

# The Lawsuit

“MR. SADLER, PLEASE COME FORWARD and raise your right hand.” After being duly sworn, I took my seat on the stand, awaiting direct examination by my attorney, Steve Aguilar.

We were in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at the recently constructed Bernalillo County Court House. None of the taxpayers’ money had been spared in creating the typical oak and ash wood court. Judge Wendy York was presiding.

Once the preliminary questions had been taken care of, such as my full name—Louis Stanley Sadler—and my employer—Sadler Southwest, my own company—Aguilar got down to business.

“And you are the plaintiff in this case? You filed the lawsuit?” he asked, mopping his brow with a white linen handkerchief. A large, heavy-set man, he always seemed to be perspiring.

“Yes, sir.”

“Can you tell us why you filed the lawsuit?”

“Because we weren’t getting paid by the City,” I explained. “We were running into all kinds of problems between the City and URS Greiner trying to get paid. Construction of the observation deck was in the final stage and we attempted to get the money that was owed to us. It wasn’t forthcoming so we went ahead and filed a lawsuit.” The lawsuit pertained to a job my company did at Albuquerque International Airport. URS Greiner had falsified documents in order for us to build the project they had designed. The company used our letterhead and changed several of the figures on the original quote so it appeared the job would cost just 1.2 million dollars, when in fact our actual bid was closer to 2.3 million dollars.

“And what time period are you talking about?” he asked.

“It was nineteen-ninety-seven and the first part of nineteen-ninety-eight,” I clarified.

“All right,” the attorney nodded. “Now, Mr. Sadler, would you tell us a little bit, sir, about your personal background? Where you were born and where you grew up?”

“I was born in Fort Worth, Texas, but actually was raised in the suburbs of Baltimore. I spent probably the first six years of my life in foster homes.”

“Why was that, sir?”

I shifted in my seat. I had been expecting this line of questioning both to bolster my credibility and to gain the empathy of the jury. “My parents—my mother and my father—abandoned my sister and me.”

“And how old were you and your sister when that happened?”

“I was nine months old; my sister was about four years old.”

“And how did your mom and dad abandon you kids? Can you tell us about that?”

“As I understand it, my mother just walked out one day. I found out

later she took us over to a relative's house and said she'd be right back. She never came back. My father didn't quite know how to handle things so he turned us over to Child Welfare."

"And what year was this?"

"Nineteen forty-four."

"Can you tell us about your parents and the circumstances surrounding their lives?"

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My father, Louis Stanley Sadler, was born May 10, 1913, in Maryland. He was the youngest boy of six children. He had one sister who was younger than he. His mother also gave birth to twins who died at birth. His father died when he was seven. All I knew about his childhood I learned from his brother Harry. Harry's son, my cousin Cliflyn, had saved many of my uncle's writings from that time. Harry described a life that was hard—and probably not atypical for the time.

Harry described being four years old and hungry. His mother was in the hospital because she'd had some kind of poison in her system, so his father paid a woman to take care of the children, but she was not feeding them. A kindly neighbor eventually brought over some soup.

When he was six, he was sent to Fresh Air Camp near Fallston, Maryland, along with his younger sister Ruth. The camp, which was located near a reservoir, was set up with boys on one side and girls on the other, so the siblings were separated. Harry remembers crying a lot because he missed his sister so much. By the time he was seven, his mother was released from the hospital and the entire family was reunited. They all lived together in a rented home near an old mill. Money and food were still scarce, and Harry recalls living off chestnuts, apples, and corn stolen from a neighbor's field, as well as crows and possum.

That same year, Harry accidentally set the house on fire making pancakes on the gasoline stove. At twelve, he started a grass fire that eventually set the barn on their property afire. Fires were frequently set back then for warmth—a sad sign of poverty. Unfortunately, they often got out of control.

Circumstances did not improve for the Sadler family as Harry entered his teenage years. The children wore tattered clothing and shoes with holes in the bottom. Winter coats were unheard of and there was always very little to eat. At one point, the school held a drive that resulted in donations of canned goods and perishables, such as potatoes. Stale bread intended to feed hogs often found its way to the Sadler table by well-meaning neighbors. One day, a bakery truck was going up a hill near the family home and a tray of buns slid out. Harry and one of his brothers grabbed them and ran for home. The driver chased the duo, but let them keep the bread after seeing the poverty in which they lived.

