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# School Sexual Abuse Survivors End Decades of Secrecy

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Jon Seiger, Steve Fife (standing), Ed Bowen, Joseph Cumming (standing) and Ron Klepper

MARY ELLEN MARK

BY SHARON COTLIAR 09/24/2014 AT 10:00 AM EDT

Jon Seiger was just a month into the seventh grade the first time it happened. On an overnight trip to Washington, D.C., in the fall of 1972, a teacher-chaperone put his hand in Seiger's pajamas shortly after the 11-year-old had gone to bed.

"I said, 'I don't like this. I'm not comfortable,'" Seiger recalls. "He said,



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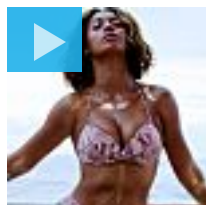
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'Just be a good boy and relax.' "

Between that night and Seiger's 1979 graduation, he would be molested or raped, he says, "hundreds of times" by eight faculty members at Horace Mann, an elite 127-year-old New York City private school that counts members of Congress, Pulitzer Prize-winning authors, scientists and leaders of industry among its alumni.

Even decades later, Seiger, 53, says: "Sometimes I can't help but think, 'What the hell is wrong with me that they all picked me?' I thought it was me alone."

In reality, Seiger was one of at least 63 students (five of them female) who say they were sexually abused by 22 former Horace Mann staff members between 1962 and 1996, according to a new report looking at both the abuse and its cover-up, the full findings of which are expected to be released in October.

"This was not like the horrible one person at Penn State. This was a whole network," says former Manhattan sex-crimes prosecutor and judge Leslie Crocker Snyder, who led the independent investigation for the [Horace Mann Action Coalition](#), an alumni group formed in the wake of the revelations.

The five men featured in PEOPLE's latest issue are among the first to speak publicly about surviving sexual abuse at Horace Mann. They represent a fraction of the victims, but their recollections, as well as their lives since, present a portrait of a pattern of abuse and the damage that can come from it.


"I can see secrecy benefiting only the abuser," says the class of 1971's Steve Fife, 61, whose memoir of those years, *The 13th Boy*, came out this month.

To learn more about talking to your kids about sexual abuse and the warning signs, go to [Enoughabuse.org](#).

*To read more from the survivors, pick up the new issue of PEOPLE, on newsstands Friday*

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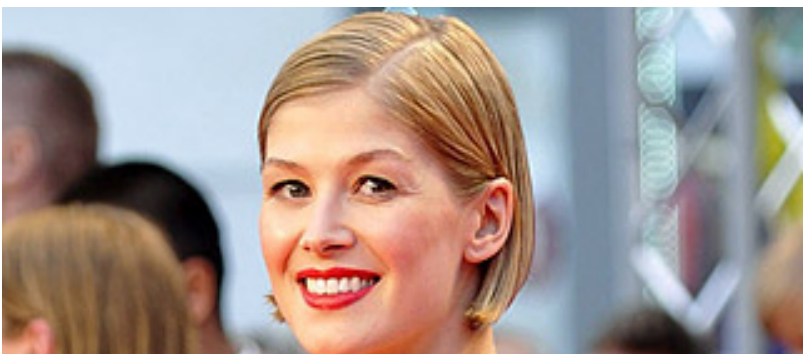
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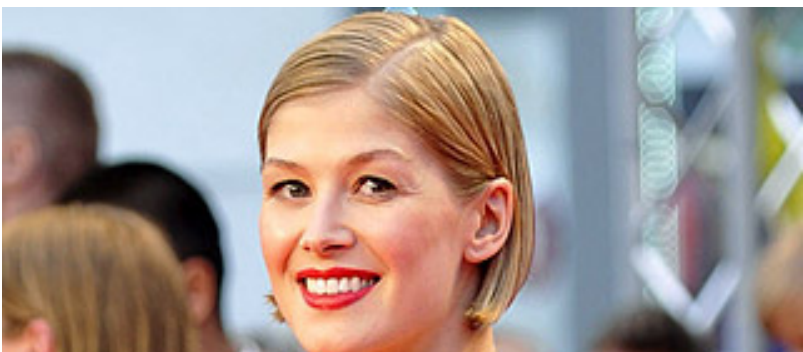
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Taylor Swift: This Is a 'Freeing Time' in My Life

