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## Column: Where's the victims' bridge?

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Posted: Sunday, June 7, 2015 12:00 am | Updated: 6:55 am, Sun Jun 7, 2015.

By Phil Gianficaro News columnist

The victims continue searching for that bridge. The bridge to normalcy.

They're the 26 victims of convicted child sexual predator Jerry Sandusky, the former football coach at Penn State University. They're the mostly prepubescent boys he abused in unimaginable ways in empty Nittany Lions locker rooms and showers, and in hotel rooms and cars, and even in his own home.

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It's in those terror-filled places, far away from objecting eyes, where this sexually violent pedophile used the enticing carrot of Penn State football to take away their clothes, their ability to trust, and their innocence.

Sandusky's victims, now adults, search for that bridge to normalcy every day. Experts say the bridge from horror to healing is one not easily found. I experienced that close up. Shortly after the Sandusky story became front-page news, I interviewed a man who was sexually abused as a child, not by Sandusky, but by a family member. He told me that as he watched the story unfold on TV one day, he curled up in his living-room chair in a fetal position, pulled a blanket over his head, and trembled uncontrollably. Child sexual abuse: a long-tentacled monster.

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o's role in the decision by former college administrators not to report to outside authorities what they learned Sandusky was doing to young boys.

Say what you will about Paterno having reported what he knew about Sandusky to his superiors — that he met his baseline legal obligation. I've always contended that had one of the young boys been a Paterno grandson, the old coach would have handled it much differently.

But what many of us cannot get past is an email uncovered by investigators and written by former PSU athletic director Tim Curley to his colleagues after Paterno informed him about Sandusky.

In it, Curley refers to a meeting he had that day with then-PSU President Graham Spanier and indicates that he and Spanier apparently discussed the Sandusky incident two days earlier. He also refers to a conversation the day before with Paterno. It's not known what Paterno may have said. Curley then indicates that he no longer wants to contact child welfare authorities just yet.

"After giving it more thought and talking it over with Joe yesterday, I am uncomfortable with what we agreed were the next steps," Curley wrote.

Curley apparently preferred to keep the situation an internal affair and talk things over with Sandusky instead of notifying the state's child welfare agency.

"I am having trouble with going to everyone but the person involved (Sandusky)," Curley continued.

For those who view this case objectively, and not through blue-and-white glasses, 409 victories and crisp fall afternoons in Beaver Stadium, there's but one way to interpret that damning email.

There may come a time when it will be appropriate to name a bridge after Joe Paterno, but that time is not now. There's no telling what additional information regarding his role in the Sandusky case will emerge during the trials of Spanier, Curley, and former university senior VP Gary Schultz. What's the hurry? The bridge will be there.

Jerry Sandusky will spend up to 60 years behind bars after being found guilty on 45 counts of child sex abuse. He'll essentially spend the rest of his life in prison.

Many of his victims, who will never have a bridge named after them, know exactly how he feels.

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