

Foster The Children

Written By: Roland F. Stoecker Jr.

The state of California decided that it was not healthy for my sister and me to continue to live with our drug addicted mother and stepfather. One morning when I was about five years old, I tried to wake up my drunken mother from her stupor because i wanted to go to school but couldn't wake her. I decided to get dressed all by myself; so, I put on a t-shirt, shoes and a pair of socks. I crossed the street and went to my kinder garden classroom. Unbeknownst to me, kids are supposed to wear either shorts or pants when they go to school and I wasn't wearing either. That morning two police officers and a social worker showed up at school. They told me in nice tones that I was not going home and then told me to follow them. My sister was about three years old and I was five. I remember being escorted by the police officers and social worker back to my home. They told me that I could only grab some clothes and to leave my toys -what heartless, cruel, white-toothed-barbarians these monsters were to tell a child of five to leave his toys and grab some stupid clothes. I have already proven that I have no problem being somewhat naked.

My mom was crying as if it was the end of the world as the smooth talking police officers led her children towards the police car. My sister and me were placed in the back seat of the car; my sister sat behind the driver and I was sitting behind the other officer who was sitting in the passenger seat. I had stopped crying because I had to be brave for my sister just as every big brother should. The police officer in the passenger seat tried to calm my crying sister down by doing magic tricks with a quarter. He would find the quarter in mid-air or behind his *own* ear because we were stuck behind the metal protective barrier like the hardened criminals we were.

My sister had stopped crying but she sat so far away from me. To this day, the distance I felt that night has never been regained. We arrived at our destination; a nice old lady was waiting for us as we drove up. The strangers were now talking in hushed tones and kept glancing towards my sister and me. The woman reminded me of my grandma so I felt safe for the first time that night. We were led into a small room and asked if we were hungry; being kids who had witnessed domestic violence on a daily basis, we could always eat, even when we were scared. We were allowed to eat all the sugary good cereal we wanted and once we were full, the nice lady led my sister towards the girl's dormitory and I was led towards the boys dormitory. For the first time in our short lives, my sister and I were utterly alone, a feeling I still have not gotten used to.

The name of the place my sister and I now called home was called the Albert Sitting Home - a holding pen for children who have been taken from their parents for various reasons. I remember the first breakfast I ate there. Instead of fresh milk and sugary cereal we had powdered milk and bland cereal. One morning the grown ups gathered the children together, formed us up and instructed us to walk in a circle. We were instructed not to look at the news camera crew as they

taped the sullen children walking. The news story was an exposé on the children in the child protective services who were taken away from their neglecting and abusive parents. One night a grown up tapped me on the shoulder as I was watching TV with my new friends; he told me my mom was on the phone. When I picked up the phone, my mom started to cry and told me she was doing everything she could to get my sister and me back. I remember asking my mom about some frog eggs I had found in the swamp and brought home when I was a *normal* boy who lived with his mother. She said she was taking care of them for me and I would have a bunch of baby frogs when I got home. I asked my mom as an adult about the true outcome of my frog egg hoard and she told me my step dad had thrown them away – I was bummed when I found that out.

I was eventually placed into a foster home. When I was a kid I had blond hair and bright blue eyes and the foster family I was placed into was a very nice black family. They had kids my own age and I remember being dropped off for school by my foster mother and the other kids at school would ask me questions about why I was being dropped off by a black woman. That was when I began to feel like something was wrong and different about me. I was embarrassed because I had been taken away from my mom and placed into a foster home. I remember my dad visiting me at the foster home and he said he was doing everything he could to get my sister and me back. I believed him because he actually came to visit. My dad told me that my sister was doing good but had gotten into trouble for breaking her foster parents waterbed.

I do not remember my dad picking my sister and me up from our foster parent's houses but he did eventually get custody of us. I would love to say my life got better because I lived with my dad but it was the end of one nightmare and the beginning of many others.