

The Early Life of Ray Tibbetts

Clemency Presentation

Life at Home

On June 8, 1957, Ray was born to Deanna and Stanley Tibbetts.

By 1958, the Tibbetts had five children under the age of ten:
Suzanne, Rick, Archie, Ray and Willie.

Life at home was traumatic and chaotic.

certainly does not promise very much in the way of further probationary or social treatment in the community and GIS was recommended". She married Mr. Tibbetts on 6/25/48 in Cincinnati and from this union had five children. This has been a rather stormy marriage, due mostly to Mr. Tibbett's desertion.

Mr. Tibbetts is one of six children born to Cornelius and Ada Tibbetts. He was formerly married and had one child, Constance, age 14 from this marriage.

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 4

Both parents were abusive, alcoholics, and struggled to provide basic care for their children.

With their parents absent from the home, Suzanne was forced to care for the younger boys even though she was just a child herself.

In July 1959, Children's Services removed all of the Tibbetts children from their parents' home and placed them in the foster care system.



Living at the Merrimans

Children's Services first placed the children with the Merrimans.

Children's Services noted the unsatisfactory conditions at the Merrimans as early as October 1960.

and Mrs. Merriman's home being approved as a boarding home by the agency for the Merriman children only, I have not been satisfied with this arrangement and have therefore supervised this home closely. There are too many conflicting and disturbing factors to make this a good placement for the children. The situation demands continual vigilance in order to formulate careful future plans for the best interest and welfare of the Tibbetts children.

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 8

The State failed to take any corrective action or remove the children.

In addition to fostering the five Tibbetts children, the Merrimans also had four biological children living in the home at the same time.

I have talked to Mrs. Merriman many times regarding the children's food since she has been accused a few times of not adequate nourishing the children. She has always indicated that she buys a great deal of milk for the children

drinks, buy fruit from the peddler, sometimes fruits out of season, with money which Mrs. Merriman has given them, I question whether they receive a good nourishing diet.

few similar incidents. Ricky's stealing has been a way of getting money yet it is significant that he steals lunch money, indicating an inadequacy of food and lunches.

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 10

Despite continued documentation of abuse in the Merriman's home, Children's Services still failed to take any action to protect or remove the children.

In May 1961, Ms. Tibbetts brought Suzanne and Rick home under agency supervision.

Claiming lack of financial resources, Ms. Tibbetts left the three younger boys with the Merrimans.

She doesn't offer the children any security.

disciplining the children. The woman needs help. She simply doesn't want the responsibility of these children. She is very narcissistic and full of self-pity.

an unstable and unpredictable woman,

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 13, 36

When Suzanne and Rick were taken back home, the three youngest boys - Archie, Ray and Willie - were forced to stay at the Merrimans.

Suzanne and Rick told their mother about the abuse at the Merrimans, but again, Children's Services took no action to remove the boys.

the Merrimans, saying Suzanne is now telling her the many cruelties they all received; couldn't watch TV, were beaten if they soiled their pants, were tied in bed, didn't get to eat after school - had to go outside or to bed, beat Suzanne's ear - if she didn't cry, beat her harder. Suzanne says she couldn't talk before because she would be beaten if anything got back to the Merrimans. Ricky verifies these statements adding the Merrimans had eggs or french toast for breakfast, but the Tibbetts always had oatmeal. Mrs. Becker said all the children are skeletons now- I could realize this if I had seen them before. She hopes Mr. Tibbetts will take the children

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 15

After Willie was severely burned, the State finally removed the three boys from the Merrimans in November 1961.

10-9-61 (E. DeWitt-lmb) I visited the Merrimans today- primarily to see Willard, who was sleeping on the couch in the living room. He was bandaged all over his legs and arm; was very listless and groggy from his ordeal. Mrs. M. was still all upset, saying Willard said Archie had lifted him up on

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 15

Living at the Oswalds

Children Services then placed Ray and Willie with the Oswalds where they lived with at least five other foster children and the Oswald's five biological children.

Archie briefly returned to his mother's home but was quickly separated from the family and placed in various other foster homes.



The problem erupted after the children had been returned to the foster parents. Willie and Raymond were quite restless, being unable to sleep at night. This kept the foster parents awake. Willie, during this period of time, wet the bed constantly while Raymond rocked himself to sleep. It took the foster parents about one week to help the children to adjust to their new home.

These boys come into one
They crave love and attention.

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 25

In the late 1960's and 1970's,
2020 was a juvenile detention center
used to house delinquent youth in a
high security setting.

very lengthy conversation she sounded much more positive
a week later, Ray was again missing from the foster home

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 63

Children's Services attempted to
reconnect the boys with their parents
for years with no success.

