving to excel, survivors are still never good enough to please their perpetrators. They must be super moms, super wives, super neighbors and super career women.

The most heartening and yet most disgusting realization for each survivor, is that she is not alone. Survivors learn to cross the abyss. They leave victimization behind and make their way to becoming victors. Victors know their power comes from within.

I was a victim, I am a survivor, I will be a victor.

- Marcy

"... I felt so afraid, so guilty, that I never told anyone until I was 17, and then I went and reported [him]. I thought it would stop, but he and the rest of the family tried to deny it by blaming me and not talking about it. At that point I decided that since no one was listening to what I had to say, I would not talk about it and things would settle down. No one in my family has discussed it since then and the threat of being forced into sex with [him] is still very real to me even though I am of age and on my own now..."

You took away my laughter, and left in its place a tear-stained soul.

You took away life's meaning and left only a gaping hole.

You diminished my capacity to love and to trust;

These are feelings that I can't give.

You made me wonder more than once

If it was worth it to continue to live.

Often now I think of you. You fill my dreams at night,

And sometimes I tremble with a nameless fear,

But I can't give a voice to the fright.

They say when God allows pain in our lives,

He'll provide for the healing, too,

But for now I can only hurt inside

And live avoiding you.

"... sometimes I think all the pain and the guilt that I feel will never end..."

- Lori

E M E R G I N G



JOURNAL EXCERPT - October 2, 1984

PAIN. In the early part of July I unburied my incest memory. It took me two months to approach the issue again.

It happened. I'm sorry I let it happen. I think I've always been angry with myself for "letting it happen." I've always felt I've done something unforgivable.

I need to find some strength, but I feel so weak.

I knew I loved him (my Dad), or at least I wanted to, but he had sex with me, so I must have been confused because I was being abused; difficulty separating sex from sexual abuse; maybe I equated love with abuse; to love is to be abused. I put my love there, for a while, my trust there, for a while. That made me ... what? ... a slut? ... that gave me my sense of worth, or non-worth; so that's what I was good for, nothing else. That's what I've always felt I deserved, and now I often feel I deserve the pain and that somehow without the pain I will be nothing. Without allowing myself to be abused I'm worth nothing to anybody.

I couldn't quite understand what he could do to me that he couldn't do to my brother. But now I know. Oh god, now I know. I guess that makes me "scarred" - used, abused and "socially unacceptable."

Trouble is, will it ever be all right? It won't go away. I've tried to make it go away all my life, even by trying to make myself "go away." I need to accept it to stay alive. But how do I accept the unacceptable? I need to get angry. Anger? Rage. And I need to grieve. PAIN.

Sketch and Excerpt - B.A. Mills

Two months ago I met someone who told me that she was a survivor of incest. As I listened to her sad story of how an uncle had forced her into sexual intercourse when she was nine and continued to use her young body for his pleasure for several years, I began to feel amazement. Her story was almost identical to mine! As her tale unfolded I almost couldn't believe the similarities. For fifteen years I had felt so alone and different, as if I had been branded with a hot iron that marked me as filth. Yes, I had been told by social workers and counselors that I was not the only one ever to have it happen to me, but never had they shown me another victim. Always I had felt that I had been the only one to bear the pain and shame of incest. My counselors had never been able to break through that shame. Indeed, they never succeeded in even convincing me that they cared about the incest experience at all. Through my dealings with them I have come to believe that they should not even have attempted to help someone who had gone through the incredibly damaging experience of incest without first receiving specific training in that subject.

Having only one other victim reach out to me helped me more than the efforts of five "therapists" over the span of six years. I know that, together, we can help each other even more.

- Kristen

ILLUSIONS

I think that there once was ...
But no, the thoughts won't come.
They linger on the edge of knowing,
Shadows of memories
Haunting, mocking.

In my dreams they come nearer,
But when I reach for them, they're gone
And I lie awake in exhaustion,
Sensing the loss,
Yet not remembering what was lost.

Scenes go flying through my mind,
Never clear, with little meaning,
And I can hear the laugh
Of a hellish phantom,
Mocking at my sorrow.

My reality is falling apart,
And I just stand here
Looking down
At pieces of myself.

- BB

"ANGER AT HIM INSTEAD OF MYSELF"

I am growing weary of this silence,
Of keeping the peace at all costs.

I think I want to play my version
of the game now;
I want to make you lie awake nights
and wonder what my next move will be.

I want you to know what it's like to
contemplate death 'cause you can't
bear life.

I want you to carry this dead weight
for awhile;
This guilt, the awful mixed feelings.

And I will sit back and wait.

And try not to smile

When it destroys you ...

- Lori

Hi. You're probably wondering why I'm writing this. I am writing this because I want you to know that you are not alone. Sometimes people that have been abused or are being abused think that they're all alone. I know that I did when it was happening to me. I would like to let you know that things are going to get better before they get worse only if you want it to. When I was being abused I got into drugs and beer a lot. That's how things got worse. I had to learn that the feelings that I had were normal and ok.

(continued on next page)

I guess I'm writing this to let you know that you're not alone and that things do get better and that if you ever need anybody to talk to, write a letter to the Franklin School English Class, Pine Street, Auburn, Maine.

- A Caring Franklin Student

Thank You,

Maine Commission For Women

This first issue of The "Looking Up" Times would not have found its way to this professional, beautiful format without the generous donation of printing from the Maine Commission For Women, which has supported all "Looking Up" efforts in very helpful and tangible ways, throughout the year.

OUR ADDRESS:

"LOOKING UP"
RFD #1, Box 2620
Mt. Vernon, Maine 04352
Telephone (207) 293-2750

Every piece of writing in this newsletter is protected by copyright law.

In the past few months, I have been working on figuring me out. Do you know that when I was confronted with the fact that I am loveable and worthwhile, I cried, and just kept saying over and over again, "It isn't true, it isn't true!" I still wonder sometimes. I wonder whether I am loveable, and I wonder what it would have been like to grow up with those feelings.

When writing, rereading or sharing this letter, I still feel scared. My heart races. I half expect people to say or to hear myself say, "that's all wrong - you (meaning me) are responsible - it's all your fault." Funny, after 20 years, I should still be afraid of that.

So, it did happen! And you did it to me! And I am not responsible! You are! And I just feel like yelling, "How dare you, how dare you, how dare you!" for every time you touched me in an incestuous way. You left me with nothing except wondering "what would it be like if ..."

I feel that there is no relationship for us now. There was nothing positive in the past, and I see nothing for the future. I cannot live my life trying to forget or hide from being a victim of incest. I am learning to be a survivor. And I don't want or need your help.

Good-bye.

"Looking Up" Information - Donation Form

_____ Please add me to your confidential mailing list.

_____ I am interested as a survivor of incest. _____ I am interested as a service provider/concerned person (circle one)

_____ My age _____ Sex

_____ Please accept the enclosed donation in the amount of \$ _____ to help support "Looking Up" efforts.

MY NAME: _____

MY ADDRESS: _____

MY TELEPHONE: _____

Donations of all sizes are needed and welcome. Please make checks payable to "Looking Up."

Our acting executive director, a survivor of incest, is Gayle M. Woodsum.

"LU"
RFD #1, Box 2620
Mt. Vernon, ME 04352