



Jon Anderson - CBS special report on Boy Scout abuse – October 2012

Jon Anderson is a 54-year-old father of three and a dedicated research chemist at Intel for over 20 years. He is also a survivor of childhood sexual abuse at the hands of his trusted Boy Scout troop leader while attending Whittaker Middle School in NE Portland. He is one of far too many people who suffered in shame and silence, while decade after decade, an array of authorities quietly shielded scoutmasters and others accused of molesting children. Without a fair jury system with access to justice, powerful organizations go unchecked, protecting themselves and putting vulnerable people at risk. Civil cases like Anderson's have forced organizations to make systemic changes to stop sweeping predators under the carpet at the expense of children whose lives are forever changed. The Horton decision threatens to upend access to justice for survivors like him and all Oregonians whose lives have been forever changed through the actions of others.

Jon's story

Proof of the Scout's institutional knowledge of the abuse was discovered in a trove of "confidential" papers released in 2012 by order of the Oregon Supreme Court. These "perversion files" detailed how the Scouts maneuvered to allow sexual predators to go free while victims suffered in silence. The 1,200 documents describe actual or suspected sexual abuse by volunteers or troop leaders from 1965 to 1985. But as Anderson experienced, rather than prosecuting the abusers, they simply moved the predators along to new troops, to molest new victims. The Scout authorities justified their actions as necessary to protect the good name and good works of Scouting, a pillar of 20th century America.

In Jon's case, his abuser, Steve Terry Hill, was a known problem in San Diego, so the Scouts moved him to Portland, Oregon. Hill abused 11 Portland boys in the mid-70's and was never arrested until charged with arson in 1977, trying to burn down the house of his then girlfriend. Next, Hill started a driving school and adventure club so he could attract new victims. In 1979, the Scouts sued Hill in order to prevent him from portraying his adventure club as associated with the Scouts, but it wasn't until 1988 that the Scouts opened an "ineligible volunteer" file on Hill -- meaning he was officially no longer allowed to work with Scouts. Hill was finally convicted in 1991 of sexually abusing youth picked up in another capacity. He served about 20 years in prison and was released in April 2011. He is reported to still reside in Portland.

Like so many victims of childhood sexual abuse, Jon suppressed his trauma until 2011, when his memories were triggered during a conversation with an old friend and fellow Scout who disclosed he had been abused by Hill. It all came rushing back. His civil lawsuit against the Scouts helped to hold the organization accountable for the abuse, the cover-up, and the impact on the victims and our community. The cumulative impact of suits like Jon's helps change the behavior of big institutions in our society.

Jon continues to work with a therapist today. And even with ample access to support and a loving family, this intelligent, well-spoken, gregarious man tried to take his own life, just a year ago, despite his unwavering love for his beautiful daughters. The "monster" still haunts him, even as he works through his traumatic memories and bravely takes a stand for all other victims of abuse.