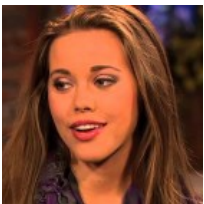


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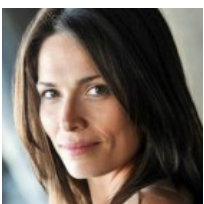
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Guest · 13 days ago  
Who says we don't need the death penalty?  
6 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Motivated Meow · 14 days ago  
To the survivors- we care about you!!  
11 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Motivated Meow · 14 days ago  
How horrible. Those poor children.  
3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



cj · 14 days ago  
I am so sorry this happened to you. I hope those alive are punished. no one should have to go through this. stay strong. there is so much evil in this world. know people are now admiring your strength  
7 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Daisy · 14 days ago  
Wow, I know one of the people in the picture, and he already told me many years ago that this was happening at that school. I def believe him.  
3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Sad → Daisy · 10 days ago  
The people who graduated from there are all so weird. Yes they are set for life academically, but at what cost? Not worth your sanity or peace of mind.  
^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Carolyn~ · 14 days ago  
I am so very proud of Stephen, and his classmates. You all are so very brave, and your speaking up will help others! Thank you all!

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and your speaking up will help others! Thank you all~  
7 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Carolyn~** · 14 days ago

I am

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**IMO75** · 14 days ago

They are very courageous to come forward and be the public face for such an awful thing. I hope this reduces the stigma and inspires other victims to come forward.

6 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Jenny** · 14 days ago

They have my sympathy as well as my admiration....the only way this will stop, is by telling the stories. It also serves as a reminder to parents to TALK to your KIDS! Thank you, you are very brave!!!

6 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Guest 45** · 14 days ago

My thoughts and prayers to all the victims. I hope the "sickos" get exactly what they deserve for what they did to those innocent children at the time.....only now those children are adults who are still struggling for what happened to them back then.

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**HM Alumnus** · 14 days ago

Re: speaking up: students did report abuse to the school. At least 25 are known. They were intimidated and misled at the time and later when others came forward.

12 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Sad** ➔ **HM Alumnus** · 10 days ago

The book called "Academy X" is based on Horace Mann. It's written by a teacher. The school fired him after the book came out.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Raquel45** · 14 days ago

this happened to my brother...he is forever scarred from it. I hope these men find peace in their hearts, AND JUSTICE!

12 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**tracy** · 14 days ago

I felt light-headed and sick when I read this, but thank god they spoke up. We have to speak up more to save lives. I admire each and every one of them.

16 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**really** ➔ **tracy** · 14 days ago

I did too. What they went through is beyond words.....There are some sick b@stards out there.

10 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**tracy** ➔ **really** · 14 days ago

Yeah, it's a scary world. And those at the top are usually the sick ones.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**SusieKJ** · 14 days ago

It's extremely painful to read, but I recommend the NY Times article on this. Amanda, at least one boy did tell, even wrote the headmaster, and the mother confronted the teacher. The school's response was to support the pedophile teacher.

12 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Fighter** ➔ **SusieKJ** · 14 days ago

Until the laws are changed and in cases like this, a pedophile is given serious punishment, like life in prison or execution, this will be happening, ruining kids' lives and making their loved ones suffer from the ripple effect. I know many survivors, and only a few of them are able to fully function in this world as adults without therapies and drugs.



**HIDIPUS** · 14 days ago

i have a CRITICAL question for all of the posters on this board , WHY oh why do people (men mostly) sexually abuse . is it the fact that WOMEN never give themselves away so easily .  
is it that MEN, more often than not , are in strong need of sexual RELEASE but this release  
CANNOT really be found out there , as this planet is inhabited by DEMURE STUNTING CREATURES (dont know their name)  
can someone tell me up until when will this female SICK-ATTITUDE go on ? in DEFINITE maybe ?

no hope for an ANSWER .

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**4barblues** → **HIDIPUS** · 14 days ago

There is a difference between sex with an adult and sex with a kid. If a man 'needs release' that @&\$! bad, hire a prostitute, don't rape a kid.

Don't pretend like pedophilia and sexual prudism are the same things, because they are not.

5 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Jenny** → **HIDIPUS** · 14 days ago

Have you seen the teachers who are abusing lately??? I think there are just as many women. I would caution your kids about ALL teachers of BOTH sexes.

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**HM Alumnus** → **HIDIPUS** · 14 days ago

The impression that the abuse at HM was almost exclusively male-male is incorrect, probably a result of the early emerging accounts. Overall, a third of all accounts known so far involve female victims or abusers, with women-as-abusers as frequent as they were a victim of abuse by a male.

