

A story a long time in its making. A woman writes about her experiences as a Mormon and leaving the Mormon Church. (38 pages)

Several years ago, I decided to write my story, the story of leaving Mormonism. As it turned out, it became much more than just that. It became a story of my life, and how it evolved from being a repressed, depressing existence, to a comfortable and relaxed life of fun and love, and definite enlightenment of spirit. I have found that in this journey, there is no finality to it, that my story keeps evolving and changing as I get older and think and study about things.

I know this is really long, and perhaps REALLY boring, but please stick with me while you read this. I hope it helps you understand more about me.

This is basically my story of leaving Mormonism, but I have found that it is interwoven with my parents and what they did to me, and I often find it hard to separate the two. I go back and forth sometimes blaming the church and sometimes blaming my parents. I guess now I have accepted it for what it is, that it was both of them together that are to blame for how I am, and perhaps the reason why I'm the person I am now.

My parents were converted to the Mormon church when I was six years old. We were on vacation in Vermont, and passing through Sharon, my mom saw a sign along the side of the road that said, "Joseph Smith's Birth Place". My mother, being the know-it-all who knows nothing, thought that Joseph Smith had some historical significance in the founding of the country, so she says, lets go up and see what's there, expecting a log cabin turned into a museum of some sort. But no, the place had a big visitor's center with reflecting pools and a garden. My parents were impressed, and when asked, "Would you like to know more?" signed the guest book with our home address and phone.

Several months later, two missionaries arrived at our door. At the time there were no Mormons where we lived. My parents had never heard of the Mormons (which is strange because my mother is originally from Canandaigua, which is right down the road from Palmyra, and I'm sure her parents would have at least heard about Mormonism.) The missionaries taught our family the discussions and my parents decided to be baptized, even though the closest Mormon branch was an hour away.

My extended family of aunts, uncles, and grandparents were very much against us joining the Mormons.

There are five of us kids. I am the 4th. My oldest sister Ann was 12, my brother Edwin was 10, my sister Liza was 9, I was 6, and my little brother Dan was 3. Ann, when asked if she wanted to be baptized, said no. My parents made her be baptized anyway. There was confusion about what ward or branch we were actually supposed to be in, since there was never a Mormon in those parts before. My parents and siblings were baptized in Jamestown, which was like 3 hours away, but they decided we were to go to the Perry Branch, which was only one hour away.

So, every Sunday we went to church in Perry branch, one hour away from our farm in Franklinville. I liked it, I guess. We had the consolidated schedule long before it became officially sanctioned by the church, because of the travel time that many Perry branch

members traveled every Sunday. Sundays were actually fun because after church we would stop for ice cream on the way home, or would get some bread and bologna, and have a picnic and take a drive, or go from Perry on to Canandaigua to visit my grandparents and cousins, or visit Letchworth State Park, or we would take our camper places over weekends. We had a lot of long weekends where we went to Washington DC, or West Virginia, or Ohio. It was a really fun childhood.

But then things got bad. Of course it took me years to figure out exactly what was going on. I guess it would be best if I told you from the perspective of my nine-year-old brain, and then explain my interpretation of it as I figured it out.

First of all, my parents decided to become stricter Mormons. That might be because we were going to the temple to be sealed. There was no more ice cream after church, no more camping out over long weekends, unless we found a church to attend in advance. (Let me tell you, camping, and then trying to change into a dress when you were dirty and had no showers was really stupid. We hated it.). (My mother was a sports fan, worse than any man I know. She actually tried to give up watching sports on Sundays. Years later she gave up trying, and watched sports anyway. Sports and her Tab/Diet Coke habit were the only issues she had with Mormonism. Else wise, she was TBM (true believing Mormon) through and through.)

We ended up not going to the temple that year because my dad got sick. He had had rheumatic fever as a child, and it flared up into rheumatoid arthritis. He could not work, and there was no way we could drive in a car clear to Utah (our temple was Manti at the time; this was just before the DC temple was built.).

I'm not sure what happened to my dad. I wondered if being sick changed him. Or he was this way all along and was just waiting for us girls to get to a certain age. (We found out many years later that it indeed was the latter.) There were times when we kids would be in trouble, and dad would try to chase us, and fall on the floor. He would lay there and cry. Again, in my nine-year-old brain, this is what I observed.

After a few months, dad got better. They got his arthritis flairs under control, and again we started planning a temple trip.

Dad pestered Ann a lot. He took questionable pictures of her. One picture was always kept handy, of Ann in her underwear. I don't believe he ever had sexual relations with her, other than the kind that I will describe later that happened to me.

At that time, things were happening with Liza. As kids, we liked to move furniture around. We had this huge old house, that had enough bedrooms for us each to have our own, but they were arranged weirdly at the back of the house. You had to pass through one room to get to others, so it was more like a big hallway instead of a room. My parents had one of the large rooms at the head of the stairs, and Liza had the one opposite it, that was the master bedroom. I had the pass-through room at the back of the house, and always had my brothers or Ann traipsing through, which I hated. Liza for some

reason insisted that I take the room that was off of her room, that at one time was a dressing room for her main big room. It was just large enough for my bed, desk, chair, and dresser. My father had a colossal fit that we were moving bedrooms around. My 30-something brain put together that his bedroom and Liza's bedroom were close together at the front of the house and the rest of us were at the back, in a whole other wing of the house. I can only speculate but I think my dad was having sexual relations with Liza at that point, and the bedroom situation made it convenient for him. I wonder now if Liza insisted that I take that dressing room because she wanted somebody close by, and that my dad cut back or stopped messing with her because I was there.

Another incident points to that situation. A little background information, my father had an obsession with women's underwear, particularly bras and girdles. He kept them hidden in a box. I really hated this. He would catch me alone at places in the house, and he would have a bra with him, and he would insist on changing me into it himself. I wasn't allowed to change into it because he said I would put it on incorrectly. Keep in mind that I was NINE at the time and wasn't near ready for bras.

More background in this case; there was definitely something wrong with my mother. My nine-year-old brain could not put my finger on it, but now I know she was angry at the situation. She would literally scream at us kids, and she would beat us. One of her favorite tricks was to grab the offending kid by the hair and make the kid do her bidding. Trust me, when someone has a hold of most of your hair, you do just exactly as you are told!

Anyway, the incident I mentioned happened one day, when my dad caught me alone and took me to the bedroom that he shared with my mother. He put the bra on me. The whole time I was just hoping it would end soon and I could get away. But this time was different. When dad was finished dressing me, he said, "Come on and lay down with me for a minute." I said no, that mom wanted me to do something (I had been given a chore and a threat that if I didn't do it, I would get the beating of my life.). He said, "oh never mind that, just lay down with me." At that point my mother discovered that I was missing from whatever task she had asked me to do, and started screaming at me from downstairs, at the top of her lungs. I remember freaking out and telling dad, she's going to kill me if I don't get down there right now, and I tore out of the room. I remember he was almost crying, begging me not to leave. My adult brain still reels at the thought of what I narrowly missed that day. It makes me sick writing it. My dad never had the courage to approach me again. I remember the day that I realized what that situation was, when I was in my 30s. It amazes me that my mom, even though she was an enabler to dad's issues, counteracted it that day, and I still freak out at the thought of my narrow escape.

I think at that point I became nothing to dad. He called me names and beat me up regularly. He continued his ladies underwear fetish, and he always was grabby, and made disgusting comments, and would try to corner me. I remember one time he was helping me with my spelling words. One of the words was "supple" and when he saw that word, he made a grab at my chest and said, "Like these." I most hated that he used

the excuse that I was using too much hot water while I was in the shower, and would come in and reach in the shower and turn off the water. He insisted that there be no locks on the doors because he “was afraid of fire”. But it was really so he could walk in whenever he wanted. He would come into my room at night when I was sleeping. I knew it because normally I would just throw my clothes on the floor and climb into bed. I would get up in the morning, and, although my clothes were still in a heap on the floor, my bra was carefully folded and placed on the dresser. One time it was really hot out, and I decided to sleep without any clothes on. And oh my god, in the morning, he commented about it, asked me why I slept without clothes. I’m disgusted, and my skin crawls just to think about it. The one night in my life I decided to sleep without clothes, and HE KNEW ALL ABOUT IT. It still creeps me out.

We went to the Manti temple when I was 10. We took two weeks and took our camper clear across the country. I really didn’t want to be sealed to this stupid family, that I really didn’t want to spend eternity with them. We sat for hours of waiting in the children’s play room, where you couldn’t really play because you were to be reverent in the temple. This was hard for us because we were mostly older kids, 16, 14, 13, 10, and 7. When we were finally summoned to go to the sealing room to meet our parents, I remember the temple matron yelling at my little brother for running ahead on the stairs, and I remember my dad’s baker’s hat. I remember people asking afterward if I felt more special now that I was sealed to my family. No not so much! But of course I smiled and nodded my head, because I would get into trouble if I said otherwise to someone outside the family.

It was about this time that my parents decided to move to a different town. We would be moving about 30 miles closer to the Perry branch. When we moved, it became pretty clear to me that Liza was the golden child and I was trash. The house we moved into was smaller, and we three girls shared a room, and the boys shared a room. Ann went away to BYU after graduating a year early from high school, and it was then that my parents allowed Liza to take a portion of the family room and make it her room, so I had my own room and so did she. She seemed to get whatever she wanted, and could get away with everything, and my parents would take it out on me.

One year mom asked us each what we wanted for Christmas. We always had really nice Christmases, I think, because my parents were so awful the rest of the year that they were subconsciously trying to make up for it. But anyway, Liza asked for a bulletin board, and I asked for a hair dryer. When the day came and I got my hair dryer and Liza got her bulletin board, Liza threw a huge fit. She wanted the hair dryer. My mom took it from me and gave it to Liza. I could ask to borrow it, and I could use it if Liza wasn’t using it. IT WAS MY HAIRDRYER. This was just one instance. There were multiple times that Liza could take whatever she wanted of mine, and I’d tell my mom, and mom would say, “Doh, just let her have it.” One time after babysitting, I had \$20. I thought and thought about what I wanted to buy with my \$20, and finally decided I wanted nail polish, remover, and a nail kit to clip and file my nails with. I walked all the way into town by myself, bought my new stuff, and proudly took it home and used it...once. Liza wanted it, so she took it. I told mom. Mom said let her have it. I absolutely hate my mother for

that. I remember hating the unfairness of it. I still struggle with fairness, and have a hard time reconciling myself to things that aren't fair that I can do nothing about.

I would try to tell my mother about things. I tried to tell her that dad wouldn't leave me alone. I tried to point out to her how unfair she was treating me. She always made this noise, almost like Homer Simpson's Doh. She would say, "Doh, it's not as bad as all of that. Doh, what do you care about that stuff? Doh, just let her have it. Doh, your dad is just joking around." I didn't realize at the time how much that Doh would disenfranchise me, how it would reduce me to feel like I was nothing to them. It belittled me. I was a worthless, no-good slut, and I didn't deserve anything, especially respectful treatment.

I think too that my mother was in denial of all of it, to a degree. Somehow she justified my father's behavior in her mind. I know for sure she was depressed. Knowing what I know now, after years of therapy and study about pedophiles, I bet that my mother was abused by her father. But that's a skeleton that won't ever come out of that closet.

As I got older, my dad got worse about the underwear. Mom would buy Liza the underwear she wanted to wear, but I was stuck with what came out of dad's box. I would get used to a bra and wear it, ignoring others that I hated. I would sneak in the girl's bathroom at school and take off the bra on gym days. My dad would get mad and take the ones I was comfortable with and hide them so I couldn't wear them, and would make me wear the ones I hated. Some of them were black and long line. Can you imagine a 5th grader wearing black long line bras and having to change in gym class? And if I said anything to him, or tried to destroy the bras, he would beat me. I was worried about gym class and the bruises, which I'm sure he didn't think about. He never hit me in the face so it would not show. Middle school was hell.

