

December 31, 2015

Melvin Morse
#707400
SCI
PO Box 500
Georgetown, DE 19947

Dear Melvin,

My name is Ariana. I was a guest speaker for the Victim Impact class at SCI last April, and you were in the group. I will assume that you probably remember my story. After the class you approached me and thanked me for speaking. You wanted to make sure I understood what you were serving time for. I told you I understood and that you had a hard road in front of you, but I wished you well. I meant it. All of this you know.

The following Sunday in church I was overcome with emotion and began crying. I felt strongly that God was letting me know that something good had come for you as a result of hearing me speak.

The very next day I received an email from Mrs. Book with a link to a news article about your case. Even though I live in Pennsylvania, and worked in Maryland at the time, I had heard the media coverage when your case was to trial. It had touched a nerve in me then, as it did when I reread it after being at SCI. You see, what I hadn't told your group (and sometimes I do include this in my talks), is that a child can disassociate from physical and sexual abuse, but the body will not allow you to disassociate while your head is being held under water and your body thinks it is drowning. My talks give a flavor of what I suffered, but I don't share nearly all the stories.

Learning that I had spoken to you, and had even had a strong belief I offered you something, set me back on my heels a bit. But this is God's work, not mine, and I let it go.

So, why am I writing to you now? A few months ago, I changed careers and came to work at Victims' Voices Heard. Just last week I was doing some updates for the Apology Letter Bank and came across your letter of apology to your stepdaughter. Yes, I read it.

Your letter came across as heartfelt and touched me deeply. It is the kind of letter I wished my adoptive mother would have written me. It contains words that were never spoken to me by people who hurt me. My mother passed away years ago still denying any mistreatment – and in fact, her final shot at me was to make sure I didn't find out about her death until many months after it happened. It is hard to grieve a loss when you find out about it so much later. Not only had I lost the only mother I had ever known, no matter how flawed, I lost all hope of reconciliation. Reading your apology letter showed me I hadn't recovered from that loss, and allowed me to process my own grief just a bit more.

Neither of us knows if your stepdaughter will ever read your letter. I hope she does, and that it might help her in her healing. But now you know that your letter helped another soul heal just a bit more.

The Victim Impact program teaches about the ripple effect of crime. Today I am writing to you about the ripple effect of kindness. You have done something in hopes of helping your stepdaughter, and in the process you provided a kindness for someone else.

For that, I thank you. And again, I wish you well.

Peace,

