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**I was in Blackwood, Burnside, Parramatta from 1947 until 1954. I remember I was always hungry.**

**My mother had died when I was 3 and my father was left with 6 children and unable to cope. My eldest sister told me I was going on holiday and they made her leave me there immediately.**

**We worked very hard all the time and I can remember sweeping the paths in winter with no shoes (only for church on Sundays).**

**Our meals were taken at scrubbed tables with bench seats. The food was very spartan, consisting mostly of home-grown cabbage, broccoli, stringy marrow, broad beans and pumpkin.**

**Friday was always tripe night, which I invariably vomited-up and was force-fed my vomit.**

**Staff took their meals at the same time and sat at tables covered with crisp white starched tablecloths and napkins, silver cutlery and serviette rings. We would sit and drool at their food. They had chicken, meat, bacon and eggs, toast with real butter, scones with fresh cream and jam. We did not know what ice cream was, except to watch it slide off the silver spoons into the mouths of the staff.**

**At Blackwood if we put one unshod foot over the front path we were sent to the dormitory, made to put on our pyjama pants and lay across our bed for hours, waiting for the master to clomp upstairs and lay into us with a double razor strop until our backside was black and blue.**

**The only 'treat' I remember was a couple of workmen digging a ditch at the rear of Blackwood who took pity on us and gave us some of their smoko – a lemon meringue pie. One other occasion was on a monthly Visiting Day, when my sister brought me a chocolate cream cake. I got so excited when she began cutting a slice that she just handed me the whole cake. Of course when I returned to Blackwood I was as sick as a dog, which upset the staff because of the mess I made. Once my best pal and I found piece of used chewing gum on the ground and shared it between us. I thought it was Christmas.**

**When I read my file I found my old man was paying 25 shillings a week towards my keep, which in those days would have gone a long way towards better food.**

**AVIS BOWMAN No. 76**

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CLAN suggested I add my thoughts about living with someone who suffered child abuse:

I have lived with Bill since 1986. We met when we were in our 40s and we were both healthy and in full time employment - life should have been rosy. I knew Bill's background, but having come from a happy home environment myself, I felt that with me he would be more content. What happened was that his fears and insecurities affected every aspect of our life and there was little enjoyment to be had.

The reality was that Bill worried about anything and everything, real and imaginary. I found he was unable to let go of problems, but would go over them in his head continuously and talk about them all the time. Then there was the pent-up anger, which would regularly explode either at me, his ex-wife, Burnside or someone he worked with. Invariably the injustice he felt was real, but the over-reaction was counter-productive, putting him in the wrong. The other difficulties were through social interaction, which Bill would try to avoid. He was obliged to take early retirement because of ongoing difficulties at work.

Eventually he realised that he needed help, and was fortunate to find a psychiatrist with whom he could relate and has ongoing sessions with a psychologist. He will take anti-depressants for the rest of his life.