

Martinez Oral History Project

Interview Date: September 9 & 30, 2020
Interview Location: Motel 6, Pittsburg, California
Interviewer: Deborah Zamaria
Interviewee: Richard Michael McDonald (Rick)

Rick was born on June 21, 1955 In Merritt Hospital in Oakland to Harry James McDonald and Hazel Viola Terio McDonald. His father Harry was an Oakland Police Officer for 30 years and his mother Hazel was a housewife. They were a fairly traditional family with dad spending hours in his shop after work doing carpentry projects and mom keeping the house and feeding the family. However, when Rick was around 12 years old, his mother worked in the Walnut Creek Post Office and then transferred to the Oakland Post Office where she worked as a secretary.

They met at the end of WWII and married on VJ Day, 1945 in Tahoe. They also bore a girl named Kathleen Ann McDonald Boswell. Her birthday is April 7, 1948.

Although they lived initially in Oakland, Rick's father didn't want to live in the city where he worked so he moved his family to Pleasant Hill, California. First they lived near the Pleasant Hill Police Department and later they moved to Oak Park Blvd. in Pleasant Hill.

Rick attended Oak Park Elementary from K-6 and then attended Pleasant Hill Intermediate. He states that he hated school except for sports. Eventually he made it to Pleasant Hill High School, but in the 9th grade he cut school and would do so frequently, eventually ending up at Olympic High School for his Junior year. Olympic was the Continuation School for the District and didn't have a sports program but his father worked it out with the administration that if he attended Olympic regularly he could play football at Pleasant Hill High School. Rick said he "never made it out of the car" and 1973 was his last year.

Rick did have a high school sweetheart named Shelly who he stayed with for five years. After Olympic, although he didn't use drugs, he just didn't want to be home. He was 18 years old and his parents told him to get a job or leave the house. He alternated between his girlfriend's house, his parent's backyard, and his parent's house until he was 20 years old.

When he was 18 years old, he was arrested for strong-armed robbery. He had planned with a friend to go to Oklahoma but they got as far as Tahoe and got caught doing a purse snatching.

The police called his parents and only his mom came up to get him. His father was angry and disappointed. His attorney offered him a deal that if he enlisted in the service, he could skip going to jail. Rick is pretty sure that his father arranged that deal. However, after asking about the length of his jail sentence (90 days) as

compared with his time in the military (two years) he opted to do the time in the El Dorado County Jail. His sentence was shortened even more and pretty soon he was back in Pleasant Hill with his girlfriend.

Shelly's father worked at DMV and got a promotion to the office in Los Banos, California. Unfortunately, Shelly became pregnant with her's and Rick's child and the two fathers talked with each other, Shelly's father was angry and wanted Rick to stay away from her.

Shelly made the decision to get an abortion saying to Rick, "Kids can't raise kids," and then the two of them moved to Los Banos. Rick got his truck driver's license there and tried to find work but was unsuccessful. His time in Los Banos only lasted one year and he returned alone to Pleasant Hill because he couldn't find work.

The long distance relationship with Rick and Shelly didn't work and they were fighting all the time and eventually broke up. This was around 1975 and it was at the peak of the Methamphetamine craze.

Rick had always loved motorcycles, (his father had been a motorcycle police officer) and Rick also had a fascination with the Hell's Angels. This gang was known all over the world and it's leader, Sonny Barger had quite a reputation as well. Rick knew Sonny Barger and wanted to become a member of this gang. Some of the Hell's Angels started using Rick and his friends as "guinea pigs" giving them meth and telling them to go out and sell it as well.

Rick turned 21 in 1976 and had a girlfriend at that time that wanted to start "shooting meth." Rick said "no" in part because the Hell's Angels didn't allow the use of heroin and they didn't allow the use of needles.

Eventually Rick decided against being a Hell's Angel because the gang demanded absolute loyalty and Rick had other plans for his life.

In 1976 Rick also met his wife, Truly, in a hotel bar in Concord. She was older than he was and had two children, Jennifer and Jason. They fell in love and moved in together. Rick had a job as a truck driver for Duraflame at that time and had a job that took him to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Truly called him one evening in Pittsburgh and asked him to come home immediately.

