

## 3 Arkansans remember Boy Scouts as dark time

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A Boy Scout uniform badge is shown during a news conference in front of the Boy Scouts of America headquarters in Irving, Texas, in this Feb. 4, 2013, file photo.

*Photo by: AP / Tony Gutierrez*

A 13-year-old boy was given a choice for how his next moment in the Boy Scouts would unfold.

Both choices -- about how to sexually pleasure the man standing in front of him, staring -- were horrifying.

Lee Keeton Jr. was that boy, and the man was a Boy Scout leader. The sexual abuse occurred 60 years ago in a cabin near Texarkana.

Keeton, now 72, is among more than 13,000 men who have stepped forward this year seeking restitution from the Boy Scouts of America for sexual abuse.

More than half of the men, 7,000 of them, are being represented by attorneys for Abused in Scouting.

In February, the Boy Scouts of America filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. It did so, the organization stated, to "create a trust that would provide equitable compensation to victims."

Abused in Scouting was created for men to confront the abuses they endured while in the Boy Scouts. The lead attorney for the group is Andrew Van Arsdale of San Diego.

Keeton is being represented by Van Arsdale's group, as are several others from Arkansas.

Since the bankruptcy filing, the roster of men filing claims has expanded, lately, even faster than before. During the first week of August, more than 600 men filed claims, Van Arsdale said.

By comparison, it took six months for the first 500 to sign up, according to the group.

Everyone who reaches out has to provide vital, verifiable information, Van Arsdale said. That includes where the incidents took place, which troop, the abuser's name, how many times the abuse happened and approximately for how long.

"It's a very intensive process to file a claim," Van Arsdale said. "Everything

needs to line up. We're very upfront about that fact during the initial interview."

The claim is complete after the person signs an affidavit. Each is reminded that perjury carries a maximum fine of \$500,000 and a prison sentence of up to a year.

The deadline for victims to file claims is Nov. 16.

On Thursday, the Boy Scouts of America said in a statement to the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette that it supports victims.

"First and foremost, we care deeply about all victims of child abuse and sincerely apologize to anyone who was harmed during their time in Scouting," it said. "We are outraged that there have been times when individuals took advantage of our program to abuse innocent children. We believe victims, we support them, we pay for counseling by a provider of their choice and we encourage them to come forward. It is the Boy Scouts of America policy that all incidents of suspected abuse are reported to law enforcement."

Referring to the Nov. 16 deadline, the organization stated, "we encourage all victims to file a claim and will be providing extensive noticing to ensure that there is a clear process for them to do so."

## TO A DARK PLACE

Keeton was abused in 1960. Six decades later, the harrowing memories haven't faded. He told few people about it, including just one person outside his family -- a friend who he learned had been molested by the same man.

Keeton never knew his abuser's full name, just his surname. He had never met the man before that day, and he had only that one overnight encounter with him, he said.

Keeton, who is Black, grew up in segregation, and the Boy Scouts site outside town where he was taken that day was known as the "white camp."

The man picked him up at his Texarkana home under the promise of teaching Keeton how to operate a movie projector. Keeton's church was considering buying a projector, and his father thought it would be a useful skill for his son.

When Keeton and the Scout leader arrived at the camp, it was already getting dark, and the camp was empty. Keeton expected to see other people there, and the man promised that others would show up later. They never did.

The Scout leader suggested they play a game. It involved stripping down to their underwear.

At the man's request, Keeton tied the Scout leader to a bedpost and started whipping him with a rope. Then the man told the boy to untie him, and the two switched roles.

Worse was yet to come.

The man told the crying boy that he either had to give the man a cat bath or "pester" him, Keeton recalled, explaining that the boy had to either lick the man's naked body or masturbate him with a handkerchief.

During a phone interview with the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, Keeton

related the encounter, breaking down when he recalled licking his own arm to see if he could bring himself to lay his tongue on the man.

"I didn't like how that felt," Keeton said as he wept. "I knew I didn't want to do that."

He decided on the second option.

The man told him to place a cloth across his private area and start rubbing it, Keeton said.

The man made Keeton repeat that two more times during the night. After the sun came up, the man drove the boy home.

Keeton told his mother, who then screamed at her husband for letting a stranger come to their home and take their child.

Keeton's parents reported what happened to the Boy Scouts, and the man was not heard from again, he said.

Many years later, Keeton lived in the Dallas area and would drive past the headquarters of the Boy Scouts of America. Each time, he remembered what that man had done to him. He considered tracking down the man and finding where he lived.

"I was going to try and find him and confront him," Keeton said. "I was convinced, almost certain that I was going to [assault] him."

He never did.

Earlier this year, Keeton learned of the bankruptcy on the news and decided to file a claim. He hopes the Boy Scouts admit fault and pay a settlement to those who were tormented by the predators on its payroll, many of whom were reassigned to other troops rather than be fired, according to Abused in Scouting.

