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I read Carol L. Hopkins' article on sexual abuse in the March 19 issue of the Lookout, and in no way do I consider her an expert on sexual abuse. By her own declaration, she is a teacher and school administrator, but she apparently does not hold any degrees in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, social work, family therapy, etc., and in fact attacks specialists in these fields in her article.

The Grand Jury of 91-92, of which she was Deputy Foreman, on reviewing child protection matters made erroneous reports, gave out misinformation (both documented by the subsequent Grand Jury of 92-93) and promoted claims such as "False Memory Syndrome" which has never been substantiated by scientific research but which is being debated among specialists who use repressed memory therapy in adult patients to recall childhood traumas.

Surf the Internet for more information by going to altavista at www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/7736/Hopkins.html

The McMartin School case is extremely interesting since it is presented in Hopkins' article as the archtypical "witch hunt" of innocent school personnel because of its outcome. After millions spent in court trials and a split and hung jury (which is NOT the same as "innocent," as Hopkins states) for the remaining defendant, Ray Buckey, which led to the case against him being dropped, it was therefore presumed that the children all fabricated fantastic stories and that injustice was done to the McMartins and their staff members.

Hopkins writes," Eventually these children began to tell lurid tales of horrible abuses, vast tunnels underneath the school...no evidence of any abuse or of anything told by the children of McMartin was ever found." Well, if you read the report of the archeological team headed by Gary Stickel Ph.D. (recommended by Rainer Berger, Ph.D of UCLA) who was contracted in 1990 by the parents after the school was sold, to conduct a scientific exploration in this report you will find the following:

"The McMartin Tunnel Project confirms that a functional pattern of tunnels once existed under the McMartin Preschool ... the discoveries stand in stark contrast to the skeptical position that the children only imagined what they described as cavities underground. If the stories of the children were bogus fantasies, there is no excuse for the tunnels discovered under the school..."

The discovery of the tunnels never made it to the court room, because the case had already been dismissed.

The San Diego County child Abuse Coordinating Council responding to the Grand Jury report #8 dated 12/9/92 (when Hopkins was Deputy Foreman of this Jury) states that the council found "that much of the 'information' contained in Grand Jury report #8 was contrary to the finding of the best research done in the field, specifically in the areas of repression of traumatic childhood memories and suggestibility of children. Research by Goodman (1986, 1989, and Saywitz 1989) on children's memory and on the reliability of children's allegations of sexual abuse tend to

demonstrate the following:

- 1) It is uncommon for children to make false allegations about being molested
- 2) Children's memories are relatively good when compared to adults' memories
- 3) Errors by children in the recall of events are usually those of omission, rather than commission.
- 4) While children may be more suggestible with respect to their memory of peripheral details, their recall of significant events that they have experienced, rather than things they have merely observed, cannot be easily changed or manipulated."

The Oakwood Child Sex Abuse Case (of which we may have seen only the tip of the iceberg) is an issue that touches us all and should not be seen simply and naively from one perspective. As a community we have the moral obligation to protect and defend all children. These voiceless innocent ones are in need of your voice and protection to defend their human rights and I have heard of people who say that because their children were not affected, they felt no need to become involved let alone informed. Many choose non-involvement for reasons of self-interests. (keeping a job, avoiding changing their children's schools) To allow self-interest to take priority or the interest of protection and defending the defenseless is both immoral and unethical.

From the FBI's Exploited Child Unit comes this information, which we as parents should become familiar with in case our children should disclose sexual exploitation:

- 1) Remember that children seldom lie about acts of sexual exploitation.
- 2) Support the child and the decision to tell the story.
- 3) Make it clear that telling you what happened was the right thing to do and that you will protect the child from future harm.
- 4) Respect the child's privacy
- 5) Show physical affection and express your love and confidence with words and gestures.
- 6) Keep open the lines of communication with the child.
- 7) Often children do not disclose incidents of sexual exploitation. It is up to attentive adults to recognize the signs of sexual exploitation (This internet site provides information on this web site www.missingkids.com)

I personally know one of the mothers whose child is a purported victim in the Oakwood School case. She has just returned from three weeks of therapy in the U.S. with a child psychologist who specializes in child sexual abuse. She has received death threats, her phone has been tapped, her attorney paid off, and finally, she was advised to leave Mexico, which sadly she and her family have done.

Unfortunately, power money and influence permeate the Justice system in Mexico, Carol

Hopkins must be unaware of this in order to make such a naïve statement as “talking may jeopardize proper investigation.” If the media should be careful about its responsibility to be objective, as she advises, I suggest Carol Hopkins follow her own advice.

Name Omitted