Liza and Edwin were allowed to beat me up. My mom got a kind of a charge out of it. She would always have an evil freakish smile on her face when she was making like she was trying to stop the fight...not really a fight because I was cowering, and Liza or Edwin or dad would be on top of me beating me up. The fake "Doh don't do that, stop it" rings in my ears. When Dan was old enough, he was also allowed to beat me up. I got beat probably about twice a week by someone. Mom's beatings were the worst of all, because she grabbed my hair. Dad used a belt. I don't know how I hid it at school.

My parents used the church to get us to do what they wanted. If we objected to anything, the beatings, the constant chores, riding for hours in the car to church in all kinds of bad weather, or anything they wanted us to do, we were preventing the family from going to the celestial kingdom, and it would be our fault that the family didn't get there.

As far as believing in the Mormon church, I guess at this point I took for granted that it was true. I'm not sure I cared one way or the other. It never occurred to me to question it, that I even had a right to question it. I must have had cognitive dissonance about God. Looking back I wonder why a loving God would allow me to be put through what I was. I don't remember praying on my own. I remember praying as a family and in church, but it was always the same trite lines and the same rehearsed crap over and over.

My parents were very concerned about the appearance of evil. Outwardly, I imagine we looked like the model Mormon family, but there were dirty little secrets in the closet. Ann remembers a time when she was having a hard time with Liza getting her way and beating us up. She had befriended a family that lived a couple houses away, and she went that night to their house and told them a little about what was going on. When she got back, my dad beat her up, not for running away, but for telling the neighbors our business.

I remember being baptized at the Perry branch, and being afraid not to say the things I was supposed to say. Once again, people were asking me if I felt special, now that I was baptized and had the Holy Ghost. Nope. And once again I lied...smiled and said yes, out of fear it would get back to mom and dad.

I do remember also that my parents always blamed us kids for not getting along. It was always our fault that there wasn't love in our home. They were bound and determined to make us love each other. And that meant that the weak were supposed to give in to the strong. I was supposed to let my siblings beat me up. I was supposed to let them have my things. No contention. That's what my parents wanted. They would pit us against each other, sit back and watch the fight, then blame us.

The beatings were always my fault, because "I provoked it." Of course I provoked it. I had an honest little smart mouth on me, and I talked back when they spewed their crap at me. So I continued to get beat up regularly.

My parents were always harping on us kids being ungrateful. If you showed any opposition to anything they said or did, you were ungrateful. I used to think, in the back of my mind, ungrateful for what? The beatings? Having to be constantly on the look out when you're in the bathroom or changing your clothes? Having people think you're a freak? The endless work? Having your stuff taken away and given to someone else? I'm supposed to be GRATEFUL for this? I have made it a point as an adult to NEVER say the word "ungrateful". I never use it on my kids. I never say it to my husband. I feel like I'm the opposite of what my parents always felt; I'm thankful for my husband and my kids and I'm so happy that they love me and choose to be around me. I am privileged to know them and to be with them, and I will never expect them to feel like they owe me anything. I'm the one that owes them.

So anyway, back to the Perry Branch. Not much past the time we moved closer to the branch, the church decided to split the stake. We would be in the Buffalo stake instead of the Rochester stake. Perry was in the Rochester stake. It was interesting that when they drew the line down across that part of western New York, that there was a little bulge drawn right around our little town. The line was straight except for that little bulge that removed us from Perry Branch. At the time, my parents were sure that the Lord had a plan for that and that we were called to go to Buffalo for a reason. Knowing what I know now about my dad, I think the people in Perry wanted dad out of their branch. There isn't really anything I can put my finger on as to why they would want us out of there, but you

will see as the story goes on, that this is the first of two times we were involved in a ward or stake split and a little bulge was drawn around where we lived.

We were to go to the Orchard Park ward which was about the same distance as the Perry branch, but the other direction. Somehow my dad got to be called as a high priest and was a counselor in the bishopric.

We weren't in Orchard Park for too long, when my dad and others convinced the stake leadership that there needed to be a branch in Arcade. There were a couple families that drove to Orchard Park from Arcade, and Arcade was closer to us by about half.

They created the branch, but called it a dependant branch with the home ward at Orchard Park. They named another guy, Davies, to be the branch president, and my dad to be first counselor. I think that upset dad, because he really wanted to be the president. But anyway, we were there for 18 months or so. I remember the branch being extremely strictly Mormon. And my parents were even more so at the time.

Now this might seem like a little thing to some people but there was an occurrence about this time that still chaffs me. You know how Mormons are always insisting on being a peculiar people. Well, the last thing a 12 year old wants to be is peculiar. I honestly hated that we were seen as freaks. The place we moved to was a strictly Catholic town with a Catholic school. We were new to town, and we were freaking Mormons. I remember a kid on the school bus asking me if we were Quakers. I didn't know what to tell him. I was embarrassed to be a Mormon.

As an aside, every kid in the world gets to go trick-or-treating. Not us. It wasn't so much a Mormon thing; it was that my mother didn't allow it. But of course it was assumed that because we were Mormon, we didn't trick-or-treat. Somehow I convinced my mother to let us go. The very first time I ever trick-or-treated was when I was TWELVE. I only got to go because my little brother wanted to go. She was too lazy to take him, so she made me do it.

Anyway, the occurrence. That summer was this country's bicentennial. 1976. The talk of the end of school was what you were going to do on the 4th. Everyone had great plans. Some were going to Darian Lake, an amusement park, and asked if I were going, and wouldn't it be fun to meet there. Some were going to fireworks shows. There was even a big show on TV with the tall ships in NY harbor, and all sorts of cool things to do. There were family picnics and parades. We lived on a lake, too, and it would have been great fun to spend the day in my canoe or swimming at the beach. But it occurred on a freaking SUNDAY. No fireworks. No Darian Lake. No picnic. No parade. No swimming. No watching the tall ships on TV. Nothing but stupid dependent Arcade branch. I remember the looks on my friends' faces when I told them I couldn't go. I was pretty upset. Even church wasn't special that day. It was stupid Fast and Testimony meeting. I pretended to be sick and snuck out to the car. At least at noon I heard the church bells and the train whistle. I laid in the back seat and cried. Then when school started again in the fall, we were asked to write a paper about how we spent the

bicentennial. I was embarrassed all over again. I couldn't lie about it, so I had to tell them that I sat in church, and at least heard the bells ring at noon. I remember the look on the teacher's face. She was thinking, FREAK. I was the only kid that had not done something exciting. I don't think I ever got over that. This was the coolest thing to happen in my 12-year-old world, and the church and my stupid family had wrecked it. There was no hiding that we were FREAKS.

Not long after that, things started to happen at the Arcade dependent branch. The leadership started to not get along. I was pretty sure the branch president was fudging the records. If we had 100% attendance for a certain amount of time, we would become a real branch. I knew and dad knew that Davies was lying to the stake leaders about it. The reason I knew was because I was the only 12-year-old kid in the branch. The other kids were way older or way younger. There was no Sunday School class for me, so they made me secretary of the Jr Sunday School. I took attendance. But I was never asked for my records, and I told my dad so. Even at 12, I knew that wasn't right. My parents told the stake leadership and the bishop at Orchard park. Apparently they opted not to do anything about the fudged records. Of course I don't know everything that happened, because my parents never told us, but the things that I knew were pretty crazy. My parents were sure that Davies was going to poison them at the Relief Society dinner because they had told on him. My dad stood up at sacrament meeting and cast out the devil in the name of Jesus Christ. Wacky things! But we went to ward conference as the dependent branch in Orchard Park, and my parents, when it came time to sustain the stake leadership, opposed them. They were hauled out into the bishop's office to find out why they had opposed. I think the stake leadership took my parents seriously after that, because Davies was either excommunicated or he left the church on his own, and that stupid dependent branch in Arcade was dissolved, much to my relief, and we started going to Orchard Park again.

My sister Liza was starting to get into trouble a lot. I thought at the time that this was the reason dad had cast the devil out of Arcade that day. Because she had moved her room down to part of the family room, she was on the ground level, and her window was just a few feet off the ground. So she would sneak out at night. She smoked cigarettes and did pot. This I know because she and her friends made me try it. At 12, I tried pot and smoking. Liza was getting into trouble with boys and lots of other things. But it never made sense to me that she didn't get into trouble with my parents. I was getting into trouble far more than she did for far less offensive behavior.

One day it got really bad. Liza had temper tantrums like a 2-year-old. She was 15. She had beaten me up, and some other stuff that I can't remember. It was just a really bad day. My mom said, "That's it, we're getting in the car and we are taking Liza to see the bishop." I thought, AT LAST, something is going to be done about her terrorizing me. For some reason Ann was there, home from school, and we talked about how great it was going to be, that finally somebody was going to see our side. A couple hours later, my parents and Liza came home, and Ann and I waited expectantly for what the bishop had said about Liza's behavior. Mom sat us down and talked to us, and I could not believe my ears! Mom said, "The bishop said that we need to be nice to Liza." I remember

speaking up at that point and saying I could not believe it. LIZA was the problem, but we had to be nice to her? How on Earth could that be? Years later, after a little speculation on mine and Ann's part, we think that they didn't go to the bishop at all. We think they drove around and talked to Liza and tried to calm her down. And bribed her to behave. I bet they were handing over whatever they could to her, because I'm sure she had threatened, on more than one occasion, to tell the bishop about dad. So one of the things she insisted on was that me and Ann had to be nice to her. What a load of crap!

You see, years later when we found out what had actually happened to Liza, that my dad had had sex with her. We figured out why she got everything she wanted and never got into trouble for acting out. Liza often blackmailed my parents. If she wanted something, like new clothes, or contact lenses, or a car, she would threaten to tell on dad. My parents would placate her by handing over whatever she wanted. Later in life they were always giving Liza huge quantities of cash. True it was unfair, but now I'm glad I wasn't in those shoes. After a while Liza could not get any more out of my parents, and the crap hit the fan, as you will see later in the story.

Wonder why I'm damn near blind? One of the things I would get into huge trouble over, was having my light on past my curfew. I had a strict 8pm bed time, which was a little unfair for a 10-13 year old. I loved to read, but after chores, I didn't have time to read and still do homework. So, I found an old lighted alarm clock, which I tore the face off so the light bulb was exposed. It was almost enough light to read by, but wouldn't raise suspicion if my dad opened the door and saw it. I had the bottom part of a bunk bed that was my bed, which was low to the floor, and had a big space between the mattress and the headboard. I put my book on the floor under the headboard, put the clock on it to light the page, hung my head over the end of the mattress under the headboard, and read for hours. Then I would get up an hour early and do my homework before school, before anyone else got up and knew I was up. That's when I would eat too, so I could do it in privacy, and eat as much as I wanted. I had to get up early anyway to use my hair dryer before my sister got up. Sad, isn't it. I'm darn near blind now, because my parents weren't interested in allowing me to read. They wanted obedience.

When I was in 7th grade, we had a really bad snow storm that closed school for 2 weeks. We could not get to the grocery store. My parents just loved this. They could prove to the world that they had their food storage for a reason. While our neighbors were riding snowmobiles out to the grocery store and eating pretty much normal, we were boiling wheat. We were eating it with canned tomato sauce. It was nasty.

Now, I know perfectly well why I have food issues today, because my mother controlled me with food. I wasn't skinny, but I sure wasn't fat. But my parents and siblings always called me Fats. There was a fat bus driver named Judy Warner. My sister called me Judy. One time Liza's friends said I was fat and Liza laughed and agreed with them. I was mad and told my mom that Liza TOLD her friends that I was fat, not knowing in my 12-year-old brain how to say that Liza's friends had said it and that she had laughed and agreed instead of defending me. The rest of my family thought that this was just hilarious because I was obviously fat and Liza would not have to tell anyone I was. They

made fun of me for that for years. My mom was just as fat, but she would encourage the others and go along with them in bullying me about it.

