

MY LOST PAST

By Lottie Boswell
Columbia S.C

My story is a long one. It's about 50 years old. It is a story that still isn't finished and it may never truly be over. My life was changed in a way that has affected every part of my life for over 50 years. It has affected not only me, but everyone I love and who loved me.

It all started when I was a very little girl. You see, I was abused and terrorized by someone my mother was either married to or just seeing. I guess once this all came out, I was given a social worker and then I was taken away from my mother and my brother and sister and I was sent to a foster home, where I stayed for several years. I do not remember my foster parents at all. I believe that they were good to me though.

When I was about 18, I got married and had two children. I loved them very much. I am sure that I did. I am also sure that I was a good mother and a good wife. I know this because that is the kind of person I am today. You see, I have very little memory of my life from when I was a little girl through the time I was about 40 years old. Although, I don't remember my children as babies or even being pregnant, or their first day of school, I know that I loved them very much... I only have flashes of memory, like holding a child while in a rocking chair, but it's like trying to put the pieces of a puzzle together with a lot of missing pieces.

I started to have terrible nightmares after I was first married and I soon started changing in other ways too. I just couldn't ever be truly happy. I knew at that time that something just wasn't quite right with me. You see, I was very depressed and confused I guess. I left my first husband, and I left my two children with him. I wasn't capable of taking care of myself, let alone two small children. I visited them I know, but I don't remember those visits at all. A few years later I remarried the man I am with now. I love him very much. We have a daughter together. About 12 years ago I became very ill, and this time I couldn't pull myself out. I started having those nightmares again, only I found out that they weren't nightmares at all, but memories. My husband eventually took me to the doctor and I have been in and out of the hospital for extended stays. I just couldn't pull myself out of the dark hole I was in. I was on so many different meds, and they didn't seem to help either. The doctors decided to give me shock treatments to see if they would help me. My husband said that he didn't think they helped me. In fact he is the one that decided that they were not helping me at all, in fact, he said that I was much worse and acting very strange, more strange than usual, and it scared him. He said that I was like a walking, living zombie. I guess you could say I kind of went away into a world of my own. I was truly lost to everyone who loved me. I didn't want to come out of my dark room. I didn't want anyone to be around me. I wanted to be left alone. Oh my God, what have I done to the ones I love? I pushed everyone away from me.

My problems were all because of my early childhood. I have some flashes of memories about that time in my life when I was being abused, for years maybe, I just don't know how long it lasted. I remember a basement where it was so dark and it is probably the scariest place in the world to me. I remember being brought down there by a man with a dead animal and he was cutting it up like they do after hunting. There was so much blood. I remember him telling me that if I ever told anyone about the things he did to me, he would cut me up in little pieces just like this dead animal and no one would ever find me.

Thank God I now have only a few memories of that time in my life, but the problem is, I don't have the good memories either. There is so much that has happened in my life I have forgotten. Things like my children's births, my weddings, my children growing up, a trip to

Disney, a cruise, and so much more. I think that after the ECT's, I must have lost the ability to feel emotion at all for years. I pushed everyone who loved me away and I am now in the process after all these years, of getting my life back. My two children from my first marriage had lost their mom for many years and I am just now getting to know them all over again. You see, I don't remember much at all about them. I do know that I love them very much and always have, even during my darkest years. One thing I never forgot was love. I think I always knew I loved my family, but I didn't know how, or remember how, to feel it, or show it. I remember my loved ones, but not happenings.

I finally became better when I started easing off my meds and seeing a new Doctor. I have so much to make up for because of all the years I was somewhere deep in my mind, where I pushed everyone who loves me away. I love my family very much. I have a wonderful husband, three children and three grandchildren. I have never met my grand children; at least I haven't seen them in many years, if ever. Mental illness or severe depression is a debilitating kind of illness that affects everyone who loves the one who is sick. Electric shock treatments can zap your bad memories away and along with them you also can lose your most treasured memories. If I had known, or understood about the possible loss of my good memories, I know that I and my husband would never have allowed the doctors to give them to me. It has taken my past away, and it has ruined my chance of ever having the life I should've had with my children and grand children. ECT's have taken my life. My family has told me about things we have done, or places we have been together. Even if I don't remember a particular happening, I at least know about it. I take these memories I've been given and store them away in my mind. I have pictures of the past and they help too. I have a wonderful husband, three wonderful children, and three grandchildren. I love them all very much.

I have also noticed that I have a problem even now, years later with forgetting things. I have a problem remembering small things from day to day. These are new things and I wonder if these problems could also be because of the brain damage I received while getting shock treatments. I can be going somewhere or doing something that I have done many times in the past few years, and I forget how to get there or how to do something that I have done many times before. I find myself staring at my computer or at the car door, and at that moment, I don't know how it works. These are just a few of the things that make my life very difficult at times. Am I going crazy? Or does anyone else have these kinds of problems, years after ECT?

The pain I feel when I hear about the cold person I became, and how I hurt all those I love, the way I pushed everyone away, is just about the worst kind of pain you could imagine and I ache inside from the loss of all my precious memories.

I Charlotte Boswell will do whatever I can to help in the fight against the continued use of ECT. In my opinion it is a barbaric and cruel tool the medical field uses when they are unable or not sure what else to do with the patient. I feel that when they make that decision, they have actually given up on the patient. They can't help them with their problems, so they just zap the problems away. The problem with that is that they zap away all past memories. Along with the bad, we lose all of our precious and treasured past memories too. I don't know what the answer is as far as helping those in need, but I do know, that if we knew what could happen to us, and if given a choice, most would not choose to have our memories wiped out by an electrical current shot through our brain, and our lives changed in a way that can never be truly repaired and our memories may never ever be recovered. **WE MUST STOP ECT NOW.**