Things grew worse for Harry and his siblings in 1922. Their father, who had been ill for many years, passed away. Their mother was unable to care for the children on her own, so Ray and Harry were placed at the Boys Home

Society in Baltimore. Ruth was placed at Samuel Ready School for Girls. As I read through my uncle's notes, it became apparent to me that history was destined to repeat itself in the next generation.

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My mother was born Jessie Ayers in a hollow in North Carolina, the first of five children born to John and Wadie Ayers. When my mother was four years old, her family left North Carolina in the middle of the night. Her father had taken someone's Model A for a joy ride and driven it into a creek. They headed to Lutherville, Maryland, where jobs seemed to be plentiful. The entire family lived in a two-room log cabin.

It is rumored in my family that my great grandmother Woods was actually won by my great grandfather in a poker game. Her maiden name was Soots, and she was a Native American. She gave birth to my grandmother when she was just twelve years old, and ultimately had fourteen more children, two of whom died at birth. I believe I made a spiritual connection with my great grandmother later in my life when I was undergoing therapy.

My grandfather was a drunk who worked on and off but spent most of what he earned on booze. My grandmother wasn't much better. She deserted her family for almost a year. My Uncle John worked and took care of the younger siblings, doing his best to make sure there was food on the table. It was a harsh life for everyone.

My mother Jessie met my father when she was just fourteen years old; he was ten years older. She immediately saw him as her ticket out of life in Lutherville. Having grown up with four brothers and an alcoholic father, she became adept at charming men. My father was no exception. They were married in 1939; she was fifteen years old. My father's job required that the newly married couple move to Omaha, Nebraska, where they both started having extramarital affairs. I had often wondered where my father got his crooked nose. I finally learned that it apparently had been broken by one of my mother's lovers in Fort Worth, Texas, where they later moved because of a better job. The couple ultimately returned to live in Maryland with the hope of reviving their marriage. I was conceived but not wanted, which was something my mother told me much later, after I was married and visiting with her.

Children are seldom the answer to holding a marriage together, so it is no surprise that my arrival did nothing to solidify their relationship. Shortly after I was born, my mother left me and my sister, who was a little more than three years older than I, with a friend. She took a trip to Texas, returning only to get a divorce. She left again when I was nine months old. She deposited me at Aunt Mae's, a woman whose sister was married to my Uncle Bill; she left my sister at Aunt Ruth's. I think my father was in the navy at the time, although I am not sure. I have a letter he gave to my Aunt Ruth in 1945 to give to me when I was older. I was already a ward of the state when he wrote it. It's highly reflective of the hope of the poor.

Aunt Mae wanted to raise me, with my father maintaining all the rights

of a parent, but he refused. It was nothing more than pettiness on his part. Since I was his son, he felt entitled to decide my fate—regardless of what might have been best for me at the time. Rather than let me stay at my aunt Mae’s, after just three months, he took me away and placed me with the Children’s Aid Society in Towson, Maryland. Thus began my foster home journey.

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“Your ‘foster home journey’? Tell us exactly how you lived. What did it mean to be in foster homes?” asked Aguilar.

“Well, basically there were families that would take in kids like myself who needed a home,” I explained. “The agency in charge was called the Children’s Aid Society. They would move us around every so often so that we wouldn’t get too close to the family or bond with them or get tied in with them. I lived with at least seven different sets of foster parents, including my grandmother, who got paid by Children’s Aid to take care of me.”

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I don’t know of any child who really understands the concept of God and how God fits into a child’s life. I know that when I left the home of my parents and before I went to the Home, I didn’t have a concept of God. If I would have had an understanding of the concept, then my foster care caseworker would have been God. She made the decision as to where I lived and with whom I lived. She always seemed to pop up when things were good or bad. Such was my sojourn through the seven different foster homes I lived in as determined by the Children’s Aid Society in Towson, Maryland.

I was nearly a year old when my father took me and my sister from our aunts’ homes and made us wards of the state. The Children’s Aid Society placed my sister and me in a foster home, but I remember nothing of that place since I was so young. We were there for just three months or so. Then “God” came along and whisked us to Mrs. Law. I have a vague recollection of her making fried squash. Then “God” whisked me away to Mrs. Eck. She had a couple of older kids who were no longer living at home. Instead of diapers, I remember her placing Kotex pads in my underwear to avoid stains. I recall falling down the stairs there, but I don’t know why. It happened so frequently that she would leave the closet door open at the bottom of the steps where coats lay on the floor of the closet to cushion my fall. I believe she had horses stabled somewhere nearby, as I remember going with her to take care of them. I don’t recall my sister being with me at the time.