Once the school was co-ed in the early 70's, the change in abuse was female abusers, in addition to the male-female abuse. The surprise is the rise of female abusers. By the 80's, three quarters of all accounts involved female abusers or victims (vs. 17% ten years earlier).

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Elaina** → **HIDIPUS** · 14 days ago

It says there was 63 students raped/molested and only 5 out of the 63 were females. That means there was 58 male victims, so your post focusing on females only is incorrect.

I'm sure there is a variety of reasons why these sick individuals do this, but IMO I think it might have to do with showing power and control over others and not about the act at all.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Charles Balter** → **Elaina** · 14 days ago

Five females is five too many. Every victim deserves compassion and support, regardless of gender or sexuality.

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**HIDIPUS** → **Elaina** · 14 days ago

there are plenty of ways to show power and control over someone , no need to resort to sexual abuse in order to fulfill their ego , the reason why one do abuse still remains unclear.....

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**HIDIPUS** → **Elaina** · 14 days ago

sexual abuse is closely related to sexual orientation , its because all of those abusive teachers couldnt find homo- sexual release maybe ? you can never tell but you need to know that sexual abusive behavior is a matter of choice



those who choose to abuse, are definitely in lack of some sexual release <object>

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**2em** → HIDIPUS · 14 days ago

You seem to have been misinformed, pedophilia is not related to homosexuality. It is really important not to confuse same-sex relationships between two consenting adults, with people who are sexually attracted to children

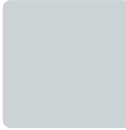
5 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Deb** → HIDIPUS · 14 days ago

Please do some research because sexual abuse, particularly in the case of pedophilia, is very seldom related to sexual orientation. The vast majority of adult male pedophiles that abuse young boys are actually heterosexual in their adult relationships.

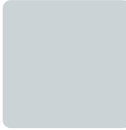
11 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Armando56** · 14 days ago

It makes me sick that authority figures could abuse children and get away with it for so many years. As parents we need to be open with our children so they will be more likely to tell. We all need to look out for our own and other children who may be at risk so we can protect them from sickos.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**perky** · 14 days ago

Whoa, that is sick and sad.

7 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Autumn** · 14 days ago

WHY do kids not tell their parents???? I just don't get it. I am teaching my kids to speak up if anyone ever touches them or does anything inappropriate. I also teach them that it can be anyone- a neighbor, family member, etc.... If only one of these kids would of told their parents immediately- maybe it would of saved these kids years of abuse!

7 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Jenny** → Autumn · 14 days ago

If you look at the ages of those men, it was a lifetime ago. I'm not nuts about how things are going today in general, but having the abuse (of anyone) come to the forefront, is a great thing! It's the only path to having this garbage stop. There are kids in my day who actually did tell their parents about some of the priest abuse, but in many cases, the parents thought the kids were fibbing, or somehow, the priests brushed it off. My parents used to tell us, there's a special place in hell for those who abuse kids, the elderly and the vulnerable.....I hope they were right about that!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Guest** → Autumn · 14 days ago

Likely several of the kids told their parents, but a) in the era it was happening and b) in the tax bracket it was happening, these things often got swept under the rug. Also, kids who weren't close to their parents (again, often the case in these types of tax brackets - this was an extremely prestigious (read: expensive) school) may worry about being blamed by them, and in some cases were correct to be scared.

Just because the kids didn't speak up doesn't mean they are to blame for the perpetuated abuses. They shouldn't have HAD to speak up, it should never have happened. And when your future is riding on your education (the way they drill it into these kids), you aren't going to make waves against your teachers or principal. Also, they were likely threatened and mentally manipulated as well. Just because you can't imagine not telling someone doesn't mean it's their fault for not speaking up. Blaming the victims, especially when their kids, is a terrible reaction.

13 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**button** → Autumn · 14 days ago

Just because you tell your kids to speak up doesn't mean they will. Kids are afraid and embarrassed. Sometimes they wonder if it really happened and if it does, will tell them. Parents are not doing it right

at all or if they will be believed. Perverts work in sick ways on purpose to ensure kids' silence. The thing I do to protect my children is being very careful where they go (trips, sports etc) If something seems fishy, there's usually a reason why. Of course you wouldn't want to lock up your kids, but if a teacher/coach is offering kids free after school lessons or rides, my antenna go up. In my country, we don't have sleepovers. In many ways, it makes sense and I'm glad I don't have to deal with "the house with the creepy dad".

