

J.H. - California

120. J.H. is the son of K.A. and D.H.. He is 20 years old. His parents were separated when he was seven and divorced when he was 10. For that three years, he lived with his mother and visited his father on weekends. The mother had always been the primary caretaker and J.H.was closely bonded to her. He was also bonded to her parents who lived close by and visited frequently. He felt safe and happy living with her and his older half brothers. She took excellent care of him. She had a home business so was always available. This continued until his two younger sisters disclosed that their father had molested them.
121. At that time, a court evaluator, Larry Leatham, was assigned to the case. J.H.told Leatham that he wanted to live with his mother and he specifically did not want to live with his father. The therapist that J.H.was seeing at the time also told Leatham that it would be harmful for J.H.to live with the father because the father was emotionally abusive and the sisters would be in danger.
122. The court also assigned an attorney, Larry Dixon, to represent J.H.and his sisters. J.H.and the therapist both told Dixon the same information they told Leatham.
123. The court assigned Matt Zanze from child protective services to do an investigation. J.H.told Zanze that he wanted to live with his mother and not his father because of the emotional abuse and because he was afraid of him. Zanze recommended the children stay with the mother but he did nothing to protect them from the father.
124. When J.H.was interviewed by the Amador County Sheriff's department about the molestation of his sisters, he told them that the father left the bedroom that he and the father shared to go into his sister's bedroom at night, shutting the door and staying in there for long periods. He told them that he had seen his sister's in his father's bed and that the father continued sleeping with the girls even after there was a court order not to. After he told the sheriff that his father was going into his sisters' room at night, the father made a separate room for J.H.in the garage so he wouldn't know when his father went into his sisters' room at night.
125. In September 1996, Judge Bradford held a trial for custody. Dixon, the lawyer who was supposed to be representing J.H.and his sisters, filed a motion to suppress all evidence of the father's abuse of the children. J.H.wanted to present evidence on his own behalf but was not allowed. The judge only allowed Leatham to testify and he accused the children of lying about the abuse in spite of medical evidence, therapist's reports and past abuse of the mother and older brothers. At the end of the trial, the children were put immediately into the custody of the father. "My life was completely shattered apart on that day, and my childhood was destroyed" J.H.said.

126. J.H. was one of the original Courageous Kids who started an email network for support. In a posting on that network, he related how he felt when custody was changed from his mother to his father.

It was really quite a traumatizing day. It was a school day and there had been arrangements for me to go to a friend's house after school since my mom knew she'd be in court. I planned on going to my friend's house, playing for a while, and then going home. Little did I know that the last part of that sentence wouldn't be true until seven years later. I was playing computer games when a sheriff knocked at my friend's door. His parents were both emergency rescue personnel so I figured it was one of their friends. After talking to my friend's parents the sheriff told me to come with him. At this point I knew something was wrong and I began to cry and panic. The sheriff took me to my dad's attorney's office where I still sat and cried and waited for my sisters. The panic turned deeper. I not only was just taken to my dad, but I didn't know what happened to my mom. And on top of that I had nothing but a few schoolbooks and a single pair of clothes. From that point on I never felt secure when I saw a sheriff knocking at the door. It was as if I was just kidnapped. I was torn from everything I knew. I had no brothers next to me, no pets, and most importantly, no mom. From my dad's attorney's office we drove straight to San Francisco where he could work on a Starbucks coffee business. He worked inside putting things together, while my two younger sisters and I sat outside the shop on the curb. So now I had no brothers, no pets, I was 3-4 hours from my home, and again... no mom. This is when I was damaged so severely emotionally. ... No one told me anything about my mom or why I was at my dad's or why we were in San Francisco on a sidewalk. I asked but received no answers. I felt that if I wasn't told anything that I was worthless to everyone. I was made into a possession rather than a child.

127. When J.H. was forced to go to his father, the court also prevented him from going to the therapist he had trusted and who believed his reports of abuse. He was forced to see Nohl who allegedly treated him for PAS. He was not allowed to see his mother for months and he was not allowed to see his half brothers and grandparents for years.

128. Months after the custody change, J.H. could remember one of his friends coming up to him one day at school saying, "Your mom told me to say hi and she loves you." To the friend it was something he heard from his mom everyday. But when J.H. heard that he went to the bathroom and cried. It was the first that he had heard that his mom still wanted to talk to him, and the first he had heard that she was even alive! From then on he went to school anxious everyday. Anxious to hear someone tell him about his mom and how she was doing. There was a small slice of hope.

129. When he was able to see his mother, it was under supervision. Nohl told him he could not hug or kiss her, show affection for her, talk to her about his feelings, or what was going on in his life. If he did, she threatened that he would not see his mother at all. This made it impossible to maintain any kind of real relationship with his mother.

