The Living Stories – Ray’s Story [Video Transcript]

**From my early childhood days I had a debilitating stutter which was my curse for around 30 years until I was made to look back into my childhood. I hope that my story of my childhood warts and all helps stutters to look back into their childhood to discover reasons for their stutter and overcome this curse. The BBC team create a show called “ Show me the child and I will show you the man” very good viewing.**

**My Early days of Fear**

My name is Ray and I am 79years old, I started to have a stammer around the ages of 4 years old and now looking back over the years I realized that children are not born with a stutter but rather experiencing some traumaticevents in their early life.

I was born in 1944 being the youngest of four siblings my parents being in their early 40’s both having had a hard life, father was a very gentle man but very restricted due to injuries in the building trade and suffering from seizures, mum had to work which made her very hard over the years.

Life improved when we had the opportunity to move into a larger house but no means better. The tenant in that house had just died so it was decided that I and my older brother would stay in the new house on our own until they could get moving organized. The house was in poor repair due to rising damp, only one coal fire, an outside toilet and a cellar. My brother and I finally moved in to stay overnight where we both experienced a black shadow moving around the room, even today we talk about it. After that night I left my bedroom door open and blankets over my head listening to the house movements for many years.

**Poverty 5-6 years old**

I can say that I was a nervous young boy, we had very little in life, I learnt to hate Kellogg’s Cornflakes and bread and jam. My clothes were cheap and were an indication of my family poverty. I did get into trouble resulting in my mother giving me a beating with a bamboo stick, my hands would be bruised and swelling having to fend off the blows, my stuttering was getting worse. Violence was a part of growing up my mum was sitting in her armchair so was dad she got up and kicked his bad leg requesting a cup of tea, this is embedded in my mind. Dad was my best friend and when mum went out I used to say to him “so nice to be alone and peaceful” sounds terrible but it was a pause from the day to day problems in both our lives.

My father had to attend to most things around the house, looking after us even though he had chronic arthritis and suffered frequent seizures, when dad had a seizure mum gave me the responsibility to go in and force his tablets into his locked mouth and sit with him until he recovered. I was only 8 years old at the time.

**School Juniors Year 7-11 years old.**

At junior school many kids asked me why I stuttered I used the excuse that it will stop when I have my tonsils removed which I knew was a lie and that my stutter will stay will me forever. One joy was the fact that I did have a good level of mathematics due to the fact I did shopping for many people in the street earning enough to let me buy some little extras in life. One of my customers was Winnie who was a retired lady of the night and her brother was a Bookmaker, but they treated me like a long lost son.

**Senior School**

This was a tough period for my stutter and was not a happy time for me, I was very quiet during those years only having a few real mates, one of the most testing lessons was reading out aloud. There were 40 in my class with our reading session allowing 8 readers meaning I was having to read every 5 weeks, for me it was very traumatic working out what paragraph I would have to read out loud, the pressure of pending doom made my inside so tight knowing I would fail.

After much stuttering I was given relief by the teacher reducing the assigned passage to read, however sometimes after stuttering what appeared to be a lifetime I was able to read without hardly a pause, it made me so happy the teacher had to make me stop.

**My Last Year at School11-15 years old**

Into my 5th year I was entering my year for final exams, I was faced with the worst fear of my life, the 5th year class had to read out a part of the Bible in front of the entire school assembly, our class numbered 24 students so I had no way out, I calculated there was a 20% possibility for me to read at the assembly every few weeks, when the selection was being considered I heard shouts how about Ray he has never done any reading yet, yes some youngsters can be quite nasty.

However there is a God as one of my hecklers I recall his name Peter Hallows had to read in front of the school and I could not believe he had a really bad stutter and the head teacher tried to coach him through the reading, I did feel sorry for him even though he was not very good to me, but at least he could appreciate my issue.

**Abandon School and enter the workforce**

Christmas came for the students in lower classes to leave school at the age of 15 to find a job; the word came everyone who is leaving report to the main hall, on impulse I jumped up to join the leavers and I felt a relief of getting the freedom to do this. My dream was to be police officer howeverstuttering would not make that possible.

**Survive in the Real world**

I tried office work, warehousing, factory work, Council Worker, Hospital Technician which I loved but low pay. At the age of 18 my father had a final seizure and had to go into hospital, I went alone to see him at the hospital and saw peacefully laying in an oxygen tent, the nurse told me to go home as I think she knew he was fading fast, so I went home and 2 hours later a policeman rang our bell, I saved him saying those words by replying my Dad is dead, he esponded yes.

 That was the lowest point of my life losing my best friend. Next day my mum told me to go to the Funeral Parlor to arrange the funeral which I did, however no one helped me and mum did not attend dad’s funeral due to not feeling well. That did not go down well, my dad was the best he never said a cross word to me and never a slap. I promised myself if I have children I would never hit them and I have always followed that promise to myself.

Finally I met my wife Jan and we got married had 2 sons and no stutters from either of them, we decided to move to Australia to seek a better life and yes I my stutter followed me.

**Australia 1968**

I was 26 year old and still feeling isolated, I started work in a factory and knew I would never move up any ladder to promotion, I would go to parties and sit beside my wife and never tried to start a conversation with anyone. If I saw anyone coming towards me I would start to panic whether my words would come out smoothly, usually they would not.

**The Day I Challenged Myself**

## It was 1978 when I decided to seek help, I was not born with a stutter so what caused it, I made a appointment to see a psychologist located in Melbourne which I saw for 3 sessions, he gave my an ink block test which I thought was strange however he we spoke about childhood life, the ups and downs to get an understanding of my upbringing and how I felt. I must say that something happened over the next month I lost my fear of the stutter and felt a lot calmer with not getting uptight but I did feel angry at not being helped earlier in my life.

## From being afraid of talking my voice got louder and more confident, I came to the conclusion that my stutter was developed over my early years being afraid of the dark and that Shadow moving around the room and my treatment as a child by my mother.

## Return to UK 1976

I made the decision to return to the UK with my family due to an opportunity to purchase a house in London due to our house going up by 350% and the very low sterling, I was beaming with confident and obtain a job with British Telcom, after 12 months they sponsored me to go back to college for 4 years to be qualified as a Technical Engineer including computer sciences , I was so proud after all the studying to achieve so much and lose 95% of my stammer, it sometimes creeps back but very minor.

**Return to Australia 1976**

I went back to my old multi National employer in Victoria with a lot of confidence, I eventually moved up the ladder and ended up in a very good position travelling around Asia lecturing companies on how to safely distribute chemicals and train users on implementing Distribution Management Systems.

It seems a lifetime ago when I was trapped in the world of stuttering, however sometime if I am tired and cold for a brief moment I may stutter but I quickly respond to stop and speak confidently.

Note: Recently I met with a man with a worse stutter than me, I asked him if he childhood issue, his wife said his father used to beat him with a leather strap at a very young age.

There are others with the same sad story.