



Pamela Sue Reser

In 1994, Patricia Reser left her McMinnville, Oregon home and traveled to Dallas, Texas where she dropped off her four children ranging in age from 4 to 8 with a friend and promised to return in several days.

Reser, who would later describe herself as a “drug dealer, a whore, a thief, a junkie and a bad mommy,” never returned. She went back to Oregon and resumed her life.

Four years later, Reser had another child, a daughter, and became embroiled in a dispute over custody. At about the same time, her other four children, who were still living in Texas where Reser’s friend had become their foster mother, claimed they had been sexually abused by Reser and her boyfriend, Jerry Dean Littleton, of Baker City, Oregon, when they were still living with her in McMinnville.

Littleton and Reser, 34, were arrested on charges of rape and sodomy. In June 1999, the charges were dismissed against Littleton for lack of evidence, but Reser went on trial that August in Yamhill County Court.

At the trial, the four children—a girl and three boys—testified that from 1988 until they went to Texas they were forced to have sex with each other and with Reser and her boyfriend. They claimed they frequently went hungry—resorting to stealing to get food—and that she physically abused them as well, hitting them with wooden boards and a golf club.

Reser denied that any sexual abuse ever occurred and said she never struck the children with boards or a golf club. She admitted that she was a poor mother and that she had numerous sex partners, used and sold drugs, stole to support her drug habit and that she occasionally slapped the children.

She told the jury that she believed the children had been persuaded by therapists and their foster mother to make the claims.

A counselor of the children told the jury that children were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and that they were too young to fake it.

No physical evidence was presented to substantiate the claims of sex abuse.

On August 15, 1999, she was convicted of 17 counts of first-degree rape, eight counts of sodomy and four counts of first-degree sex abuse. She was sentenced to 116 years in prison.

In 2002, two of the older boys told their foster mother that they had lied about the sex abuse, rapes and sodomy. Oregon state police commenced a re-investigation of the case and all four children recanted and passed polygraph examinations.

On May 31, 2002, prosecutors and defense attorneys presented a joint motion for a new trial and Reser was released on bail pending another trial. On June 18, 2002, the charges were dismissed.

State: Oregon

County: Yamhill

Most Serious Crime: Child Sex Abuse

Additional Convictions: Sexual Assault

Reported Crime Date: 1994

Convicted: 1999

Exonerated: 2002

Sentence: Life

Race: Caucasian

Sex: Female

Age:

Contributing Factors: Perjury or False Accusation

Did DNA evidence contribute to the exoneration?
No

– Maurice Possley

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Mother Gets New Lease on Life After Exoneration

August 04, 2002 | GILLIAN FLACCUS | ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

McMINNVILLE, Ore. -- Pamela Reser first heard the terrible accusations at a court hearing, when a longtime friend petitioned to adopt her three young boys.

"Your son has been saying you did things to him," Reser remembers the friend saying.

Reser, confused and addicted to alcohol and methamphetamines, brushed it off. But the ugly allegations didn't go away.

Within months, four of Reser's children -- aged 8 and under at the time of the alleged abuse -- would testify that their mother engaged in sexual acts with them and forced them to have sex with each other. In 1999, a judge sentenced her to 116 years in prison.

Reser endured the stony silence of prisoners who called her freak and monster behind her back. She tried to study, exercise and pray. She got used to keeping to herself, even in her darkest moments.

She told her attorneys that she was innocent. She was sure that someday, when they were older, her children would take back what they said.

She was right.

This summer, all charges against her were dismissed, and Reser was released after spending more than three years behind bars.

In May, an unrelated investigation turned up evidence that some of the four children, who now are ages 13 to 18, had recanted their accusations. State police detectives followed up. One by one, the children took back what they'd said under oath.

Not Mad at Children

Now Reser, 37, is trying to rebuild her life and wondering why her children lied. She insists that she is not mad at them and has tried to find the positive in a traumatic experience.

"It's sad the way it went, but I'm not angry," she said, fingering the gold cross around her neck. "It's a miracle if you stop and think about it."

Police say they believe that someone brainwashed the children into testifying against their mother, but they have made no arrests.

The five children in all, who have new adoptive parents and new last names, could not be reached for comment. They have different biological fathers, none of whom are involved in their lives, Reser said.

Prosecutors said they were stunned by the children's admissions.

"There was no indication that this was a memorized story and that this was something they had gotten together and arranged," said Cal Tichenor, Yamhill County deputy district attorney.

Admissions Comforting

Reser is comforted by those admissions.

"My kids, they knew in their heart, they knew that I didn't do those things," she said. "They came forward, and I was just so glad for them."

Reser is now staying with friends. "I have a second chance at life," she said.