9 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**afvet** ➔ Autumn · 14 days ago

In the sixties, you didn't talk of such things. The victims were blamed, shamed and humiliated. If by some chance charges were filed, the victim would be shredded on the witness stand. It's only been in the last 15-20 years that things have changed enough were people can say 'hey, this happened to me.' And kids are realizing that if they speak up that adults will listen and believe them.

7 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Olympia01** ➔ Autumn · 14 days ago

I told my Mom - she said "All men do it and there's nothing you can do about it." I believed her for 14 more years and why wouldn't I have? I had the abuser telling me to keep quiet and my mother agreeing with him. Are you blaming me now for this because I had this example and the shame associated with sexual abuse? Autumn - you might not believe this, but your words are incredibly damaging to victims of abuse. I was the child, the abusers were the adults.

29 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Rick** ➔ Autumn · 14 days ago

I think it's wonderful that you talk openly with your kids and encourage them to speak up if anything should happen. However, I'm surprised that you, as a mother, are blaming those kids for the ongoing abuse - and you are. I hope nothing ever happens to your children, but if it does, I hope they tell you immediately. But if they do not and more children are abused, how would you feel if another adult placed the blame on your child?

25 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Carrie** ➔ Rick · 14 days ago

I don't think Autumn is blaming the kids or realizes that it sounds that way. I think it's more an "if only" as in it's so sad that all of them were so afraid that they didn't come forward. Just one kid coming forward might have toppled that horrible chain of abuse. But it does feel (in a way) like throwing stones at the very innocent child victims even if it's not meant that way. Ask a kid why they never told their parents - the answer isn't complicated. They were scared, they didn't know what to do, they were frozen by that fear.

7 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Your Momma's Chest Hair** ➔ Autumn · 14 days ago

Someone flashed me as a kid and I never told anyone. I was too embarrassed by it to say anything. I can't imagine if it had been worse for me. So I understand why they didn't speak up. It's both embarrassing and, as one person noted they do sometimes make threats, scary too.

16 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**HIDIPUS** ➔ Your Momma's Chest Hair · 14 days ago

flashing aint that bad, just Flip your FINGER at the flasher, as it might be bigger than his " TOOL"

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Your Momma's Chest Hair** ➔ HIDIPUS · 14 days ago


I assume that was meant to be funny but a grown man sitting in his car outside a soccer field while he played with himself isn't funny. I was 8.

15 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**HIDIPUS** ➔ Your Momma's Chest Hair · 14 days ago



- 

but thats another story , what it really has to do with the flash-incident that occured to you ?

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**HIDIPUS** ➔ Your Momma's Chest Hair · 14 days ago

joking apart , it really works , yeah really i tell you . all of those flashing-tards exhibit themselves to boost their ego-sickness , so dont just give them a chance to do so...

1

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**guest2** ➔ Your Momma's Chest Hair · 14 days ago

It's not at all funny, but I think this person is a regular troll on this site, so just ignore him.

6

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**HIDIPUS** ➔ guest2 · 14 days ago

youre the one to be ignored , i wont call you a name btw

^

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**Emily** ➔ Autumn · 14 days ago

Whether you realize it or not, you are placing part of the blame on the victims - CHILDREN. It's great that you talk to your kids about sexual abuse, but maybe they weren't fortunate enough to have parents to educate them the way you're educating your children. These kids were probably frightened and ashamed and, like many sexual abuse victims, blamed themselves.

16

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**guest** ➔ Autumn · 14 days ago

Usually because the perpetrator threatens the child with killing their parents, killing them or something equally as repugnant? Then there's the guilt and shame that comes from having endured the act itself. Obviously you've never been in this situation -- have a little compassion.

11

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**Carrie** ➔ Autumn · 14 days ago

Sometimes kids are afraid. They think THEY will get in trouble, that THEY did something wrong. They are ashamed that they let this happen to them. I'm sure that's what child abusers count on - the shame and fear their victims feel. It can take a long time to come to an understanding that you aren't the one who should feel ashamed, that you were the VICTIM. Kids sometimes just don't know - that's why these vile abusers go after them in the first place, because kids can be easily manipulated and don't have an understanding about how the world works. Not all parents teach their kids to speak up and tell if someone touches them. I think you are parenting correctly but even kids who are raised the way you are raising yours might still be scared to speak up.

14

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**Vivi** ➔ Carrie · 14 days ago

Also, kids often overestimate what they can handle. They might not even see it as abuse at the time, just out-of-bounds behavior from a favorite teacher they don't want to get in trouble. They often do not realize the psychological havoc an incident can wreak on them over time.

3

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