According to Mom, there was never enough money for groceries. My parents paid a full tithe, and my mom didn't work outside the home. Mom would buy chocolate chips and hide them in her room. She would buy bags of apples, half of which had big rotten spots on them. She insisted on making her own bread, and it was gross, whole wheat that had not been allowed to rise properly, so it was impossible to make a sandwich out of. She made horrible nasty oatmeal for breakfast that was the consistency of cement. If there were leftovers, she would just put the pan it was cooked in, right in the fridge without covering it. Then she would expect you to eat the leftovers, all dry and cracking up in the pan. Leftover macaroni and spaghetti was enough to make you throw up. She would buy milk from a local farmer, then would mix it half and half with powdered milk, which tasted horrible. So, when there was a chance, I hoarded food and hid it under my bed with my modified alarm clock reading lamp. I would get into the fridge and grab the cheese and eat it all before anyone else could get any. I was a lucky person if I got to the milk before it could be mixed, and I drank as much as I could hold. I would get into trouble, but the trouble was a small price to pay because I got enough milk to satisfy for a while. If a person made a pan of brownies, he or she had to eat their fill at the one sitting because they would be gone the next time you went by the kitchen, and there would not be brownies again for a very long time.

School lunches were totally embarrassing. Mostly there were half rotten apples or that ridiculous bread to take. Yet another issue to make me into a freak at school. I refused to take the food my mother had at home, so I would go without food and would beg it off of my friends. They would share their lunches, or would lend me money and I would pay them with my babysitting proceeds. Or I would charge lunch until I dared not anymore, and would pay with my own money. I think one time my friends got tired of me begging off of them, and they must have been talking about it, because one day none of them would give me anything, and I went without. It hurts all over again to think about this, and I would hope that people are teaching their kids to look for the kid that doesn't have a lunch and to find a way to share with them.

Anyway, during that snowstorm, we could not get out to go to church. So my parents insisted on having sacrament meeting at our kitchen table. I remember thinking how lame it was, and how fake and trite it felt. I wondered why we couldn't be like normal people and just stay home from church. We had sacrament with that awful half-risen whole wheat bread.

We lived in that area for 3 years. One day toward the end of my 7th grade year, my parents decided to leave New York. There was a job in Colorado, and my dad had gotten it, and was leaving. My mom was going to sell the house and come later when school was out. My grandmother and my aunts insist that there was something shady about the way dad left and why, perhaps that he was in trouble with a girl. That, I don't think I will ever know. But it was a hasty departure. Ann came home from BYU, and we only had a couple weeks to get ready, but mom camped out on the couch because she didn't know

what to do. Ann took charge and got us packed. Another thing to tell me that I was not worth the time of day: I was not allowed to bring two little boxes of dolls that I loved. Two lousy boxes the size of file boxes. I was told that I was too old for those dolls and there was absolutely no room for them. We brought the stupid food storage, the Sam Andy that they never used and probably still have to this day, though it's out of date, bought in the early 1970s. (I think it was already out of date when we left NY) But no, I could not have 2 little boxes of personal things. We left the house full of stuff, and my grandparents had to take load after load out of the place. I bugged my mom about my boxes and she said she would have Papa send them to us. The boxes came....with the dolls gone and some other useless crap that was important to my parents packed in them. My dolls were gone forever, no one knew where. I was not worth it. Other family members got to bring much more than I was able to bring. It was like having what little childhood I was allowed ripped from me. I was 13.

The job fizzled out soon after we got to Colorado, which caused further speculation among my extended family. We lived in a borrowed house for a month (from a person on sabbatical from CSU), and then in the KOA for a couple weeks. At that time my sisters and brother got into stealing peoples' coolers from their camp sites. I only participated once. I was a goody two shoes and would not go with them, but I went the one time because they said they would not share the food with me unless I helped. We lived in a tent, but we sure as heck went to church and paid tithing and we stole food.

They found a house in town and dad got another job, then bought a house later that was close to the new stake center and the Fort Collins II ward. Dad got another job, but it didn't pay well, and my mother had to work for the first time, outside the home. She was a nurse's aid, and through the years got her LPN, and then her BSN, and she later became the charge nurse at the nursing home she started in.

As I became a teenager, I do remember being angry about what my dad was doing to me. But my dad always insisted that he wasn't doing anything wrong. He insisted that he was joking around, and that I just couldn't take a joke, and what the heck was wrong with me!? I don't think the thought occurred to me at the time, but I'm sure my dad thought that since there was no intercourse with me, that he was in fact doing nothing wrong. He never said it, but that's what the feeling was. And of course any discussion with mom resulted in "Doh!", the belittling irritating expression that devalued me.

I had a growing sense that dad was not being true to his priesthood, and I had difficulty even listening to him when he got all churchy. At the same time, at church we were being told that we should keep ourselves clean and pure and ready to marry in the temple. I didn't know at the time what my dad was really doing to my sister. I know I felt incredibly guilty most of the time, because I found it impossible to live up to the teachings. I know I tried really hard to be perfect. If I was absolutely perfect, my parents would someday, one way, accept me and that would be a happy day. I guess the thought that resonated with me was the incredible unfairness of it all.

I remember thinking to myself, one of these days I'm going to tell. I'm going to find a bishop or a teacher or a police officer, and I'm going to tell everything about my parents to them. Someday, I'm going to tell. But someday would not come for a long time. Pedophiles perpetuate abuse by guiltting their victims into not telling. As long as nobody tells, the pedophile can keep up his activities. We were totally guiltted into not telling. My sister had been beaten up for telling someone outside the family something, and she hadn't even told a tip of the iceberg. At the time, I could not see telling anyone in the future, but I always fantasized about telling someone someday.

I still took for granted that the Mormon church was true. I didn't know any other life. It never occurred to me to question it. My parents were still concerned about public image. I started going to seminary. I told them I read every assigned word, that I had read the standard works cover to cover, because I was afraid of what would happen if I admitted that I didn't. My parents would surely hear about it. Besides, I thought all of my friends were reading every word, and I could not embarrass my parents by being the only kid that wasn't reading. I tried to read the scriptures, but they were so...not interesting, that I could hardly get past the first chapter. Anyway, when it came time to graduate from seminary, I received an award for being the only kid that had read the standard works. That was rough because I knew I had not, but if I admitted it, I knew I would get beat up to within an inch of my life. That's a lot of pressure for a kid to endure.

I had started refusing to take blessings from my father. I knew that his priesthood was a sham. I would get sick, and my parents would insist that dad give me a blessing, but I would not allow him to do it. I asked if the home teachers could do it, but they said, no, no that would never do. So I would not get a blessing because they didn't want the home teachers knowing I would not have a blessing from dad.

My dad was still at his old tricks, grabbing , making rude comments, opening doors when we were undressed, messing with my underwear, keeping his box of bras in the crawl space, etc. One day I got sick of it. I was passing by him to go into the kitchen and he grabbed at me. I turned on him and smacked him as hard as I could. I said, if he ever laid a finger on me again, that I would take his car and crash it into the biggest tree I could find. (years later, after hearing this, my shrink asked me, did I think doing personal harm to myself would get my father's attention? I said I hadn't even thought of that, that what I was going for was damage to the car, which would get dad's attention. I told the shrink, my dad could have cared less if anything happened to me in such an accident. That caused a long silence from the shrink!) Dad never touched me again after that.

Around the same time, my brother was whipping ping pong balls at me, because he thought it was funny. I stole them all and ran down to the laundry room and was up on the washer tossing them behind the water heater so nobody could get them, and my brother came after me. He threatened to beat me up if I didn't get those ping pong balls for him. Standing there on the washer, I reared back and kicked him as hard as I could in the face, and gave him a bloody nose. Of course I got in trouble, but my brother never touched me again.

I wished that I had had similar moments with my sister and mom, but they left me alone too. I guess word got around. But not my little brother. He would beat me up probably the worst I ever got, later in the story.

The ward split into Fort Collins II and Fort Collins III. Miraculously, there was a straight line through Fort Collins, except for that little bubble around the street where my parents lived. We were going to be part of Fort Collins III ward. The leadership had again, with the stroke of a pen, removed my family from our home ward, and we were to be in the new ward. It's not like we were on one side of the line or the other; a bubble was drawn to put us in the other ward, where if the bubble was not put in, we would have still been part of the old ward. They didn't want my dad in FC II. Hmmm.

My mom became more withdrawn from me. She would go away during the day and lock me out of the house. She would come home, and I would be sitting on the step, pissed off, and she would say, "Doh, Rhonda I forgot all about you." I was quite good at music, and was in the best groups at school. We had a lot of concerts and performances. Mom never saw me in marching band. She went to one choir concert, and complained so much before, during, and after the program, that I never asked her again. I got the highest award for music in my senior year, and there was not one of my family members there to see me get it.

As I look back, I realize now how suicidal I was. I never acted on it, but I really wanted to do it. I knew if I said anything to anyone, I would be packed off to the funny farm. I think what stopped me was that I was too scared to do it. Silly perfectionist me, I was afraid I would botch it, and not end up dead, and then I would be in really bad trouble from my parents. I knew that an attempted suicide would put a huge dent in their reputation, and in public they would act like they cared, but in private, my hell would be worse.

I could use the family car if I went to seminary, but that was only once or twice a week. I always had to bum rides off my friends to school from seminary. I didn't have any money to give them for gas, but I didn't have a ride and didn't have any choice. My parents didn't know or care about it. One day my friend's car was in the shop, and we exhausted all other people who could give us a ride. I had to call my mom. She came and picked us all up, but the whole time she ragged at me, putting me down in front of my friends and threatening me if I ever called her again. It was so embarrassing! I think though, that after that, my friends were a little more ok with taking me to school. They understood more about what I was dealing with.

Ann and I really liked to watch M.A.S.H. It was on after the news every night at 10:30. My mom would get angry and storm out of the room whenever Klinger was on. She didn't think Klinger was funny at all. Even though we tried to explain to her that Klinger was only dressing like a woman to get a Section 8, she would have nothing to do with it. It was unexplained hostility for many years until my aunt enlightened us. My dad used to put on my aunt's underwear! This was another sickening detail that I could just not get

my mind around. No wonder my mom was so uber angry at us laughing at Klinger. Klinger's cross-dressing was a little too close to home.

My dad was always excited about the prospect of eternal polygamy. When he talked about it, he would get this sickening little glint in his eye, and my mom would get mad and disgusted at him. No wonder. When I found out about what really happened with Joseph Smith and all his secret wives, I thought about how jealous my dad would be that old Joe got to have all those women. I am very surprised that my dad didn't go join some outfit like Warren Jeffs. You could tell that dad REALLY WANTED polygamy to be legal.

I started working in the nursing home where my mom was a head nurse. I was only 15, but I was put on as a nurse's aid, due to my mom's influence. I saw things that no 15-year-old should have seen, and because of my naivety from being raised a Mormon, I really didn't know how to handle them. I should not have been looking at naked old men, nor should I have been exposed to their propositions. Luckily nothing happened, but I think this added to my problems with self-esteem and sex.

Anyway, my mom was bound and determined that I was going to be a nurse. I didn't want to be a nurse, particularly after I had worked in the nursing home. I worked there a year and decided I could not take it any more, then got a job at a fast food restaurant. But here's the ultimate Mormon controlling part. After I had quit, I kept getting calls to come in to work at the nursing home. I had given them written notice, and every time they called, I asked to not be called again. This kept up for several months after I had quit. I asked one lady, finally, why they were calling me, when I had quit months ago. She said that I was on their on-call list. I asked mom about it, and she said she had been telling them that I wanted to be on call and that I would for sure work a couple days for when other nurse's aids called in sick. She desperately wanted me to be a nurse, thought it was what was good for me, and didn't really care what I wanted. When I told her to butt out and let me work at the job I wanted, she laid into me. She said this was good for my future, and if I didn't take the opportunity, then I was going to end up a no-account with no job and no means to support myself, and that she was in no way, going to be there to pick up the pieces when I failed. What a controlling self-purposed pain in the ASS!

