

[Children of Rage – Beth Thomas and Mary Flora Bell](#)



Rarely do I witness actual, true interviews with child abuse victims. This documentary is unique simply from that perspective. However little **Beth Thomas**'s soft, sweet demeanour as she calmly reveals to her therapist **Dr. Ken Magid**, how she tortured animals and sexually molested her brother Jonathan are about the most bone-chilling imaginable. Beth is a pretty, brown-haired six year old in the **HBO documentary *Child of Rage*** displayed on **Youtube** in 3 parts. It is an actual interview held between Beth and her psychologist, not a **Hollywood** production, although there is a **CBS 1992** television movie entitled ***Child of Rage*** based on Beth's life. This **HBO** documentary however is the real deal.

Beth was a victim of **childhood sexual abuse** until she was approximately **19** months old. Her mother died when she was one year old and she and her infant brother **Jonathan** were left at the mercy of their sadistic father. Beth describes her father's abuse in matter-of-fact tones and displays a crayon picture of herself lying in bed weeping as he fondles her genitalia. Her voice is as eerily calm and flat when speaking about her own abuse as it is when talking about the abuse she inflicted on her brother. By the time Beth and Jonathan were rescued by **Child Services** she appeared to be indelibly scarred by neglect and severe abuse. The two children were given to loving parents, **Tim and Julie**, who themselves had no biological children. Tim and Julie were not given any information as to the children's abusive background. At the time of the adoption little Jonathan was **7** months old. His head was flat at the back and bulged forward at the front from being left on his back in his crib all day. He couldn't raise his head or roll over. Beth suffered

from nightmares of a “*man who was falling on her and hurting her with a part of himself.*”

It took approximately two months until Beth’s parents discovered the truth about Beth and Jonathan’s upbringing. They recognized that both Beth and Jonathan exhibited disturbing behaviours. Julie caught Beth masturbating several times a day until she made her own vagina bleed and had to be hospitalized. Beth poked pins into her brother and into the Thomas’s pets. As she got older, on a particularly violent occasion she smashed her brother’s head into the cement floor of their basement until he needed stitches to close a gash in his forehead. Beth’s intention was not merely to harm her brother but to kill him. She often voiced her desire to *kill* her entire family including her parents.

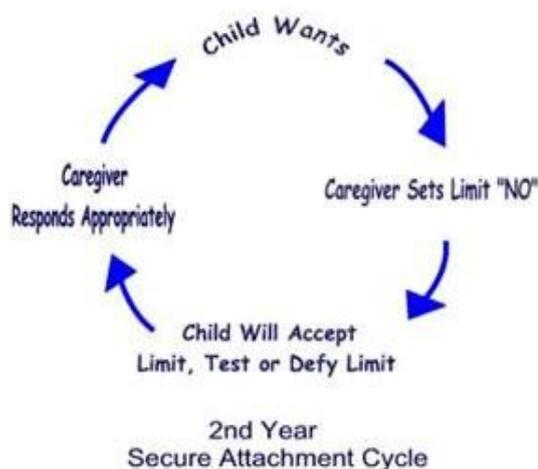


Yet the most disturbing aspect of Beth’s behaviour was her complete lack of remorse and concern for her actions. She was well aware that her actions were wrong and hurtful but this didn’t matter to her. Not long after these incidents her parents brought her to a therapist named **Connell Watkins**, who diagnosed Beth with a severe case of **Reactive Attachment Disorder**. It was once known to laymen as “**failure to thrive**” although this is inaccurate as **RAD** is much more than that.

Reactive Attachment Disorder is characterized by *markedly* disturbed and developmentally inappropriate ways of relating socially. It can take the form of a persistent failure to initiate or respond to social interactions in an appropriate way—known as the “**inhibited**” form—or can present itself as **indiscriminate sociability**, such as excessive familiarity with strangers—known as the “**disinhibited form**”. Beth’s condition involved a complete inability to bond with any human being and a complete lack of empathy. This is also known as **sociopathy** or **psychopathy** although those terms are not used about

children under the age of **18**. RAD arises from a *failure to form normal attachments to primary caregivers in early childhood*. This results from severe early experiences of **neglect, abuse**, abrupt *separation* from caregivers (Beth's mother passed away when Beth was one) between the ages of six months and three years. It also results from a frequent change of caregivers, or a lack of *caregiver responsiveness* to a child's communicative efforts. That Beth Thomas developed **RAD** is certainly beyond her control. The assessment is not a criticism, nor is it blame against the child. It names the **cluster of symptoms** Beth displayed due to her brief, harrowing life with her father.

Beth's condition was so extreme that in **April 1989** a professional therapist, **Connell Watkins**, removed Beth from Tim and Julie's home and brought Beth to her own home to give her intensive behaviour modification. In spite of Beth's dangerous behaviour the therapist was confident she could help Beth since her professional history included working successfully with extremely disturbed children, such as **9-year-old** murderers. At first all of her freedom was restricted until Beth demonstrated that she could be trusted. It was a difficult transition for Beth. Children who don't trust do not like rules. At first Beth was locked inside her bedroom at night so she couldn't escape and hurt other children or adults in the house. She had to ask permission to do everything from play with a particular toy to getting a glass of water. Over time



these restrictions were slowly removed as Beth's behaviour improved. Within one year of living in the house her behaviour was so recovered that Beth was permitted to share a bedroom with the therapist's own daughter. A remarkable transition took place in **Beth Thomas**. She learned empathy and remorse when someone was hurt. She learned about right and wrong. When she talked about her earlier abuse of Jonathan she wept openly. She no longer talked about hating anyone or wanting to kill anyone. She didn't abuse herself anymore. Her therapy took years to

complete and Beth, like any child abuse victim, will likely live always with the consequences of her abuse.

