

My mother was one of these orphans, at about 10 yrs of age, around 1926, in Montreal Quebec, possibly Cote du Lac. Her story is similar, with the exception of her 5yr old sister's, Julliette's, murder by a nun, for the sin of wetting her pants. The nun grabbed Julliette by the pony tail as she tried to removed her button shoes, stockings, peticoats, costume, to change. When the nun grabbed Julliette, the nun kicked her in her side. She was placed in the infirmary, where my mother would visit for 3 days, standing outside in the hall, behind frosted glass doors, listening to her sister's rasping, until the day she died.

My mother said when they washed and dressed Julliette for her funeral, her complete side, half of her body was black. When I asked what happened to this nun, she said nothing. I asked why, and she said they would have been excommunicated.

My mother was severely affected by her 10+ years in the orphanage, becoming a novitiate for a year, before being told by the doctor who examined her and an elder nun to go into the world, first. If she didn't like it, she could return. She never did.

She told me stories of the "clack" and of kneeling on raw peas in a corner of the room, arms extended out to the sides, a nun, keeping vigil, seated to watch the arms did not fall or the child sleep. If they did, their head was banged against the wall. These nuns kept vigil in case the girls should jump beds to sleep with other girls.

Her two brothers were also in this orphanage and they ran away. As my uncle told me his story of survival, tears streamed down his 80 yr old face. He and his brother survived living with animals in hay in various farms as they worked their way through their existence. She also told me there was one Jewish girl living at the orphanage who the other children would stone every Friday. She ran away.

One day, my mother and her friend had been in the garden, harvesting vegetables they placed in baskets to carry back. On the roadway they encountered the "Governor" who rented the entire top floor at the orphanage. The best fruits and vegetables always went his way. He stopped the girls to engage in small talk. As he did, he reached his hand under one girl's garment, and rubbing her breasts, exclaimed "ohhh des beau jeau" (sp?) for maybe mellons? I asked what they did and she said they just froze in place, nothing they could do. Eventually, he moved off. Did he come back at night? Probably.

Eventually, when my mother left the convent, she found an apartment in Montreal, maybe Verdun, where she and another sister shared a bed. And when she found her two brothers, they had the bed to sleep during the day, as the boys worked at night. So, the 4 of them sharing one bed. No refrigerator, food was placed between window panes and no working stove, food was eaten as it was bought, daily. One day they eat apples, another, slices of bologna or ham or nothing.

It all began when her parent and 5 siblings lived on a farm in Ste. Justine. Her father working for CNR Railroad, murdered down the tracks somewhere, presumably to a person who would get that job and promotion which was right around the corner, which offered a pay raise and the Station House to live in. Her father wanted that for his family and to get them off the farm. Her mother delivered child number 6, three days after they found her father's body on the tracks. This is when the children were sent to the orphanage, her mother not able to care for them. Government people came to say some of her cows were sick, and took them, and her chickens, too. Probably stolen, but a woman alone with a newborn...

Anyway, all of this to say, I hope people believe. She never accused or complained more than these stories, however my brother and I believe she was, more than likely, raped and we know abused.

Once I looked online at Google Maps to locate the Orphanage. During a late 1980's trip, I took my mother back to this Orphanage and it is now home for Seniors and Retirees. The woman at the reception desk refused to allow my mother back into the residence and really, all she wanted to see was the kitchen, where she spent most of her time, missing class to cook and clean and wash dishes. On Google Maps, I saw street names there, one Julliette and one, Germaine. Could this have been purposely done or a fluke? Who knows.