I had some real hangups while trying to date. I only dated after I was 16, and I tried dating only Mormon guys, but none of them wanted me. I dated a few non-members, got into some heavy petting with them, but never went all the way. I had NO IDEA that this was a problem for the guys I dated. I didn't know that once you started with a guy, you pretty much had to finish, or it made them really super uncomfortable. I had very few long term boyfriends as a result. It was likely that my reputation got around, because as I got older there were fewer and fewer dates. Enter more guilt into the equation; I knew I wasn't "pure", but there was no way on god's green earth that I was going to confess to the bishop about it, because it would get back to mom and dad, and I was sure I would get beaten up for it.

Mormon guys didn't want me because I was too smart and spoke my mind, and wasn't spiritual enough, and non-mormon guys didn't want me because I was a tease.

All my friends went to BYU, but my mom told me sometime in my junior year, that there was no money for school, so I might as well forget about it and find a job when I graduated from high school. I went into a work-study program at a local manufacturing plant. And started going to Relief Society. The sisters really didn't know how to talk to me. I was taking engineering courses and working in a factory, something Molly Mormons didn't do. Ann and I bought motor cycles. That wasn't done by Mollies either. Ann owned a Ford Bronco, and I wanted a pickup truck. My mom had a fit over that. I quote, "A pickup truck! How do you expect to get married if you drive a pickup truck?!?" I began to learn to speak my mind more, also not part of the Molly Mormon MO. Ann and I began to find other things to do on Sunday and not go to church, and I fell away. I felt pretty guilty about it, but could not bring myself to go back at the moment. I was seriously behind in tithing, i.e. I had never paid it, and I felt bad, but I needed the money.

Ann and I were really getting sick of the presumptuous nature of the Mormons. We were sick of them presuming that we would just hand over everything we owned to the church, like it was community property. She told me one time about when she was at BYU. She had the only TV in the dorms, and the only VCR. She got a knock on her dorm door one day, and it was a girl she didn't know. This girl had come over to borrow the TV and VCR for a Family Home Evening. Ann was not in the habit of lending them out to people she knew, let alone a total stranger. She told the girl NO. The girl stomped off, all mad. What did she think, that Ann would just hand the stuff over? Nuts. Another time, Ann bought a speed boat. (She had a lot of money because she lived at home and had a really good job, so she bought nice things that she could afford.) The boy scout leader heard about it, and asked to borrow it for a scout outing. Ann said they could not borrow it, but she would gladly take them boating, and of course her first mate (me) had to go along and help with the trailer. The scout leader said, no, no, women were not allowed on scout outings and he would just borrow the boat. Ann said no. The scout leader left in a huff.

I don't know what did it, perhaps Ann going back to BYU, but I started to feel really guilty about not going to church. So I started back up again, and got involved in the student ward at CSU. I prayed and studied, and started going to Institute classes. I became Molly again, and put my motorcycle in the garage. I really wanted it to work this time. I still didn't pay tithing, but I really wanted to, and was working out my finances so that I could.

My family of course still sucked. My brother Dan had dropped out of school and was sponging off my parents. I was still living at home, and one day I got into a bad fight with Dan. He put me into a wall and gave me a concussion. I left and went to a friend's house. The bishop of the student ward worked out some room mates and a place for me to live, and gave us groceries from the storehouse, but of course we had to pay him back

for the money he lent us for the deposit and the groceries. I was in a house with two nice Mormon women and everything was going to be great.

I restricted my dating to Mormon guys. But I never got anywhere with them. I was trying to be Molly Mormon, but I was too opinionated, and of course there was that little matter of taking engineering classes and working in a factory. I was just as smart, if not smarter than those guys, and they knew it. My mom continually harped on me that I would never land a husband with all those cards stacked against me. There was one particular guy that spelled it out for me...I was not worthy enough to even date him. I hope where ever he is, that he's suffering for the self esteem blow he gave me.

Wasn't long until one of my nice Mormon room mates stole our rent money. She told me in the middle of church so I could not go ballistic on her. I went to see the bishop and told him under the circumstances that I was going home to my home ward and my parent's house. I could not live with this dishonest woman. The bishop took that lady's temple recommend. He didn't make me pay any on the deposit and groceries. He was actually a really nice guy.

So, back home I went. I was still trying to be Molly in my home ward. There were fewer young adults in the Fort Collins III, but we had a nice group and I became the young adult representative that went to the ward planning meetings. I took it onto myself to visit with all the inactive young adults, or at least I tried. They wouldn't give me the time of day, most of them, but I had a little success.

I believed that the Mormon church was true, and I thought I had a testimony. I wasn't much of an intellectual, and I never went to Gospel Doctrine class. When others had questions, and the men in authority said that all would be revealed in good time, I bought it. I was patient, and I didn't really care. I was doing my best to live the gospel. I did have my past insurrections to worry about, things that I thought were very damning (but now think they were very mild compared to some stuff I had seen out of Liza!). The guilt of those slip ups was very difficult to bear at times, but I got on my knees and prayed several times a day, did my institute reading and homework, despite the tons of homework I had in my engineering studies.

However, I did have a nagging unconscious doubt, that I wasn't really aware of, until one day. My friend Ron called and wanted to see me. It was odd for him to want to come have a moment alone with me. I liked him a lot, and we did things together as a group, but I had never visited with him alone. I even had a thought that maybe he was going to ask to date me, which, because he was major TBM, or so I thought, I would finally get my Mormon guy and be that much closer to marriage. So I agreed to go for a walk with him.

My friend Ron got right to the point. He asked me point blank, "Do you believe in the church? Do you really believe in all of this?" I was stunned and at a loss of what to say. I thought I did, but that unconscious doubt came billowing up, right at that moment, and I didn't know how to answer. Warning sirens went off in my head, be careful what you

say, because I still didn't know WHY he was asking me this? Had he heard something? Was he talking to my parents, and what would he say to them? Fear welled up. Like the grinch that stole Christmas, I thought up a lie, and I thought it up quick. I said I did believe. I know I wanted so much to believe, but I knew right then that I really didn't. But what could I tell him? I couldn't flip that quick to not believing. Besides...I'd been taught over and over the consequences of denying Christ, denying the prophet, denying the Holy Ghost would be DAMNING. I couldn't do it. I bore my testimony.

Ron knew I was lying. He got mad at me and asked me several times more if I really believed. I said I did. He got angrier and left. I had no idea the struggle he had going on in his head and his heart at that time. I wish to God that I could have been honest with him. Ron slipped into a very deep depression after that. I called him a time or two to see how he was, but I was so uncomfortable talking to him, that I didn't talk for long. We never spoke about the church again. He gained a lot of weight and would not leave his house. Not long after that, Ron stepped into his garage, started the car, and asphyxiated himself.

I was shocked. I actually fell on the floor when I heard he had killed himself. The pain of that day still wells up, and I have thought about him every day since. The worst pain for me came when I heard the story of his struggle. Because Ron's family was very public, the story of his struggle ran in the newspaper. (well, half of the story anyway, I will never know Ron's side of it)

Ron was gay. His family had long left the church, but he was the only one holding on. He fought against being gay, and would go talk to the bishop, and the bishop would tell him to read and study and pray until he wasn't gay anymore. Ron's head and his heart conflicted so badly that he could not deal with the pain any longer. I often wonder if I had told him the truth, that I didn't know the church was true, what would have happened. Would that answer had given him the OUT he needed to just reject Mormonism and live his life true to himself? I will never know. It's been hard to forgive myself for that lie. But it would be another 10-15 years before I could truthfully say that NO, I don't believe in the Mormon church, and would have the courage to say so out loud.

Being suicidal myself for a good share of my life, I saw how the church and the public reacted to Ron's death. It made me even more scared to do it. I wanted to so badly sometimes, but I didn't have the courage. I was almost jealous of Ron. He had gotten out.

Meanwhile, I went on with my little Mormon life. Because I had success with the inactives, the stake decided to call me as a stake missionary. I was approaching 21, so I think they were getting me into practice, so that I would have no trouble going on a real mission. I gladly accepted the calling. I went around with another single lady, calling on inactives, making appointments, and going to meetings together.

In my career, I worked in a predominately male profession, working mostly with men. You would think that by the 1980s, that women would have had more equal footing in the engineering world, but it certainly wasn't the case, not where I worked anyway. (Astonishingly, I worked at an engineering job in 2000 that was almost more backward than the place I worked in the 1980s, as far as being a woman in a man's world was concerned!). I had a heck of a time fitting in. I could work circles around the men, and I suppose that's why I had so much trouble with them. Mormon men would not date me because I was smarter than them. Mormon women found it hard to talk to me, because I wasn't barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen. I didn't fit in at work, and I didn't fit in at church.

I started subconsciously becoming a woman's libber. I didn't want to use the same restrooms as men, or want to fight in the same foxholes as men, but I had started to see that I deserved at least equal pay for doing the same job as the man next to me, even a better job than that guy. I really hated the notion that I was good for nothing but marriage and babies. I resented the hell out of my mom for always pushing marriage on me.

I think I had been a stake missionary for about a month, when they announced a missionary correlation meeting. There was going to be a speaker at the meeting who was very popular around the stake. He gave great talks and everyone liked to hear him speak. So it was pretty hyped up, and I was really looking forward to the meeting.

When the day came, I was eagerly sitting on the front row, ready to hear what this man of God was going to tell me, ready to take notes and put all of his wisdom to use in my stake mission. The brother got up to speak. His talk didn't start out like his usual talks that everyone enjoyed. It was a SALES talk. I remember people looking around at one another in surprise. This is not what we came to hear. This man went on and on about getting suckers in the door. It wasn't about the light and the happiness that we could bring into people's lives. It was about numbers, numbers, numbers, and getting warm bodies in the seats. It was about dunking people. He used those actual words! It was totally disrespectful of the people I wanted to reach. As the talk wore on, I got madder and madder. Who did this guy think he was, and what did he think coming in here to tell us this? Spreading the light and truth of the gospel was reduced to a numbers game. I was angry. I left the meeting, thinking really? Is this what I'm supposed to do? Is that all that matters to the church? I could not get my mind around it.

That was the last time I formally went to the Mormon church. I quit going from that day forward. I called the stake president and asked to be released. I gave no explanation. My parents questioned me, but I would not tell them. I just left.

This part will seem a little unimportant, but you will see with the telling of this paragraph, that I was no longer a Molly and had grown some self esteem and learned to set boundaries. Not long after I left the stake missionary program, a lady called me to ask if I could direct music for the Sunday School program. The kids were getting up in front of sacrament meeting and singing a few songs. I hesitated. I asked when the program

was. She said this Sunday. Hmm, I think she called me on the Friday before the program. She had to be out of town, at the last minute, and could I please direct the kids in their program? I said maybe, what songs were they singing? Songs out of the Sing With Me orange book? I had that one memorized since primary. No, she said, it was new music. I said, well, I'm going to have to have the music ahead of time, because I won't lead kids in songs, in front of the whole congregation, that I personally don't know. She said she would drop the music by my house if I would agree to help out. I said sure, I would do it if I had the music ahead of time. She never dropped off the music, and Sunday rolled around. I didn't bother to show up. She called to find out where I was. I was home of course. She asked why I wasn't in church. I said, well, I asked you to bring me the music, and you didn't, so I'm not doing the program. I specifically told you I would not do the program if I didn't have the music. She said, well, she couldn't make it over to my house on Saturday, but it would be no big deal if I just got up there and directed anyway. I said no. She got VERY ANGRY and hung up on me. Too bad so sad. If she had lived up to her word, I would have done the program. I was sick of being taken advantage by Mormons and their assumption that I would just bow my head and say yes.