For Keeton, any mention of child sex abuse, whether through the Catholic Church or U.S.A. Gymnastics, angers him.

"Every time I hear about it, I get mad," he said. "I get angry. It's indescribable, unless it's happened to you."

## STIRRED MEMORIES

(One of the sources for this article, an abuse survivor, requested that his name not be used. He's referred to in this section as "Walker.")

Walker, who lives in Little Rock, joined Van Arsdale's case a year ago. Now 32, he said he was abused by his Scout leader at least 10 times in elementary school.

Walker joined the Cub Scouts through his school and advanced to the Boy Scouts as he got older.

"All my friends were doing it," he said. "It was fun. ... It was where you learned how to be a man."

Walker suppressed the memories of abuse until he began therapy as a young adult. Over time, his recollections grew more vivid.

Walker was abused as an 8-year-old Scout.

"Everything came back," he said of the memories. "It wasn't pleasant."

The abuse occurred in the locker room at school and at a Boy Scouts camp in Damascus.

His Scout leader told him he was in "an environment of trust" and that his parents "would not understand what goes on in Scouts."

The leader made him think sexual activities were a normal part of the Boy Scouts experience, he said.

Walker called him "a manipulative creature."

The abuse involved oral and finger encounters.

One day, at the Damascus camp, Walker wasn't feeling well.

His Scout leader, noticing Walker walking away from one of the camp activities and heading to the cabin, took him over to another area of the camp. He took him to a bush that had arching branches, which acted as a canopy. It shielded them from the sight of the other Boy Scouts.

The Scout leader gave Walker oral sex under that bush, he said.

The man told the boy, "don't worry, this will take care of your stomach pain."

Walker remembers hearing people walking by and talking, not realizing that a child was being abused 10 yards away.

"He had the audacity to do this near God-knows how many people," Walker said.

As an adult, Walker reported the incidents to law enforcement. He was told he was six months too late. The statute of limitations had expired.

"I thought, 'this sick piece of s\* is going to get away with it,'" he said.

Walker filed a lawsuit against the Boy Scouts in federal court in Washington, D.C. That case has been paused pending the outcome of the bankruptcy case, Van Arsdale said. His abuser is named in the original suit.

Walker is in a "unique position" because he filed a lawsuit before the bankruptcy case, his attorney said.

By outing his abuser, Walker was "able to take back that power," Van Ankle said.

"A lot of people won't have that opportunity through the bankruptcy," the attorney said.

Walker started having seizures during his young adult life, which disrupted his pursuit of a college degree. Doctors were perplexed about the cause, but eventually, they surmised that the seizures were stress-induced. He manages his seizures better today, he said.

"This deeply affected pretty much every relationship that I have, romantic, interpersonal, any relationship you can think of," Walker said. "It's hard for me to trust anyone."



Walker is still going to school and is gainfully employed.

He is carrying on as best he knows how, through family support and therapy.

"Looking ahead, I don't see it going away," he said. "I just see it getting managed. That's the best you can hope for."

## LONOKE TERROR

Arkansas' first collective realization about Boy Scouts abuses came after a triple homicide more than 23 years ago in Lonoke.

Heath Stocks had gunned down his mother, father and sister inside their home.

It came to light that Stocks' mother had walked in on him and his Scout leader, Jack Walls III, having sexual relations in the former's bedroom.

Stocks also had confessed to his sister the night before that Walls had been sexually abusing him for years.

Stocks, who was 20 at the time, went to Walls' home to tell him what his family knew. Walls was enraged and told Stocks he needed to "fix it," Stocks recalled. During his tirade, Walls raped Stocks for the last time.

"He made me get on all fours," Stocks said in a phone interview with the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette from prison. He described it as the most harrowing episode of abuse Walls had ever inflicted on him.

Stocks then went to his parents' house, ransacked it, found a .45-caliber

handgun and put the barrel in his mouth. He couldn't summon the will to pull the trigger.

Later that evening, after his sister and parents returned home, he pulled that trigger several times.

Stocks is serving a life sentence for murdering his family.

For 10 years before that he had been sexually abused and manipulated by Walls, who also is serving a life sentence. The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reported in 1999 that authorities estimated that Walls abused anywhere from 100 to 150 boys before his arrest.

"It's how I wound up here," Stocks said. "That's why others wound up addicted to drugs and alcohol. It's horrible what we went through.

"I was a child who got molested," he said. "For years I was conditioned to believe it was my fault."

Walls' parents were struggling with their young son's problems -- a learning deficit, hyperactive behavior and physical disadvantages. Stocks was pigeon-toed and struggled to concentrate in school.

Walls, a well-known Lonoke judge, told Stocks' parents he could mentor their son. Not long after, Stocks joined the Boy Scouts.