Apparently Truly's husband at the time, Mike, had found out that she was with Rick and was threatening her. Rick came home and fought with Mike (unfortunately in front of the children). The police came and Mike went to jail for his abusive behavior.

Also, Truly had been selling weed and another dealer in the neighborhood came to her house while Rick was gone and shaved her head and beat her up. Rick wanted this guy dead. He found out where this person lived and broke into the home. He

was caught and got a burglary, robbery and rape charge. Rick said that even though there was no rape involved, his attorney told him that to accept the plea deal, he had to accept all charges.

Soon after, he was arrested for a petty theft. Someone told the police he was going to leave town so his bail went from \$1,000 to \$20,000. Truly called Rick's attorney, Jack, and told him the story. Rick was also fortunate because of the choice of judge. The judge reduced the bail to \$1,000 but Truly wouldn't bail him out because she thought he would run too.

Fast forward six months. Truly gives Rick a stack of paperwork which gives detailed instructions on how to "disappear" in California. She didn't want Rick to go to jail so on July 28, 1978, they packed their belongings, put some in storage, rented a truck and planned a trip to Colorado. Rick was supposed to be in court that day. His mother also died of liver cancer in 1978 and this broke his father's heart.

They made it to Colorado and Rick got a job as a U-Haul truck driver. He had gotten all new ID, a new social security card (his alias was Dennis Cole) and changed his appearance slightly.

Eventually he lost his job because of excessive partying. He was also selling "crank" at the time and a man down the street was selling weed. Rick had problems with this person and felt that this guy had disrespected him and made him look bad, so Rick stole the man's stereo and was caught. When the police came to search his house (at first they couldn't because of Rick's 110 lb. wolf) they found his California ID, 26 handguns and charged him with burglary. He was arrested in 1980 on his father's birthday. He thought the charge would be dismissed but he got three years in Buena Vista State Prison in Colorado.

Rick only served 5 days of that sentence. Some fellow prisoners told him to come to the prison church on a Sunday. He did and ran right out, threw his prison shirt in the nearby river and made it to a gas station. He approached a man in a truck and asked him for a ride and was eventually dropped off at a bar where he hitched another ride.

Rick finally made it to his home in Colorado, but in October of 1982, the police caught him in Modesto doing another burglary. Before that he had been in a serious fight in a bar. Truly was with him and tried to intervene, but could've been killed. The police came and found out he had two warrants involving guns, escapes from prison, an alias and other charges. He was sentenced to Vacaville State Prison for 14 years.

Rick's father died of lung cancer in the winter of 1990 while Rick was still in prison. Rick's mom had told him that he and his father were "exactly alike but just different ends of the fence post." Rick loved both of his parents very much and his father's death, in particular, had a profound impact on Rick.

In 1993, he was released from prison, but unbeknownst to him, the California Department of Corrections under the guidance of the Department of Justice, had changed the sentencing guidelines in 1983. The penal code 288 A or C was Oral Copulation with a minor under 14 years of age. This charge had been added to Rick's "jacket" although he swears he never committed that crime. Consequently, because of Megan's Law, in addition to being on a sexual offender list due to the rape charge, he's on Megan's List.

In 2017, Rick had moved to Concord, and because of the rape charge in his early years, he had to register as a sex offender. A Concord police officer told him that he was on Megan's list. According to Rick, the officer said that he felt it was a mistake because it didn't fit the sort of crimes that Rick had been involved with during his life. Rick had no idea that he had been indiscriminately placed on this list (as apparently had hundreds of other prisoners) and has made it his mission to right this wrong. The police officer told him to get in touch with his attorney and see if he could reverse this.

His name on this list has cost him jobs, relationships and homes. The stigma attached to it is something that he never before had to deal with and it greatly disturbs him that it would be such a dishonor to his parents.

In February of 2020, Rick had a massive stroke that left him partially paralyzed on his right side. Because we are in the middle of a pandemic and Rick was homeless, he has been given shelter in a motel in Pittsburg until the Shelter in Place is lifted.