So there! I originally left because I was offended. The sad thing is, that TBMs will shake their heads knowingly and say that that's the reason most people leave. Well so what? Why should a person stay around if they are going to be abused by people repeatedly? I didn't see any reason to stay. I was starting to see that there were things in the church that I didn't agree with, I didn't want any part of it.

However, I was still conflicted. I still thought I believed, but because of that incident with Ron, I wasn't sure any more. I could not put my finger on what the problem was, but I knew there was a problem. On the other side of the coin, I felt terrible guilt. Crushing guilt. I didn't know what to do about it. So I shoved it down and tried to go on with my life.

My parents of course kept shoving the church down my throat, kept guilt-tripping me. I felt worse and worse about my salvation. I was terribly conflicted.

I started dating a non member. We dated for a little while, and then I got pregnant, so we decided to get married. All of my mother's church friends were so happy to hear that I was getting married...until they found out he was a non-member and I was going to have a baby. My name was Mudd after that, and my parents made sure I heard about every nasty comment. But getting married to ANYONE was better than being unmarried. I thought maybe I would feel better once I was married, but I didn't.

The guilt continued. I never paid tithing. I had sex before marriage. I didn't get married in the temple. I didn't go on a mission. I never read the scriptures when I told everyone that I had. I had a career, but I was supposed to stay home with my kids. I was definitely a Jack Mormon. I still believed, I thought, but I could not follow the gospel.

To add to that guilt, I did not get along with my then-husband. He never physically hurt me, but he might as well have. He was abusive and manipulative, and he treated me like absolute crap. My self esteem was in the toilet.

When I had my first baby, I was sad because my then-husband didn't bring me flowers or anything. (My friend Lucy got flowers, and a diamond ring, and the baby got stuffed animals, and there were all kinds of gifts she brought home from the hospital.) He said, "Well you're just lucky I bothered to show up at all." Lucky for that kind of treatment? Ugh.

I had nothing but my baby. She was the only thing that kept me going. I was still suicidal, of course, but I could not leave my baby here among people who didn't care about her. I needed to stay.

I really felt guilty about not being married in the temple. I had been to the temple a couple times as a 12-13 year old to do baptisms for the dead, but I had not gotten my endowments. I felt like I was missing out. The temple had been advertised as the ultimate experience in Mormonism. I had heard that important truths were revealed there, that there were visits from ancestors, prophets of old, or even Jesus Christ himself. I felt guilty for not going.

My parents never relented. They poured on the guilt as fast and as thick as they could. They sent the missionaries to see my then-husband. I went along with it because I wanted to go the temple with him. He got very angry at me for that, and I suffered his controlling mental abuse for many weeks after that.

I got pregnant again shortly after my first daughter was born. This really pissed off my then-husband and his mother. Although my mother-in-law was what she claimed to be a devout catholic, she suggested that I have an abortion. She said I was dragging my then-husband down. He was basically in denial. He had not told his brother that I was pregnant until my 8th month. He refused to allow me to name the baby when she was born, as if not naming her would make her go away.

In the mean time, my sister Liza brought up charges against my dad. She claimed that my dad had sexual relations with her daughter and, earlier with herself. My dad was brought in and questioned. They hired a private investigator to question Ann and me. Now I knew that my dad was no angel, and in the back of my mind, I knew he deserved this come-up-ance. But I had not figured out all the issues that had occurred when I was little. Like my mom, I was in denial of a lot of it. I knew dad was bad, but at that point in my life, Liza was worse. She stole my stuff. She did time in jail for stealing my parents' stuff. She had perpetrated a fraud and emptied my parents' bank account. She was an alcoholic and a drug addict. She was a compulsive liar. So help me God, I took dad's side. I wish I had never done it, but at the time, that's the best I could do under the circumstances.

My dad went on a campaign to smear Liza. He had depositions sworn out about his character. He did everything he could to show that she was a drug addict and an alcoholic, and that she could not be trusted. He joined a group that defended people against trumped-up child abuse charges. They got him a lawyer. My mom called me one day to tell me the private investigator was going to call me. I remember distinctly what she said on the phone. She said, "We were wondering what you are going to say." At the time, I think my parents knew I had stuff on dad. They were wondering if I was going to put him away. Damn I wish I had, but I didn't. I told them I was going to tell them about Liza. Mom breathed a sigh of relief. When the investigators and detectives called, I defended dad.

In the end, we (Ann and my dad's mother and sisters) were not told the truth about the case. That would come out much later. We were told that the judge threw the case out of court when he read dad's depositions. Mom said that dad agreed to pay for psychiatric treatment for Liza and her daughter because they could not afford it. Me and Ann were placated with a load of bullshit.

I was a mom of two little kids, working full time, and going to school for my AAS degree. My then-husband refused to do any house work, or even watch the kids for any length of time so I could go to class. I had to get a babysitter so I could get my hair cut. He would have nothing to do with the kids, well, except be a controlling asshole to them.

He liked to control me through the kids. One year, I had bought Christmas presents and had them hidden in the garage. I think the kids were 2 and 3 at the time. They had committed some infraction that had made him unhappy. So he goes and gets MY Christmas presents out of the garage, says to these poor little kids that they didn't deserve their presents, and took the presents with the kids back to the store where he made them watch while he returned the gifts. Bastard. Behind his back I went and re-bought the presents (I think at another store, so I would not have to face that store clerk...OMG they must have thought my then-husband was such an ASS!) and they were wrapped under the tree on Christmas morning. When the kids unwrapped them, my then-husband gave me a look, but he never said anything. I know he was pissed because he took it out on me worse as the days went by.

I got laid off from my job. I really wanted to kill myself that day, and almost went through with it. I forced myself to sit in the middle of the living room floor until my then-husband got home. I knew if I could just sit there, that I wouldn't do it. I kept thinking about my kids. I could not leave them.

My then-husband punished me for losing my job. It was subtle. I know that if you asked him, it would be easy for him to deny it, and he would say that I read a lot of stuff into it that wasn't really the case. But he did punish me. He would not allow us to eat out "ever again" when he knew that I enjoyed eating out and liked a little respite from the work. What was funny was, I had a job within a week. I was working grave-yard shift for the first time in my life, but I was making more money than I had at my old job. But that wasn't good enough. My then-husband refused to let me put the kids in daycare. He

thought that I could take a 1-2 hour nap, and I should be getting up and working. This was just not possible for me. The kids, being 5 and 6, were left all day without supervision. And this was supposedly my fault.

I lived with my then-husband for 8 years. We tried marriage counseling. My then-husband put up with it for six sessions, then declared he was done, but I kept going. I was nearly to the end of my sessions with the shrink, as I called him, when he pulled out of me, for the first time ever, the things that my father did to me. My “someday” was that day. It was agonizing. I could not look the shrink in the eye. I closed my eyes tight as I told it. I was ASHAMED. I remember not feeling any better, feeling like this was only the beginning of a very long road.

I came even closer to suicide. I was clinically depressed and suffered anxiety attacks. I gritted my teeth so hard that I killed all the nerves in the teeth on my left side. I was sick all the time with various infections. I developed an inner ear problem that has plagued me ever since. I had walking pneumonia, and coughed for three months of my second pregnancy. I had strep 6 times in one year, and talked the doctor into taking my tonsils out. I let my then-husband talk me into getting my tubes tied so I would not have to face the possibility of getting pregnant again, and further causing him and his mother to be angry with me.

My sister Ann got married. (she was still inactive and was marrying a non-member). I was really excited for her wedding, but at the back of my mind, I KNEW that my then-husband was going to ruin it for me. I just knew it. And sure enough, like every other family celebration since I met him, he wrecked it. He was supposed to video tape the wedding, and they really needed him at the rehearsal, so he would know where they were going to be and what they wanted filmed. He claimed he had to work, but really he went to the bar with his work buddies and didn't show up for the rehearsal. They waited for him. It was one of the most embarrassing moments of my life. I knew right then, he was going to be a pain in the ass for the pictures, that he would be his usual unsociable self, that he would not dance, that he would just wreck the rest of the wedding. It was the beginning of the end.

I looked back on our 8 years, and I realized it was always me that had to apologize. It was always me that took the blame because according to him, there was nothing wrong with him, it was ALL ME that was the problem. I knew that if I stayed, for the rest of my life, I would be forced to do things his way, and if I balked, it would be me that took the blame. I hated him to his inner core.

A couple weeks later, I decided I couldn't take it any more. I had been fighting with my then-husband all day, and I said, “I don't have to take this.” And I went out the door and back to my parents. I was gone all summer. I came back for a couple weeks in August, but I had faced the music, and I knew it would never work. I filed for divorce, on the day after our 8th wedding anniversary.

My dad was totally against me getting a divorce, even though he knew, in detail how I was being treated. I remember thinking at the time, that the damn letter of the law was so important to him, that he would rather see me in pain than to have me be divorced. What an incorrigible son of a bitch. One more proof that he could care less about me and what was right for me.

Me and the girls lived with my parents from then until February of the next year, about six months.

Remember now that I was still in denial about what my dad had done to me and my sisters, and I had just defended him against Liza and her daughter. My parents tried to get me to go to church, but I refused. My parents even got me home teachers assigned. It was pretty funny because they came to visit me, and insisted that my daughter be baptized. She had just turned 8. I said no. If she was going to be baptized, I wanted her and me to have the missionary discussions together, and then I wanted one of them to baptize her, not my dad. They all sat there with their mouths open for a minute. One of them finally collected his wits and said, that was not the common practice, but they would see what they could do. Hahaha, I never heard from them again. I think they just expected me to bow my head and say yes.

I allowed my parents to take my kids to church, mainly because they had fun there, but I would not go myself. I was working nights, for one, and going to school again, for two, and I was really tired. Plus...I really didn't want to go, period.

One Sunday morning, I was just getting ready to go to bed off the night shift, and my kids were getting ready to go to church. I saw what my oldest was wearing. SHE HAD ON A BRA. SHE WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD! Oh my God, I LOST IT! I tore down the stairs and I confronted my father. I said if he ever laid a hand on her again I would kill him. He kept claiming it wasn't a bra, it was a "vest". I said WHAT IN HELL is she wearing a vest UNDER her clothes for? I said there is no way that he was going to put my kids through what I went through as a child. I would kill him. He knew I meant it, because for the first time ever, he cowered behind my mother.

The kids didn't go to church that day, or any other day after that. I moved out shortly thereafter, into my own apartment. My mom still watched the kids, and had promised that she would not have them near my dad. Like a stupid idiot, I believed her, and we went on for 6 months or so.

Along about that time, I reconnected with a guy I knew in high school. We started to date, and we got along very well from the start. It was amazing how he treated me. He didn't twist things around and try to control me. He supported me in the things I wanted to do. He loved the kids and they got along great with him. (for the most part. My oldest had trouble with the divorce, and we had issues for quite a while, but eventually they smoothed out). He listened to me, and most of all, he told me things.

This guy was a nevermo. But he was raised in a truly Christian household. His parents were absolute saints. They had a wonderful family. They never beat each other up! They never fought. They all got along really well. There was never any stupid drama. There didn't appear to be any skeletons in the closet, and I've still never found any. They were wonderful to me and my kids.

We got married 9 months after my divorce was final with my ex-husband. Poor guy didn't know what he was getting himself into, because if a person could have baggage, I had a whole cartload.

I was still not going to church. Because of my parents, I was being love-bombed by home teachers, visiting teachers, and missionaries. One of my favorite visiting teaching love bomb attempts goes as follows: It was like, the 30th of the month. My new visiting teacher, whom I had never met, calls to ask if she can come visit that day or the next. My house was a mess, I was working late every day, and I just could not fit it in. I told the lady she could come visit, but it would have to be the first of next week, because I didn't have time today or tomorrow. I could hardly contain a snicker because I knew the end of the month was close. The lady got all upset, and was I sure she couldn't come? I said, no, but I would love a visit next week. She hung up. I never saw her the next week, nor did I ever see her again. She had no interest in being a real friend. She was interested in making her VT numbers for that month. It didn't even matter to her that I would see her the next week, as she would be three weeks ahead the next month. Nope. As if I could not see straight through that!