The Tibbetts have not visited the boys, Mrs. Oswald says, since 12-66. This worker has been unable to contact Mr. Tibbetts, so it is suggested that the new worker continue to try to find these parents, as visits are important to these boys.

There has been no recent word from them, nor are we aware of their present address or circumstances. It would be strongly advisable for the new worker to attempt to locate them, as their visits have some real meaning to the boys.

There has been no parental contact for these boys.

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 52, 53, 57

she really doesn't want them.

his parents have not been able to show any interest in him,
his aunt and uncle. He feels that he "won the prize" to
live as virtual orphans
the Oswald household

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 57, 61, 65

7-15-70 - Ray and Willie received their first letter from their mother in over
9 years. Willie has already written back to her. Mr. Tibbetts called today
and says he is interested in contacting the boys. We will wait to see what
happens.

Oswald foster home. They have not heard from their mother since September,
1971. She all of a sudden quit writing and when I called her to ask what
happened she told me she no longer wanted to write to the boys because she
knows she could never have them. I don't quite buy that excuse because it is

There has been no contact with the family at all.
received phone calls concerning the boys' mother

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 56, 60, 61

With nowhere else to go, and
continued inaction by Children's Services
the boys remained at the Oswalds.

State says shelter neglected children

By Terry Boschert
Staff writer

the county Friday alleging chil- soon as possible with Seth P. and have placed themselves in

The Allen House was a placement
facility for unwanted children and
troubled youth.

The facility had a history of
neglecting and abusing the children
placed there.



where, he would have to be placed probably in a boy's residential setting.
After our visit to Allen House, Ray came back saying how great it was there.
I again repeated that I would not place him there.

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 61

Children's Services noted concerns with the discipline and care the boys received at the Oswalds, but the boys were not removed.

... on one occasion beaten Willy with a belt. The bruises and cuts sustained from the beating are diabolical. The O's are also hypocritical of W's friends. They never fail to go between the boys and their friends. The total lack of feeling these people show is quite overwhelming. ... also go out the bedroom window and come back in the morning. Of course, the other kids, would hear him leave and tell the O's. The O's are so restrictive that the kids have absolutely no freedom, therefore, they take what they can. Then the O's ground them, usually Willy, for a week. Dad Oswald has on

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 67

In addition to the physical and emotional abuse, Willie also reported sexual abuse at the Oswalds.

Life after the Oswalds:

After ten years in the Oswald's home, the State removed Ray and Willie.

After leaving the Oswalds, the boys cycled through orphanages, group homes, and the juvenile detention center.

By the age of 14, Ray had already begun drinking and abusing drugs.



General Protestant Orphan Home

... at LIVE OAKS VOCATIONAL SCHOOL. In the early spring problems drinking and asserting his independence to ... since both denied the fact that they had been drinking (Ray could barely walk and smelled like a brewery ... ing to Mr. Otten who picked them up) and that they ... two incidences of being arrested for drunkenness.

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 69, 6-17-74 dictation

At the age of 18, Ray was released from state custody, lived alone, and was trying to survive on the streets.

I would like to add that I still feel Ray is basically a very decent person, but still needs help overcoming problems stemming from early abuse, neglect, a bad foster placement, and very negative family relationships. Also, Ray has been extremely honest in all his dealings with me.

Ray pled guilty to these charges before Referee Strickman, who felt, as I did, that Ray's past showed him as a young man in need of help not punishment. Ray was released to go back to the Idle Creek Center. On 10-31-71 Ray was released.

Hamilton County Children's Services Record, p. 69



Where Are They Now?

Suzanne:

At 14, Suzanne ran away from home.

She lived on the streets and spent time in juvenile detention.

She got married at the age of 15 and had 2 children.

Suzanne left her abusive husband after 13 years of marriage.

She has been married 4 times.

Suzanne still struggles with mental and physical illnesses, but she finally has some stability in her life.



Rick:

Rick left home at an early age.

He briefly served in the military, but was discharged.

Rick struggled with drug abuse and spent time in and out of jails.

Rick never found a stable home or long-term employment.

He lives alone in a single-room transient motel in St. Petersburg.

He plays music on the street and in bars to make ends meet.



Archie:

Archie remained separated from the family as a teen.

He struggled with addiction and became involved in the criminal justice system.

He spent much of his adult life in and out of prison.

When he was not in prison, he was transient and lived alone.

At the age of 44, Archie committed suicide.



George:

As a teen, George began abusing alcohol and struggling with addiction.

George has wrestled with the demons from his abusive childhood his entire life.

He served 10 years in prison.

George struggles with mental health issues but is currently stable with counseling and a medication regime.