While locked up, she managed to get sober, take classes, rediscover her religious faith, and physically challenge herself with daily jogging and weightlifting.

"It would be so easy for her to just kind of give up," said her attorney, Stephen Palmer. "It's frankly pretty inspiring to see a person turn such a negative thing into a positive thing."

Reser's road to prison began with a 1998 custody hearing.

Four years before, her children had been placed in foster homes because of Reser's addictions and neglect. This time, she was before a judge to try to regain custody of a fifth child, a baby girl.

But at the hearing, she learned that a secret indictment had been filed detailing sexual abuses that she allegedly committed against her children.

On Dec. 17, 1998, police arrested her, and she was charged with rape and sodomy.

The older children said the crimes happened between 1988 and 1994, ending when the state took custody of them. When they accused her, Reser had not seen them for at least three years. She had been living on the street or with friends, lost in her addictions.

Reser insisted that she had never touched her children in those ways. She began to think that God might be punishing her for abandoning her responsibilities.

"I ran, I ran hard. I was on a suicide mission -- it's sad, but it's true," she said.

"I held a lot of guilt for the things that I did to my children, not being there for them. Maybe because of the lifestyle that I lived, one of my boyfriends could have done these things behind my back," Reser said. "That crossed my mind."

Still, Reser wasn't prepared for what happened during the five-day trial.

Jurors cried. Those who originally looked at Reser with sympathy later refused to make eye contact. The court had to take a break during the youngest boy's testimony because the stuffed animal he clung to was sopping with tears.

'I Was Traumatized'

Another child read a letter to his mother during sentencing, saying, "I don't know why they can't just kill you and get it over with."

Said Reser: "I was wondering who put those words in their mouth, because I knew I didn't do those things to them. I was really wondering what was going on. I was traumatized."

Tichenor called it "the most horrendous case that I have prosecuted."

On May 15, three detectives arrived at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility to tell Reser that her children had confessed to falsely accusing her.

"They said, 'Well, your kids recanted.' I was running back and forth and I said, 'Say it again, one more time.' I didn't even know if I'd get out of prison, but I didn't care," Reser said.

A 'Lost Puppy'

When Reser was freed two weeks later, "she was like a little lost puppy," said her mother, Millie Reser. "She just stayed close to the wall, she was so scared."

Tichenor says he is now convinced of Reser's innocence, but he will not charge the children with perjury.

"I believed very much that she was guilty at the time," he said. "But I am satisfied that if we had the evidence then that we have now that she never would have been convicted."

Reser believes that her release is a chance to get her life back on track.

She is learning to enjoy the small things -- having a private bathroom, sleeping in, walking on the beach and wearing civilian clothes.

She savors the memory of her first meal on the outside -- a Burger King Whopper with cheese, an order of fries, a Sprite and chocolate pie.

She hopes to earn a high school equivalency degree, get a job at a fast-food restaurant and move into her own apartment.

"I've got to start somewhere," she said. "I don't want to take one day for granted anymore."

<http://www.solresearch.org/~SOLR/rprt/bkgrd/FalsAcCases.htm>

**Pamela Reser — McMinnville, Oregon, US — 1999 (conviction)
Prosecution with imprisonment**

“Reser was convicted of raping her four small children and sentenced to 116 years in jail. Her children alleged that she forced them to have sex with her, each other, and her boyfriends. Apparently, their foster mother put them up to this, because they all later recanted. Reser was incarcerated for more than three years before release.”¹



- Location: McMinnville, Yamhill County, Oregon
- 1 Claimed Innocent: Pamela Sue Reser
- Outcome: Sentence: 116 years¹, Correction: Released after new police investigation.³, Incarcerated: More than three years
- Dates: Conviction: 1999³, Release: May 31, 2002³
- Problems: **Recanted testimony**. “[D]etectives verified that Pamela's four children admitted they made up the alleged abuse she was convicted of. A polygraph test of one of the children confirmed to the investigators the recantations were real.”³
- Latest information: June 2002³

Source:

1. [Pamela Sue Reser](#) by Dan Rastatter, *Victims of the State*, July 2005
2. [Pamela Sue Reser](#) by Hans Sherrer, *Innocents Database*, Forejustice
3. [Innocent Small-Town Oregon Woman Freed From 116 Year Sentence For Non-existent Crimes](#) — Pamela Sue Reser, wrongly convicted in 1999 of raping her four small children and sentenced to 116 years in prison, was released on May 31, 2002 when an investigation by the Oregon State Police uncovered that the crimes she was convicted of hadn't occurred. — *Justice Denied*, June 2002 (Undated; date is month of latest event mentioned)

Listed in: [JustD](#), [VotS](#)