I had another lady from the ward come visit in the middle of the day. I of course was at work, the kids at school. She left a note, which went something like this: "I rang your door bell over and over, and I tried to call, but you didn't come to the door. I could not figure out why you weren't at home!" Then there was blah blah blah about calling her and coming the church etc. I couldn't resist. I called her back. She again wondered where I could be in the middle of the day. I said, well of course I was at work! She freaked out! She apparently had never met a Mormon woman that worked. I will never forget the gasp and the long silence and the hurry to get off the phone.

One time the missionaries were sent to our house. We had come outside because we were on our way somewhere. My husband was there with me. The missionaries said that they wanted to come talk to me about the church. I said, now is not a good time, we are on our way someplace. They said, when would be a good time? (I had seen a joke go around the office, a batch of one-liners that you wished you could use on your boss, and one of those came to mind just then.) I said Never. Is never good for you? The missionaries looked dumbfounded, then got in their car and left. We laughed hysterically.

I was surprised my dad didn't go join an FLDS outfit because of the way he always talked. He was all bent out of shape about the New World Order, and was all hyped up about conspiracy theories and stuff like that. One of his favorites was that we didn't pay taxes to the US government, we paid them to the US treasury, and that it was illegal, blah

blah blah. Dad loved to talk about militia groups and storing away guns and ammunition and gold coins to trade with. He went crazy over the delay in opening the airport in Denver, DIA, because they were having problems with the baggage handling system. Dad was absolutely sure that the baggage problems were a front for the New World Order people, and that they were installing the computer system by which they were going to run the world, under DIA. I remember when dad said that, my husband and I looked at each other in disbelief, and then we busted up laughing. That was the most far fetched thing we had ever heard out of him.

(I actually had to start psycho-therapy up again because of my dad's militia fetish. The one year anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing was coming up. In all his militia talk, he had said a lot about how individuals were told to act out on their own when it came to acts of terrorism. As the authorities investigated the bombing in Oklahoma, information about these militia groups came to light. On TV they were talking to a militia expert, and he said WORD FOR WORD what my father had said about acting out individually. This upset me so much! I knew that my father was involved, and I knew the anniversary was coming up, and I knew that Oklahoma City was done on the anniversary of Waco Texas. I was sure that dad was involved in so terrible plot. I got pretty worked up about it. Lucky, nothing happened that year. It took a couple months for me to get talked down by the shrink. It was tough!)

Dad was totally racist. About the time I started to really question dad's priesthood, he started working for CSU as a farm manager. CSU had a brand new president, who was also an African American. At my job, I was asked to go hear this new president speak on diversity. I don't remember a whole lot about his speech, but I do remember him describing what he had to go through to get his education. I had been through much the same thing, being a woman in a man's profession. And I found I could really relate to this guy. Besides that, he had a couple of doctorate degrees and seemed like a very smart, likeable kind of person. I learned a lot and I was eager to share that with dad, because dad knew I was going to go see the guy speak, and wanted me to return and report. When I told my dad what the president said, he proceeded to berate the guy. The president was a N-word, and for that reason, we all had to start loving N-words, and we had to celebrate the N-word holiday (MLK Day) and I had to hear how stupid my dad thought this president was. The more dad talked, the sicker I got. What right did my dad have to berate this guy? Dad had one lousy associate's degree from a college nobody had ever heard from, and the African American CSU president had multiple doctorates. It really hit home what an ignorant bastard my father was, and my hatred of him grew some more.

The Relief Society sent out their monthly news letter to me faithfully every month. One time, I got their letter in the mail on a day I had been in the throes of my job, where I had to deal with men who were not used to women working in their field, and I was particularly mad about having to work with this set of unenlightened men. I got home and found that stupid relief society letter. I remember saying something to the effect that there was no way I was going to raise my kids to have to kowtow to men like the ones I had worked with all day. I took the letter and wrote on the back of it. I said, NO, I would

not be attending their meetings this week or ever. I would not accept visiting teachers or any other visitor. I was not going to participate in their foolish priesthood worshipping, and I was not going to raise my kids to think that their only worth was to keep house and pop out babies. My kids were going to be raised knowing that they had choices. I signed my name, stuck in an envelope, and mailed it back to the return address.

Just a few weeks later, I got a letter from the bishop. It said that they received my resignation, and if that's how I felt, they were sorry, but they wished me luck in all my pursuits. They said I had 30 days to rescind, but after that, my name was being removed from church records. WOW. I was floored. I thought, what now? Am I excommunicated? I wasn't sure. I felt a little strange, but I also felt good. I let the 30 days pass without any acknowledgement.

It's funny, but now I wish I had kept a copy of the letter I sent to that poor RS sister, and a copy of my 30 day letter. I had no idea really what a big step I had taken at the time. I laugh now because I sort of inadvertently resigned from the church.

In later years, I read all the time about people who try to resign from the church, and they are stalked and pestered by church members until they have to bring the law down on them. They are not allowed to resign and are forced to go through excommunication. None of that happened to me. I always wondered why. Now after writing this story, I wonder if Ron's suicide had something to do with it. I know he had tried to resign. Perhaps the bishops and stake leaders had talked about it, and decided that they would just let people go if they wanted to, so they could spare people the heartache that they put Ron through. I don't know, and I'll never know. I just know that I left pretty quietly, and never again had problems with love bombing or members overstepping my boundaries.

My parents moved way out of town then, and would start attending a Cheyenne ward. There was plenty of speculation about this move among the extended family. There were new sex offender laws in Colorado. Sex offenders had to report to the local authorities when they were moving into a new neighborhood. My parents were moving to one of those little towns that had boomed before the Dust Bowl era, but was no longer really a town. At the time of their move, there were only 6 residences in the town. We're pretty sure that dad wanted to move there to escape the sex offender laws. It didn't matter. My best friend knew somebody who lived there, and I was sure to tell all to them.

My mom was still watching my kids. She came to my house and took care of them during the day. She had invited Ann to come up and go shopping with her and my daughters. Ann knew that I had told mom not to let the kids be around my dad. I was at work, when Ann showed up at my house to go shopping with mom and the kids. To her surprise, my dad and my brother were sitting at MY kitchen table, and mom was serving them MY FOOD for lunch. Ann immediately got me on the phone and told me about it. I was SO angry. I ordered them all out of my house. That was Mormonism for you. Against my express wishes, my mom was allowing my dad near the kids because SHE knew better.

This prompted me to dig into more of my dad's sexual assault case brought by Liza all those years ago. I was going to group therapy at the time, and there were a lot of thoughts surfacing that I had kept down for so many years. I started reading up on sexual abuse and the anatomy behind it.

I went looking for my dad's court records. I had a lawyer handy that had helped with my divorce. I told him I wanted to hire him again, and what I needed. I wanted to see the court records for my dad's case, but they had been sealed because my niece was a minor and they wanted to protect her identity. My lawyer laughed and said I didn't need him for that. He gave me instructions on how to get the records. I would not be able to see the whole file, but I could have the sentencing. I went to the court house and got the records.

The judge had NOT thrown the case out when he saw Liza's record. My dad had been put on probation for a year and made to pay restitution. He had not volunteered to pay for Liza's psychiatric care, he had been ordered to pay it by the court. I also had researched dad's CBI file, which detailed his police record, aggravated assault and aggravated incest. They had proved somehow that my dad did what Liza accused him of. Unfortunately he had received a slap on the wrist, probably because me and Ann backed him up. His year of probation was up a long time ago, and he was going after my kids. I was angry.

I dug a little deeper. I found out that he had been put on probation at CSU where he worked as a farm manager, because he had "made a joke" at one of the female students. I found out that there had been a rash of Peeping Tom incidents and stolen bathing suits from the health club where he had worked as a temp. I found out he lost his job at a grain research facility in Berthoud, because he would not leave the boss's wife alone. Remember the group that he joined back then, that got him the lawyer that defended people against trumped-up child abuse charges? They dropped him shortly after the court proceedings. They found out his charges were NOT trumped up, and they didn't want the likes of him as a member of their group.

Along this time, I had stopped all contact with my father. I never spoke to him again. I got in contact with one of my aunts, my dad's sister. She was a lawyer, and dad had contacted her about the situation with my kids. He was upset that I had withdrawn contact. He wanted to know from my aunt if there was any legal action he could take against me to allow him contact with his grand daughters. The nerve of that asshole! I said no contact, so he was going to go around me through the legal system to screw up my daughters' lives. Lucky there was no legal recourse. My dad tried his usual defense, discounting Liza, and saying that I had started listening to Liza, even though it was proven that she was a druggie and could not be trusted. He said that I had gotten the court records illegally, because the records were sealed. (I am betting that he was banking on the fact that he had been told the records were sealed, that this was how no one would ever find out, not us kids, not the church, not anyone. What he had not guessed was that only my niece's part of the record was sealed, not his part. He kept insisting that the

records were sealed, which was a big clue.) My aunt finally said to my dad, “Why don’t you talk to Rhonda and find out what she thinks? If she’s listening to Liza, you will know. Was there something that happened between you and Rhonda?” My aunt offered to talk to me for him, but dad panicked and said, no, that would not be necessary. He knew that if my aunt said anything to me, that I would sing like a canary.

My aunt smelled a rat. So she called a friend in the government in Fort Collins, and went about the same route that I did to get the court records. Then my aunt called me. She told me the things that dad had done as a teenager, that he had done similar things with underwear with his sisters. His sisters told their parents, and their parents put a stop to it. Or so they thought. I was wrong that the rheumatoid arthritis flare up had changed him. He had a problem from way back.

Armed with that information, I felt it was time to confront my mother. I wanted answers and I wanted them now! I called her. I told her what I knew. I started asking questions about the court case, and asked her why we were told the case was thrown out of court. I rapidly fired a bunch of questions at her, told her I was tired of being lied to, and said that I wanted the truth. She said, ok, she would tell me the truth. She would come over in the morning when I got off of work, and she would tell me everything.

I could not believe my ears. She was going to tell me EVERYTHING? It was too good to be true. I could not sleep, thinking about it. When I got off of work the next morning, my mom showed up before the kids left for school. I took her down in the basement to my office because I didn’t want the kids to hear. We sat down in some chairs, and my mom started talking. She said, you want the truth, well I’m going to tell you the truth right now. I know that the church is true, and I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet in these latter days....OH MY GOD, she started bearing her testimony! I could NOT believe my ears. After all my parents had put me through, and THAT’S what she was saying to me? I didn’t let her finish. I stood up and started yelling at her. I told her I was being excommunicated (at the time I didn’t know what to call it...in reality I had just resigned and had my name removed). I told her again everything that I knew, about dad’s jobs and the court case. I also really let her have it about the advocacy group for trumped-up child abuse charges. I asked why they had let dad go. I asked why they were not trying to clear dad’s name after all of that. I said that if it was me, and they were false charges, as my parents kept insisting, I would not rest until my name was cleared. Why weren’t they trying to clear his name?

Then I hit her with the big bomb. I told her what had happened that day, when my dad said he wanted me to lay down with him. I told her just exactly when that was, and that I knew what dad was trying to do. I asked her to explain THAT to me. This shut her up. I will never forget the look on her face. Her eyes went back in her head so that her eyelids looked like her eyes had been gouged out. And her eyes were BLACK. I have heard that people under extreme duress often experience a dilation of their pupils. Well I saw it that day. I have seen faces like that in horror movies. She looked surprised, as though I had just hit her with a 2x4. It was totally bizarre. I don’t remember what happened after that.