Beth Thomas grew into a mentally healthy woman. She obtained a degree in *nursing* and has authored a book entitled "**More Than a Thread of Hope.**" She and her adoptive mother **Nancy Thomas** established a clinic for children with severe behaviour disturbances. Nancy Thomas wrote a book entitled **Dandelion on my Pillow, Butcher Knife Beneath (Coping with Personal Problems)**. Nancy and Beth Thomas' website is www.attachment.org

Since the original posting of this blog, the author has uncovered disturbing information about Nancy Thomas and her child therapy practices. To read a blog and watch a video about **Thomas's therapy strategies click here**. **warning – video has disturbing content** In an ironic endnote, Beth's therapist, Connell Watkins performed a fatal **attachment therapy** session known as a "**rebirth**" on a **10**-year girl named **Candace Newmaker** and in doing so, asphyxiated the child. Watkins served seven years of a sixteen year prison sentence and was forbidden from working with children ever again upon her release in **2008**. Walker served **7** years of her **16** year sentence. **Candace's death** became the motivation for "**Candace's Law**" against attachment therapy in several states. For detailed information about **Candace Newmaker's death and Walker and Ponder's criminal convictions click here**. Although Nancy Thomas was not involved in Newmaker's death she continues to be associated with the clinic that has been held responsible. To read a blog criticizing **Nancy Thomas's AT parenting with children click here**.

Beth's case is reminiscent of **11**-year-old **Mary Flora Bell** from *Newcastle upon Tyne, England*. Mary was also severely sexually and physically abused. Her mother was a **sadomasochistic** dominatrix (prostitute) who **used her unfortunate daughter** with her clients. **As Mary grew up** she exhibited significant signs of rage including the torture of animals and attempts to kill other children through strangulation, what she referred to as "massage". Her understanding of strangulation was not that the victim was dead but that she or he would *wake up* again, suggesting that perhaps her mother, **Betty (nee McCrickett)** suffocated then revived her daughter during prostitution sessions. Like Beth, Mary didn't bond with her parents. Mary's father left before she was born and Betty remarried a man named **Billy Bell**, an alcoholic and petty criminal. He and Betty fought constantly and Billy frequently

left Betty and Mary to fend for themselves for weeks at a time. The household was in constant chaos. On 25 May 1968, the day before her 11th birthday, **Mary strangled four-year-old Martin Brown** to death. She was believed to have committed this crime alone. On 31 July 1968, Mary and a friend **Norma Bell** (no relation), strangled three-year-old **Brian Howe** together. Mary attempted to carve her initials into Brian's body post-mortem using a razor and mutilated his genitals with a pair of scissors.



Eventually Mary was convicted of **manslaughter** due to **diminished responsibility** and although only a child at the time of her conviction she was sentenced to prison "*indefinitely*". Mary ultimately served twelve years in juvenile and adult prison before she was released. During this time, Mary **mailed her mother a letter** that read in part, "***Please Mam, put my tiny mind at ease, tell judge and jury on your knees. They will listen to your cry of 'please'. The guilty one is you, not me. I am sorry it has to be this way. We'll both cry and you will go away. Tell them you are guilty, please. So then Mam, I'll be free. Your daughter, May.***"

Mary received behavioural therapy while imprisoned and, incredibly, she too developed a sense of right and wrong, and feelings of remorse for her actions. However, in **1977**, during a transfer to a less secure facility, Mary escaped. She was picked up along with a fellow escapee, by two young men. Mary lost her virginity. The man with whom she had slept later sold his story to the newspapers, and claimed that she had escaped from jail so she could get

pregnant. " (She didn't). ***As time went on, my nightmare was the press,***" said Mary. ***"I never could understand what they wanted from me."*** Mary was moved to a hostel a few months before her parole in **1980**, and she met a married man who got her pregnant. ***"He said he was determined to show me I wasn't a lesbian,"*** she said. ***"It was hard for me not to think of sex as dirty."*** When she found out she was with child, she had a moral crisis of sorts: ***"But if I think that almost the first thing I did after twelve years in prison for killing two babes was to kill the baby in me. . ."*** Due to her improved character Mary was permitted to keep her daughter.

Mary, like Beth, has not re-offended. She is living somewhere in **England** under an assumed name. She had to fight the legal system to have her daughter also protected with an assumed name. Mary has had three assumed identities and has moved at least five times after being identified. **Mary is a grandmother.** She worked closely with a local author named **Gitta Sereny** who released two accounts of Mary's biography entitled **"Cries Unheard: Children Who Kill – The Story of Mary Bell"**. and **The Case of Mary Bell**. The first book was written after Bette's death, a significant factor in the book's publication.

Watch **Healing RAD Through Horses at Hoofbeats to Healing**

Watch **Alex King Testifies (live on court-tv)**

Watch **Kids Behind Bars**

Read blogspot **Living with RAD: Child of Rage**

Read **Connell Watkin's statement to Jefferson County District Court Judge Jane Tidball**

Read **Rebirth Therapists Get 16 Years**