

# Collateral damage – learning to live without regret: Part IV

written by admin | June 7, 2019



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## Part IV: Barely surviving

By Daisy . . . Two years later, I had gained a little confidence after finally leaving my retail job for an administrative assistant position, and I had the brilliant idea of picking up where my life left off in 2003. I decided to finally get on with my original plans and attend graduate school. We ended up moving to a different location within the same state where we had hoped things would be “calm.” Calm was always a relative term because there was nothing easy about having your address, vehicle, and face on the sex offender registry. Like every other person on the list, Alan and I both lived in constant fear of vigilantism.

The hope for calm, however, completely vanished as we soon realized that our new county of residence had vastly different rules than our previous one. For example, Alan was now required to attend therapy and was obligated to meet with his probation officer with far more frequency than he ever did before. His new probation officer was convinced (as he was convinced about every sex offender on his caseload, we later learned) that Alan was a sexually deviant predator ready to “strike” again. His reasoning was that child pornography was predictive of worse behavior, which may be true in some cases, so I won’t argue with his professional experience. But he didn’t know Alan. The probation officer thought Alan was a threat when, in reality, he was a completely and utterly

broken man. Jobless. Directionless. Sickly. Pitiful. Pathetic. Other than the suicide attempt, it was the absolute nadir of Alan's existence.

Alan's "therapy" was unbelievably soul-crushing. I remember waiting for him in the parking lot to drive him home after group therapy and seeing all of the other offenders walk out to their cars, their faces sullen and grim. Some of their offenses were of a much more serious nature, and all I could think of was how my sweet Alan from high school could **ever** be lumped into the same category. I learned from the system that when it comes to sex offenses, there is no "worse" offense than another. Alan with his five pornographic photos is considered just as vile as those whose hands-on, forced offenses were truly heinous. I came to learn that, in the eyes of the public, there was no spectrum of offense because **everyone** on the list is considered an equivalent monster.

Eventually, his probation officer convinced the therapist that Alan was indeed a horrible predator. He provided the statement from the investigator that said they had recovered those "thousands and thousands" of photos from Alan's computer, so the proof was in the pudding—or the hearing notes, as it were. Thus began a series of events in late 2008 where I truly thought my only option was suicide—and *that* is an absolutely terrifying place to exist.

Alan's probation officer decided to enforce a request, as he did for all offenders in his caseload—a request that was somehow legal, though I'm not entirely sure how. He asked Alan to take a polygraph test to prove that what he was telling his therapist was true. I suppose we thought that he had no rights as a sex offender, so of course we could not object to the therapist sharing with his probation officer what we thought should have been protected medical information.

What exactly was Alan telling his therapist that prompted the need for a polygraph? He was telling them the same thing he

always had: He had no sexual interest in children or adolescents. He downloaded the images of child pornography while he was bored and waiting for music to download on something called the IRC (Internet Relay Chat). In essence, the IRC was a popular place for computer nerds to transfer files to each other's computers back when the internet became popular, and, being a computer whiz, Alan was certainly no stranger to it. He admittedly used it to download music and software—unquestionably crimes in and of themselves—but, instead, he was caught for the five pornographic images he downloaded. They were downloaded from a fellow IRC user in a nearby state whose server showed the activity and showed that a user from Alan's IP address downloaded five images using his university account. Alan told his therapist that he barely remembered downloading and viewing them and likely deleted them as he never thought to look at them again. The court notes I've seen describe the five images, which appear to possibly be the same image or slightly similar, as some variation of "image of nude teen female on bed."

Despite the fact that the images were of a teen (and I'm not going to split hairs or minimize here), his probation officer believed he was somehow a threat to the entire community of prepubescent female children at-large. Being faced with a very serious requirement, we researched the efficacy of polygraphs and learned that they are not very accurate, especially if you are nervous. Alan did not have the confidence to **not** be nervous during the exam, so we knew that he would likely fail. I scrambled to find housing in our original county, and we essentially fled as fast as it could be arranged. He was scheduled to take the polygraph in January, and we escaped in December. I say "escaped" because I am certain Alan would have failed the polygraph in some way, which would have prompted a probation violation, which would have meant jail time. What I learned about this experience is that when you are faced with a future that includes probable jail time based on a faulty rationale, then you will do anything you can to survive.

Our survival strategy involved moving back to the county where we knew they would not require a polygraph or therapy, though they instituted the latter a year after we moved back. I must say that I'm forever grateful to the landlord who agreed to rent to us in spite of Alan's criminal record. Other than our previous landlord, the probation officer, and the therapist, there were no other people with whom we ever discussed Alan's conviction at that time. It was incredibly difficult for me to reveal Alan's record to a prospective landlord, but I felt that honesty was the best policy. His kindness and acceptance still cause me to weep as I credit him with literally saving both of our lives by giving us a house to live in—a house we later bought from him as proud homeowners.

***Part V, A new way of life, will post on Friday, June 14.***