Somehow she got out of my house. And I never spoke to her again. That was 20 or so years ago.

I wasn't done. I figured out who my bishop was supposed to be. Not going to church, I didn't know, but I found a co-worker who I knew was Mormon and lived in my neighborhood, so I asked him the name and number. I made an appointment with that bishop, and told him I wanted to tell him about my dad. I went to see him on a Sunday. I purposely went in my worst holey blue jeans, so he knew I wasn't there to start going to church again.

When I first started talking to this bishop about my dad, he stopped me. He wanted me to know that anything I said, he had to report to the authorities. I said go ahead and feel free. I think he was hoping that I would not want to get my dad in trouble, and so I would quit talking. But I was there for the sole purpose of getting my dad in trouble, and there was no stopping me now. I told him everything there was to know about my dad. Dad was a high priest and in the bishopric, and he liked little girls. I had copies of his arrest records and court records. I described what had happened to me and my sisters.

I said that I was worried that since I removed the possibility of him abusing my daughters, that he would probably look elsewhere for little girls to torture. I said that I felt obligated to tell what I knew, so that parents in the church could take action. None of that was really true. I didn't care what happened. I knew my dad's MO was to go after family members, and that he was too chicken to go outside the family. His outside reputation was too important to him. I was there to destroy that reputation. I was there for revenge.

(When I read this now, I'm thinking, WOW, I was pretty angry to have wanted revenge so badly. But looking back, yes, I was THAT angry! But after years of therapy, that anger has subsided. Now I look back and think, man I was a bad ass! Where did I get the courage? I'm pretty amazed I did all that now.)

The bishop asked if there was anyone that could corroborate the story I just told him. I gave him Ann's number. She knew I was going in that day, and had told me, that if she could help, to let her know. She spoke to the bishop and added plenty of damning evidence. The bishop told me and Ann that he would take this evidence to the stake president, and that they would let me know what happens with it.

The church never contacted me about what they did. I called the bishop a couple times and got the brush-off. I decided a while after that, that I had done what I came to do, that the ball was in the church's court, and that I really didn't care what happened after that. If any little girls got molested, it was on the church, not me.

It turns out that dad never told the church about the court case. That was another hole in his insistence that he had done nothing wrong. If he hadn't done anything wrong, why didn't he tell the bishop? It was an admission of guilt, if you ask me. The church was stuck with a PR nightmare, and they didn't know what I was going to do with the

information if I didn't see results from what I told them. They could not blow me off because I had proof in the form of dad's arrest and court records. I should have gone to the press with it, but eh, I was done with the whole thing by then. We found out years later that my parents were out of the church. They had told a distant relative that they were not Mormons anymore, and I and my sister heard it through the family grape vine. I imagine they excommunicated him and mom both. That little piece of news made me happy; I had gotten my revenge.

I got more revenge a little later. One day I went to have my hair permed, and working in the salon, was an old Mormon friend of mine. She was one of the girls I always begged rides off of. Well, I had really long hair, and I wanted a spiral perm. I had HOURS to spend with the direct attention of this old friend, who was connected to one of the more important families of the ward. I told her everything. I made sure she knew to tell her parents. She told me too that her family had always wondered what was going on with my parents. It was her house that I went to when my little brother beat me up years before. I knew this girl. I knew she would tell EVERYONE my story. I made sure she knew every detail. I don't know if she ever did tell, but always hoped she did. I felt very satisfied that now, dad's dirty little secret was out, and there was no hiding from it.

The most precious thing to my parents was their reputation. I of course will never know exactly how it went down, but I know that their reputation took a big hit that day. I feel proud of myself because I went through with it, even though I spent most of my time scared out of my wits.

You see, my dad always talked tough. He had guns and he wasn't afraid to use them, or so he said. He had beaten the living daylights out of me on a regular basis when I was a kid. I was really afraid he was going to go down the school while I was at work and steal the girls. I know my husband was horribly upset with me for telling the bishop. I know he didn't want me to, because I think he, too, was afraid of what dad would do.

But, as it turns out, dad was all talk and no action. He never did anything. I remember seeing glimpses of weakness in him, always a lot of hiding behind my mom when I yelled at him. I think he was really aggressive when someone showed weakness toward him, but if he saw any sign of strength, he cowered. I think he knew I had stuff on him, and with his previous record, if the police were called, he would go to jail for a very long time.

My dad died in 2009. I found out through the family grape vine that he had passed away after a long bout with skin cancer. I hope the bastard suffered every day of the rest of his life.

I was not invited to the funeral. They announced his death and funeral in the Cheyenne paper, but had a private burial. Mom knew that I knew the truth, and she didn't want me there. She wanted her imaginary world not to be broken by anything close to the truth about the bastard she was burying. They did not announce dad's death in the Fort Collins paper. They had lived there for 25 years, and for all I knew, still had plenty of friends

there, but they did not announce it there. This is another clue that leads me to believe that they didn't want me there. The announcement in the Cheyenne paper said that the service was at the Mormon church. Great. So dad had reconciled with his church, but not his family. Typical.

I don't believe there is a Hell, but at times I really wish there is. I hope there is a hell for my father. He cared only for himself, and his little fetish. He did not care that he ruined Liza and threw her to the dogs when his precious reputation came up under scrutiny. He excused himself in his little mind that he was doing nothing wrong. He didn't care how much he hurt us kids. He did everything he could to ruin our lives. He made sure none of us had any self-esteem. He beat us. As long as we kept us cowering, he could continue to feed his little urges.

I really hope there is a hell for my mom, too. Not to excuse my dad, but his brain was wired wrong for some reason. Mom, on the other hand, made a choice. She chose to save her own skin rather instead of protecting her children. She was hateful and deceitful. She could have done something to help us, but she didn't. She was more concerned with her own self.

I would say that I really hated my parents. Hate is a very strong word, but it seems like the only one that fits. But it's the kind of hate that causes an equal and opposite reaction toward the good. Because I hate them, I became a better person for it.

My aunt on my mom's side was a born-again Christian. She was always trying to tell me that although I seem happy, I'm really not because I don't have Christ in my life. I really resent that. She has no idea how happy I am, and has no call to say that I'm not happy. She was always harping on me to forgive my parents. That's never going to happen. I was taught in church that to forgive a person, they must come to you, confess their sin against you, and try to never do it again. My parents never asked for forgiveness, so therefore I will never give it. I also think my aunt was expecting ME to apologize to THEM for MY part in it. First of all, I didn't do anything wrong, and second of all....NO. There was no apologizing from me.

As far as the rest of the family is concerned, I don't have much contact with them. My mom passed away in May of 2016. I never spoke to my mother again after the day I told her off. I have not spoken to Edwin or Liza in years, and have no desire to.

I speak to Dan every so often. I'm not sure he remembers that he beat me up. I didn't like to tell him much, because he was still close with mom. Although just after dad's funeral, Dan told me that mom never called him, saying that she didn't have the number. Dan was at the house and found the number in her address book. I guess he told her that the phone works both ways. After her death, Dan and I had a heart-to-heart talk and we are a lot closer now.

Ann has been a different story. She and I started getting close when I became an adult. We were very close for a lot of years. It's been difficult at times between us, because we

always seem to be at different stages of our recoveries. There have been times when I've really pissed her off. We will go a couple months, or even a couple years without speaking to one another. But she has been my closest ally through all of this, and I value my relationship with her. She is the ONLY one that knows what it's like to be in that family, at that time, in that church. I am grateful to her that she has stuck it out with me. We've had one hell of a time!

Ann and Dan and I are the only ones that came out of this with some semblance of a normal life. Ann might have been too old by the time my dad had the courage to proposition any of us. I got away before the "real" damage could be done, and I think Dan, being the youngest, and a boy, had no idea what was going on. I remember he and dad didn't get along, but I don't remember why.

Liza is still, as far as I know, an alcoholic and a drug addict and a compulsive liar. She has had several husbands, and has bounced around from job to job. I don't think she has any college education. She took advantage of my aunts and grandmother on dad's side for a while. I don't really want anything to do with her. Her daughter, the niece that my father abused, has tried for years to have a relationship with me, but I don't want it. She was always very controlled by Liza, and I have no desire for Liza to know anything about my life. I guess that's the collateral damage of the whole situation

Edwin recently got married, I think in the temple. I think that's his 4th wife. He has at least 5 kids with 3 different women, that we know of, and at one point refused to get a job because of all the child support he had to pay. He stayed with mom after dad's death, and we believe he abused her. We believe that Edwin coerced my mother to sign a living trust and will that granted everything to him in the event of her death. When she died, we found out about this. It was very difficult for me, because, even though I knew she didn't love me, there was always hope that someday she would change her tune. When I read that she had written me out of her will, it was like the final gate slamming shut, that I knew for a fact that she didn't love me and that it would never ever change. It has taken a while to get over that.

My grandmother, mom's mother, decided to side with my dad when I first started questioning the court case. She told me exactly that on the phone. I never spoke to her again either. She passed away a couple years ago.

My grandmother on my dad's side passed away a few years ago. I know that my dad and she had started speaking to one another again just before he died. I know also that dad had apologized to one of my aunts, but she said, "I'm not the one you need to apologize to."

I was already well out of the church by the time I found RfM (Recovery from Mormonism). This is a website dedicated to helping people who have left the Mormon church to become mainstream and to find their way in a world without Mormonism.

I happened on the site while I was in the throes of exposing my parents' misdeeds to the church. Even though I had asked to have my name removed, inadvertently, I still believed in the premise of the church, though I had a big problem with how women are treated. I still carried a lot of guilt for not believing. I still worried about being married in the temple and a lot of other things. I was still basically a Jack Mormon, though I didn't know it at the time.

If you remember, I had told the bishop about my dad, and I had not heard from the bishop for several weeks, and was starting to get frustrated. I wondered if the bishop was just sitting on the news I had told him, or if he was actually doing something. I wanted to take my information about my parents to someone higher up in the church. I had just started learning to use the internet at work, and was into finding all kinds of information about lots of different subjects. Surely, on the internet, there was some website belonging to the church where I could get a hold of a General Authority, and I could give him my information. I did a search, I think, on the word "Mormon" and up came the RfM site.

I could not believe my eyes! Here were hundreds of people, just like me, that had difficulty with the church, but felt all alone in their convictions. These were people that had questions, and had either felt too guilty to say anything, or had actually said something and been slapped down by the church authorities. These people had studied and found out that the Mormon church was NOT TRUE.

Something came over me then. First of all, I could not read enough! I read every word on the RfM. I read at work when I could get away with it. I read far into the night, and would read when I got up in the morning before work. I quit eating and sleeping. I read books. I read other websites. The story started to cave in. It was all made up! It was like the onion layers falling away. Every so-called truth gave way. Every question that I had was answered. It became incredibly clear. The weight of all that guilt I had carried around for 30-some years fell off my shoulders. I had an ah-hah moment! None of it was true!

I was particularly relieved that I had never gone to the temple, to be married or otherwise. When I found out it was all a bunch of secret handshakes and code names, I was so relieved! Thank goodness I didn't waste my time. I was so terribly disappointed then. The temple was supposed to be this wonderful place where I would have learned essential and sacred truths. And this is all it was? What a bunch of crap!

I had a rush of all kinds of emotions. First of all, I was giddy! I was so happy that it was all false. I was so happy that I didn't have to worry anymore about my salvation. I didn't have to feel guilty anymore for not paying tithing or going to the temple. It was an incredibly free feeling.

Then I got angry. I had suffered all my life with my stupid parents for what? A stupid money making scheme? No wonder my parents learned to lie. It was part and parcel of the example that the church sets. No wonder my dad was crazy about polygamy. He

knew that in the end, the church would be ok with what he did to us girls. He knew that he was a priesthood holder, and in the end he would be exonerated. He knew in the end that he would be able to claim his daughters as wives in the celestial kingdom. It was no wonder that he insisted that he wasn't doing anything wrong.