130. J.H.began trying to live a secretive life and put on a happy mask at school. He made up stories about his mother taking him places so he could fit in. If he saw his mother's friends in a public place he would run and hide because he didn't want them to ask why he didn't see his mom. He had to lie a lot.
131. After each visit, Nohl would interrogate the children and urge them to say negative things about their mother while she said positive things about the father. The children were not allowed to have pictures of their mother or half-brothers nor were they allowed to give pictures of themselves to their mother. He specifically recalls the incident where Nohl forced his sister to write a recantation of her molestation allegation to a school friend. Every week after the hour with his mom was over he would go home wondering if he'd see his mom again. He wished with all his heart he would, because the agency workers discouraged the children from hugging their mother and he figured that if he could keep seeing her every week that one week he'd sneak a hug in. "Until then I had to just look at her and wave." He was forced to endure this mental and psychological abuse weekly for three years, each year feeling more and more helpless.
132. When Nohl was removed from the case, he saw his mother for two weekends a month and a few hours during the week without supervision. However, his father and attorney Dixon continued to interfere to destroy any relationship. He found it extremely hard to trust anyone that the court appointed for him. He lost trust for almost everyone in his life.
133. He lived like a prisoner for all the years he was in his father's custody. He was isolated from his entire maternal family and former friends. He was put into day care or left alone with the two younger girls. They had to forage for food in the house and basically raise themselves. Instead of living like a child, he was forced to take on adult responsibilities for himself and his younger sisters. For the seven years in his father's custody, he had learned to become completely self-reliant. He paid for things that parents normally pay for. He taught himself to be independent. Along with his responsibilities, he kept his feelings to himself. For those seven years he felt powerless.
134. J.H.was emotionally abused and physically neglected by the father as well. He could not speak his true feelings but had to pretend everything was fine in order to survive. The father told the children they were to blame for all of his problems because they had told the police about his actions. The father expressed aggression with outbursts of rage. He would storm around the house, hit things and throw things. J.H.feared he would be the next to be hit. He felt alone and terrified.
135. After the father obtained custody, he continued to visit the girl's bedroom at night. J.H.could not sleep worrying about what he was doing and feeling helpless to

stop him. He lived in constant fear and anxiety and felt he didn't really sleep for the seven years he was with his father.

136. The father's whole life revolved around his hatred for the mother. He isolated the children from her, told the children the mother was to blame for the destruction of their lives, she didn't care about them, he constantly criticized her saying she was a bad person, selfish, crazy and unchristian. As a result of this emotional abuse and neglect, J.H. became severely depressed over the years. As a child, he tried to talk to the court to get help but was never allowed. Those in charge of protecting him instead banded together saying his mother was bad and crazy. Even when he was authorized to get counseling through the Victims of Crime program, Dixon and Nohl prevented it.
137. When J.H.'s father remarried, the step-mother joined the father's efforts to demonize his mother. J.H. was afraid to challenge his father and so lived with constant guilt that he was not able to defend his mother. He became so fearful and depressed that he didn't want to live. He wrote to attorney Dixon specifically asking him not to show the letter to his father and telling him that he wanted to be put into his mother's care for his own safety. Dixon told the father about the letter and J.H. felt even more fearful.
138. When J.H. turned 17 in 2003, he packed his bags and left his father's house to return to his mother. His father reacted by being vindictive e.g. he tried to prevent the boy from being on the school snowboard team by refusing to get information for his physical examination and he blocked him from getting oral surgery so J.H. suffered in pain for a year. For Jeff, the worst thing is that the father turned his sisters against him as he tried to turn the children against their mother and he no longer has a relationship with them. He has no doubt that his father molested his sisters and felt guilty that he could not protect them either.
139. After he went to live his mother's house, life completely turned around. He was happy and free from fears. He had two jobs, was on the school's snowboarding team and had a GPA over 3.0. He ate more often, he slept at night and his life was much better.
140. Because of the conduct of the Amador court, J.H. feels he was robbed of his childhood. He grew up feeling very unsafe, ripped away from everything and everyone that made him feel safe, secure and loved. Instead he was forced to live a life full of fear and mental abuse. The years of pain and suffering he endured in the custody of his father still haunt him. It has left him permanently scarred and he feels it will take many more years to heal from the trauma. Because of what his father did to his sisters, he has declared that when he gets married and has children, he will never allow them to be around his father or even know him.
141. On 22-24 February 2005, J.H. testified in court regarding custody of his sisters. On 17 March 2005, the court issued a ruling. On 13 June 2005, J.H. filed an

affidavit correcting numerous false statements in the court's ruling concerning his alleged testimony.

142. His alleged attorney Dixon refused to give him a copy of the file to prevent J.H. from suing him for malpractice. J.H. did however file a complaint with the State Bar but they closed the case. When J.H. turned 18, he filed a complaint against the court to the California Judicial Council. The Council rejected the complaint saying he should have filed it within six months of being placed in the father's custody – in other words when he was 10 years old.