Stocks had a strict, insensitive father, he said. Walls gave the boy the kind of praise, attention and affection he craved. Instantly, Stocks was under Walls' spell.

"Jack always made time for me," he said.

By the time Stocks was 10 or 11 years old, he reached a point where he was ready to further his way into "Jack's good graces," he said.

"When it first happened, he got me drunk," Stocks said, recalling the first time Walls abused him.

It took place during a Boy Scouts jamboree. Other boys were there. Some of them were older. They were drinking, smoking and looking at pornographic magazines.

Walls walked Stocks from the campsite to an isolated area where there was a blanket.

"We got on the blanket, and he told me to lean back," Stocks recalled. That was when Walls asked whether anyone had ever helped him masturbate. By the end of the night, the molestation escalated to oral sex.

After they finished, Stocks walked back to the campsite where the other boys were.

"They all had these looks on their faces," he said. "It's like they were saying, 'Welcome to the group.' It was an initiation."

Future episodes got more sadistic. Eventually, Stocks recruited younger kids for Walls to abuse. He was complicit to others' torment, he said.

Deep down, Stocks knew it was wrong. He knew if his father found out, knowing how he felt about homosexual behavior, he would have an ugly,

possibly violent reaction. Stocks kept his secrets for 10 years, and the abuse never stopped.

Records show that there were parents who had learned that their sons had been molested by Walls, and they reported it to state and local authorities as early as 1992. Eventually, the Boy Scouts of America learned of it and fired Walls.

Lonoke was rural, sparsely populated. There was no oversight. Walls stuck around.

The abuse lasted until August 1997, when a 16-year-old boy, one of Walls' victims, saw Walls grooming his younger brother the same way he had been groomed years earlier.

A day or so later, that teen confronted Walls with a gun. He walked him to a neighbor's house, where the boy's parents were visiting, and ordered Walls at gunpoint to confess what he had done.

Walls did and agreed to undergo counseling. Eventually, he was arrested.

That teen, a boy Stocks knew, committed suicide years later.

Walls' admission came seven months after Stocks killed his parents and sister. The community at that time still saw Stocks as a deranged person who carried out an unthinkable massacre.

It was later revealed that Stocks was victimized by Walls. The full scope of Walls' abuse could hardly be fathomed.

Walls was sentenced to life in prison in January 1998. He pleaded guilty to five counts of rape and no contest to an additional count. His plea agreement meant that there was no trial, but several of his victims testified during Walls' sentencing hearing. Stocks was among them.

Walls, now 73, remains incarcerated at the East Arkansas Regional Unit in Brickeys.

Neither he, nor Stocks, are expected to be free again. Stocks is still holding out hope that he will be released.

When he was sentenced to prison, not everyone knew Stocks' full story. He still felt that he needed to protect his abuser. It took years before he untangled himself from Walls' manipulation, he said.

Had everyone known the full story, Stocks thinks there's a chance his fate would've been different.

## GRAPHIC STORIES

Stocks, like Walker and Keeton, is among the 13,000 men filing claims in the Boy Scouts bankruptcy case. Accountability, Stocks said, is what he is after.

He said he doesn't want to see the organization put down a "pool of money" and make the problem go away. Instead, institutional changes are needed, he said.

"Nothing changes the horror of what happened to my family," he said. "I want to be able to do something with that pain. I want to be able to talk to people about what happened. I don't want them to dismiss it all."

There is the possibility that the bankruptcy case, which has been filed in Delaware, will not end satisfactorily for attorneys and their clients, Van Arsdale said.

"They're trying to discharge all of their liability through the bankruptcy process," Van Arsdale said, referring to the Boy Scouts. "That's the purpose of bankruptcy, to discharge responsibility and debt."

He added that it is "hard to say" if everything will get resolved through one bankruptcy case.

"The Boy Scouts of America is committed to fulfilling our social and moral responsibility to equitably compensate victims who suffered abuse during their time in Scouting, while also ensuring that we carry out our mission to serve youth, families and local communities for years to come," the Boy Scouts stated in its email to the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

Stocks' story is among the most emotionally jarring of those shared by the men who have contacted Abused in Scouting, but virtually all of them are graphic and gut-wrenching, Van Arsdale said.

"Quite frankly, it's been hard," he said. "I don't sleep very well."

His staff talks to up to 100 abused people in a single day. The emotional toll has led the attorneys to hire an "in-house therapist" to work with the staffers who are fielding and filing the reports, Van Arsdale said.

Keeton was philosophical about how the abuse has affected his life. A religious man, he was struck by one of his preacher's sermons.

The theme was that bad memories may not disappear, but they don't have to define you.

"It's just a memory. I can take it," he said. "I can recall it and then leave it alone. I won't make it part of [me] again."