

The Diary of Amber Heckerman

Oct. 1978

...mommy's belly is really big now. I can't wait to be a big sister! I'm going to help do everything!...

Nov. 1978

...I'm 9 now! My 3rd grade teacher, Mrs. Huggins, says we will celebrate my birthday after lunch tomorrow!

Dec. 1978

...mommy is in the hospital having the baby. I get to stay with my best friend Angela until she comes home!

Dec. 1978

...I came home from Angela's, but mommy isn't home yet. At bed time I just stared at the stars through my window, then daddy came in to hug me goodnight. It was weird, daddy forgot to put his clothes on. I didn't say anything, because I didn't want to hurt his feelings...

Jan. 1979

...I hate my baby sister. Ever since she was born daddy does yukky stuff to me, and he makes me do yukky stuff to him. I wish she had never been born...

Sept. 1979

...I told my friends at school what daddy & I do, and now I don't have anyone to play with. They think I'm a freak...

Feb. 1980

...The girls at school held me down and brushed my hair. They said I used to be pretty and if I would just brush my hair I would look pretty again. I don't want to be pretty. I just want everybody to leave me alone...

June 1980

...that's it! I couldn't take it anymore. He cornered me in the shed today. I told him mom could come out any minute, but it didn't help. I did it. I told mom today. First I thought she was going to puke, then I thought she was going to pass out. She just turned white and didn't say anything for a long time. She sent me to my room...

Sept. 1980

...started a new school in a new town. I'm so nervous and scared. I have to help out with Autumn a lot, since mom is working two jobs to take care of us now. I feel so bad, mom is so stressed. She doesn't know it, but I can hear her crying. If I wouldn't have told on dad, none of this would be happening...

Mar. 1981

...Mom told me the divorce lawyer won't ask for sole custody, unless I tell him myself. I don't understand why they just won't believe my mom. I just can't take the chance to make daddy mad again...

June 1982

...another weekend with dad. I hate going with him. I'm so tired. It takes so long to get well after being with him. By the time I get back to *normal*, it's his weekend again. I have to go to protect Autumn. Maybe as long as I'm there he won't touch her...

I never kept a diary, but if I did, these would have been examples of my entries. My father committed incest with me from the ages of 9-16. To this day I don't truly know if he every touched my sister.

I did eventually disclose to a lawyer in Sumner County about my dad, only because I had taken a job at 15 and offered to work as many hours as they would give me on the weekends to avoid being with my dad. I had awful feelings of guilt, because to temporarily save myself I was sacrificing my baby sister. The lawyer laughed at me, accusing my mother and I of conspiring this absurd story against my father just to jab his pocket book. My mom even told him to drop all child support if it would keep dad away from us. It was a no go. My dad's family was a pillar of the community at one time and their *good* name preceded him.

I left that lawyer swearing up and down to my mother I would never put myself in that position again. How humiliating! I felt so degraded! Approximately 5 years later I found myself in another lawyer's office attempting to tell my story again. The reason this time was because my mother said Autumn had some signs as I did of sexual abuse. She even had two detectives and a psychologist come to interview Autumn. Autumn never disclosed, but rather denied anything had every happened. The lawyer spoke to me, asking me questions just as the defense lawyer or judge would in a courtroom. She refused to take our case. First of all, the statute of limitations was up already and, secondly, I was a basket case. She said I was

reverting to a nine-year-old's state of mind and was unable to communicate as an adult when it came to talking about the abuse.

Guilt has followed me all my life. It's a demon. I can't fathom all the young girls my dad has molested through the years. I can't blame all my poor choices I've made in my life on my dad, although I do believe he was a major negative influence. Because of the incestual relationship he forced me into for so many years, I was confused about proper loving relationships. I became promiscuous. I numbed myself with drugs and alcohol for years. I have been so full of rage. I have always been scared to spank my children, afraid the rage would come out at the most inappropriate time. I never sought professional help because I could never afford it.

At the age of 25, my husband and I had our first child. I lost so much sleep that first year. Aside from the regular duties of a new mom, I found myself staying up all night guarding my daughter. I was afraid to trust my husband. Would he get up in the middle of the night like my dad did? I finally met a wonderful Christian lady who led me to a support group for incest survivors and provided me with a workbook written by Dr. Larry Crabb. That was finally the beginning of some healing.

Much time has gone by from the time the incest started to the time it ended to the time I found resources to help with the healing process. I am blessed to be as balanced as I am. I have met other women who suffer far more physically and mentally than I do. There is not a single day that passes that I do not relive in my mind the things my dad did to me. It's just impossible with all that is in the news (real) and television (fiction). I have mostly good days. I also have really low days. The simplest scent or phrase can trigger very scary and negative emotions. On those days I am literally sick with headache, stomach ache, and depression. I pray through it and Jesus leads me out.

Dad trained me not to cry. I do cry...alone, in the car or in the shower. My husband is a *tough guy*, as far as crying goes. How sad to me, that my children have seen their dad cry more times than they have "caught" me crying. They must think I'm very cold and hard hearted. I believe I am a good mother. I don't believe I am as loving a wife as I could be—that relationship is harder for me.

My survival level is due to the awesome relationship I have with my mother and my Lord, Jesus Christ. Without them I would have probably been dead many years ago. The Lord has brought many wonderful people and opportunities into

my life that are a part of my healing process. I know it will be a life long process. Finally at the age of 37 I am not scared, embarrassed, or ashamed to tell my story. If my story can help even one person to disclose, which is the first step in the healing process, then by all means let's broadcast it.