Then I felt a little lost. If none of it was true, then what was true? I dug into other religions, especially Christianity. If the book of Mormon was a passel of lies, then why would the Bible be true either? I took a couple of religion classes in college. I learned a lot about the Bible, that most of it was written 30-40 years after it allegedly happened, and that it was pieced together later in Rome, and that much of it was left out. Once the book of Mormon caved on me, the Bible caved in soon after.

It has taken a lot of years, but I am finally at peace with my religion. I would say that I really don't have any religion. The main point of my belief is, that no one truly knows what happens to you when you die. Nobody has survived it and come back to report! If no one knows what happens, and there's nothing anyone, including me, can do about it, then why should I worry? I'll know when it happens.

In the mean time, I guess I have taken away the Christian values, even though I am not a Christian. I try to be honest. I try not to hurt anyone. I don't commit adultery. I don't steal. But you won't catch me honoring my father and mother!

Christians have tried to scare me with the whole Judgment Day thing. First of all, I don't really believe there will be a Judgment Day. I think that if anyone tries to judge me, judge my actions after the life that I was handed, then they're going to get an ear full from me. I don't think anyone has the right to judge me after what I went through. I am truly proud of what I did. Although I'm not sure whether my kids are scarred in any way, I'm hoping that I wasn't too late in getting them out of the abusive situations that they were in with my dad and my ex-husband. I stopped the abuse from continuing into their generation, at least in my limb of the family tree. I did it, but my mother didn't have the guts or the strength or the personal fortitude to do it for me. I stood up to the so-called priesthood, even when I believed in the church. Looking back, and reading other people's stories, I know that took more guts than a lot of people have.

As far as the abuse goes, I don't think I will ever be completely over it. I am getting better every day, as I put years between me and my parents. It took seven rounds of psychiatric treatment, and I was in the thick of dealing with it for maybe 10 years. There are residual issues, that I'm sure I will deal with for the rest of my life, but I have learned most of what they are, and either deal with them, or avoid situations where I know they will come up.

Despite the negative ring of this story, I have made a good life for myself. I am married to the best guy in the world. We have been married 22 years this year, and we get to be better friends more and more. My husband has been very supportive of everything I do, and I could not ask for a better friend and soul mate. My kids are the greatest! They are my best friends and greatest supporters. I live for my husband and kids, and I would not

be here but for my duty to them. I made a pretty remarkable career out of nothing, got two college degrees, have had a lot fun jobs and a lot of hard jobs, but have always made a pretty comfortable living. I have a roof over my head and food on the table, good friends, and a lot of fun. I love to cook and camp and watch movies, and I especially love to read and study, and to write.

I know I started out a pretty harshly abusive parent. But as I peeled away at the onion layers of abuse and neglect in my own childhood, I mellowed out and realized what I was doing. I wanted a better life for my kids. I never wanted them to go through what I went through. I wanted them to feel loved and needed and important. I can only hope that my kids understand that, and if I left any scars, it was because I was in pain myself, and I hope that they can forgive me for the early years.

Because my mom and dad were such terrible parents, I feel I became an exceptional parent after that. I did everything opposite that my mom did. My kids were never allowed to hit each other, nor take each other's things. I tried very hard to be fair and to treat them the same, even though they are 180 degrees out from each other. I never called them degrading names. I always tried to support them in what they wanted to do, even though I didn't always agree with them. The word "ungrateful" was never uttered in my house! I always had good food for lunches, and if we were out of groceries, I made sure they had money to buy lunch. And I never ever have said anything about their weight or whether they were fat or not. NEVER. I went to as many concerts and track meets and Odyssey of the Mind tournaments and parent-teacher conferences as I could. I made sure they had a ride and money to pay for gas, and made sure they had their own car when it came time. I gladly hauled their friends around when they needed rides, in fact went out of my way to make sure everyone got to where they needed to go. I continue to try to give willingly and never ask for a cent back. My kids never went without the things they needed...I made sure of that. I tried very hard to listen to them and never to discount their feelings on any issue. I tried to let them know that their feelings mattered. And I am always, ALWAYS proud of them, no matter what happens.

And I think that my parenting has paid off in so many ways! My kids are the greatest. Although they had everything they needed, they were never spoiled. They learned work ethic, perseverance, and pride in a job well done. They did chores...and they did them well! They learned that if you're not five minutes early, you're late! They learned to treat others as they would want to be treated, and they learned core values and how to work together with all kinds of people. Whenever we went camping or snowmobiling, they jumped in and helped without being asked. We worked together and played together, and we had a great time. Their biggest worry, I think, is disappointing their parents. But I am never ever disappointed. They always try their hardest and do their best. I am the proudest parent ever.

I am still over weight, but am slowly learning to accept the body that I was given. (Recently I have decided that "accept" is not the right word. I think a better word is "embrace". I am who I am. This is what I look like. There is far too much inside my heart and my head to worry about my outer shell.) I have a funny story about that, one

my poor family has had to listen to a lot. I was a tee-shirt and jeans kind of girl, never wore makeup, and only blow dried my hair so I wouldn't freeze to death in the cold climate I live in. I was waiting to lose my weight before I felt like I could dress myself and wear makeup like I had seen some women wear. This was until I started watching What Not To Wear. I learned that a person needs to feel beautiful, regardless of the body they were handed. I saw how I could dress my overweight body to look attractive without losing a pound. I went shopping with my daughter and got some really cute clothes that fit all the rules, and I started wearing makeup and doing my hair. When I first saw myself in the mirror, I thought, "Hey! I look like a million bucks!" And a funny thing happened. As the day went on, I kept the million buck feeling all day. It gave me self esteem and confidence. I started getting compliments on how I looked. I used to feel self-conscious when I went out in public. I always felt like people were judging me on how I looked and how fat I was. It has only been recently, after developing my new look over the last several years, that I have gone to public gatherings and have not thought once about how I look and what people thought of me. I am still amazed at how good I feel, even though I have not lost the weight. I feel for the first time that it doesn't define me, that I am who I am, and that person is loved and cared for, even though I'm fat. It's an amazing feeling.

Not only that, but after my years of therapy, my doctor and I decided that I was to go on antidepressants, to up the dose, and to never go off them again. This really has helped me, even though I understand the bad connotations that go along with being on such medication.

So I win. My parents lose. Every day that I live and enjoy my life, every time my kids do something I'm proud of, every time my husband says "I love you", I win. Every time I hear about God and Christ and church, I can decide what I think, even if it's something different every day, and nobody will judge me for it. I win. Every time I look in the mirror and think, "I look like a million bucks!", I win. For every time I speak up for myself when I'm treated unfairly, I win. For every cup of coffee and every beer I enjoy, I win. Every Sunday that I sleep in, I win. My parents lose. They tried to break me, and they could not do it. I win.

I know it is difficult sometimes for non-Mormons to understand the whole issue with leaving the Mormon church, and what it does to the person who rejects it. The closest description of Mormonism is, that it's a cult. In a cult, you are programmed to think and act in certain ways. From the time you are small until you become an adult, you are basically brainwashed. You are taught not to question, because questions are evil. You are taught that when the authorities speak, you must obey without thinking, because the thinking has been done. You are taught that there are terrible consequences if you stray from the path. As you grow up in the church, you invest more and more of your time, talents, and beliefs. The church makes it very difficult to even think about a different way of life. By the time you are an adult and would start to think for yourself, you already have invested a couple years at BYU, plus the 2-year mission, plus the temple marriage and a couple kids, and you are paying the church 10% of your earnings. You

are so heavily invested, that you feel there is no way you can extricate yourself. You are basically trapped.

Even though I physically left the church before the mission and temple marriage, I was still affected by those aspects, because I felt so guilty for NOT doing those things. I was mentally in the church until I studied my way out, well into my 30s. I was just as trapped as the person who was following the gospel.

Imagine losing every bit of your culture: your daily routine, the way you spend holidays, the way you make decisions about your money and your time, your family and friends, your position in your community, and most importantly your thoughts, ideas, fears, successes, failures, beliefs, and every aspect of your personality. It's like waking up with amnesia. You have no point of reference any more. You have never learned how to have a real relationship with a person, because you have always been assigned relationships. You have a hard time conversing with people because the church was always on the tip of your tongue, and the subject of every conversation. You get out in the real world, and you find you don't know ANYTHING, where you used to know EVERYTHING. You have to come up with your own answers, because they are no longer provided for you. You are totally messed up on sex, alcohol, and even coffee. (it was years before I could go into a liquor store and not feel like I was going to get caught by the Mormon police). The freedom is great, but what do you do with it? So many things were off limits before, so many things were taboo. You want to try new things but you don't want to go out of control. And you are still thinking there's terrible consequences...that's the hardest part to get over, in my opinion.

Non-Mormons would think this is silly, but when I became enlightened to the falseness of the church, I had to do some pretty weird things. I went down to the end of the driveway, and I shouted that I denied the Holy Ghost. I had to physically do that so I would know that there was no lightning strike! Seems easy enough now to do, but I was pretty scared at the time! I had to deny Jesus Christ in the same fashion. I shouted BULLSHIT to God. I think that's when I finally shed the notion that nothing would happen to me if I actually mentally quit the church.

I know in the past that my husband hasn't always seen the attachment I have with the RfM. He has said a couple times that I should just leave it alone. I think as the years have gone by that he is finally beginning to understand that there is no way to leave Mormonism alone. It's a little like an amputated appendage. You have to learn to live without it, and for a long time, it's very awkward, and sometimes it still itches.

The RfM helped me in so many ways. I found out I was not alone. I found out that there were people suffering far worse than I was. I learned about all of the inconsistencies of the church, and where to read more about them. I learned that I had a voice. I learned that although I have rejected Mormonism, it is part of my persona, and that it will always be with me, whether I like it or not.

When I first went to the RfM, I could not get enough of every written word. I poured over the facts again and again. I was on it morning, noon, and night. But there did come a time when I finally felt that I had read enough. The stuff was starting to repeat itself, and I was sick and tired of the constant bombardment of all things Mormon. So like many contributors, I stopped reading for a while.

But I went back after I had come to terms with the whole rejection of Mormonism, but there was still a hole I needed filled. I was not close to my family, except for Ann, the only person in the world with whom I could talk about my life, and she wasn't ready to totally reject Mormonism the way I had. I needed to go back to the RfM, just to have people to talk to, who understood that part of my life.

I hope that I have been able to help others who are going through the same things I went through. I don't post very often, but I hope what I have said, has helped some poor stranger that feels like a freak for being a Mormon, and is feeling like even more of a freak for leaving it.

It's funny but I always tell people that I "belong" to the RfM. It's not really like a club that you join. Mostly you log on and read stuff and post if you have something to say. But I really do feel like I belong. I feel like I know the people. I have told people that I'm in group therapy, because that's how I feel about the people of RfM.

I have been a lurker and sometimes poster for over 20 years now. I skip over the doctrinal stuff most of the time, because for me, it can't get any "falsier". I go now for the humor mostly, and for the camaraderie. I love to laugh at the whole Mormon genre, about boring sacrament meetings, hymns we hate, temple garments, funeral potatoes, and all the other crazy things we did because we thought God wanted us to do it that way. There is not another person in my real life (though I know my husband tries) that can understand the pain behind the humor. So I go to the RfM, where there are a whole bunch of people who get the humor...and understand the pain.

The title of this story is, "Someday I'll Tell". Well, now I have told.

To those who are at the beginning of this journey, rest assured, that it gets better. For those of you struggling to still believe and are suffering with cognitive dissidence, think about it for once in your life. THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH THINKING. To those of you who have made it out and are making lives for yourselves, congratulations! You all know what a mess Mormonism made of us all, and you were able to overcome all the lies and ill treatment, and have come out the other side stronger, better, and wiser. I wish you all good luck and best wishes!