“God’s” next stop for me was Mama Weezy (Louise) and her husband Bill. They had no children and loved to travel. I must have lived with them during the summer months as I was able to run through the lawn sprinkler to cool off. My father came to see me once while I lived there; it was a Sunday, and I was told to stay in my room until he came. I have other vague

memories of my time there, such as when I cut my leg scratching myself while she was ironing, and when I wet my pants because she wouldn't let me use the bathroom until I cleaned up my toys.

For many years when I was older, I had a dream about a very bad storm one night. Bill and I looked out the window to see a man in a three-cornered, colonial-type hat standing under a street lamp while the sky rained red. Later, while undergoing EMDR—a healing process used for people who suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome—the revelation of the hallucination came to me: Bill had molested me. The red rain was my pain. *Who, I asked, was the man in the three-cornered hat?* The answer came to me: *It was God. Why didn't God help me? I couldn't help you. I am God. I am pure Love. I cannot harm one human being to protect another. Only man does that. Love harms no one.* That statement has caused me to make a major shift in my belief in God.

*May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1945  
Wednesday*

*Dear son Louis,*

*Here is your first letter your daddy has written you. When your daddy wrote this letter, you were too young to read it, but now that you are old enough to read, I want you my son to remember every thing daddy tells you in this letter. I want you to grow to be a be a strong healthy and well-educated man. When you go to school, I want you to try and study hard so as to make something out of yourself and son you will need education so bear this in mind and remember what your daddy wants of you. Whatever you do, try to become a doctor...you can do it if you try. You'll be someone to be proud of. Your daddy never got the chance. There are lots of reasons why but forget about me and try for yourself. All I ask, Louie, my son, is to be a kind and truthful gentleman. When you go to school there are going to be hard days along with the good ones, so take it on the chin, son. Have faith in God, also he helps you wherever he can. You'll have to attend church a lot so you can learn the meaning of God's works. Well, son, you grow up to be a respectable young man and you'll have lots to be thankful for. Stick by your sister Sonja—she is a swell sister—like I ask her to stick by you. Be kind and helpful to one another. Well, son, I will say goodbye and remember.*

*As ever, all my love,*

*Yours,  
Daddy*

Along came “God” again and whisked me off to the Faulkners. They seemed to be wonderful people with two children—Johnny and Susan—and a big two-story house with a detached garage and a big yard in which to

play. Johnny cried a lot, and I didn't know why until much later. I remember Christmas and an electric train around the base of a Christmas tree. I also had a pet turtle that roamed around their yard. Mr. Faulkner painted my name *LOU* on the turtle shell. I have a memory of sitting in the bathtub, watching Mr. Faulkner shave in his underwear. He told me that I was going to be strong when I grew up because of an indentation in my rib cage at the base of my sternum.

A doctor often came to visit me while I was there because I was having trouble going to the bathroom. It wasn't until the summer of 1992 that I realized the reason for this. I believe Mr. Faulkner had sodomized me in the car in the garage. I recalled him sticking his penis into my behind, which hurt terribly. He also made me perform oral sex on him. I think I know now why Johnny was always crying.

When I left the Faulkners, I was taken to live with my grandmother Dahler—my father's mother. She actually took me to live with her along with one other foster child for the money. She lived on a small, primitive farm with no indoor plumbing. The toilet was outside and water was hand-pumped into the kitchen sink. She and her husband raised chickens and guinea hens. I remember them very well because my step-grandfather would cut off their heads and let them run around the yard, spewing blood everywhere.

Their house was set in a hollow along side of a creek with a few trees accessed by a dirt road. My Aunt Ida and Uncle Ray lived at the top of the road so I was able to play with my cousin Sandra. My father was a barber and sometimes would come stay at his mother's house. When he was supposed to come, I would sit by the bedroom window and watch for his car. I usually fell asleep before he got there.

My Aunt Ruth, Uncle Mac, their daughter Carol, and Uncle Bill and his wife would come over during the summer with a bushel basket of live blue crabs from the Chesapeake Bay. After my grandmother would finish bathing me in the kitchen sink, wiping me down with alcohol, and putting me to bed, the adults would steam the crabs and party for the rest of the night. They always saved a crab for me.

My grandmother was a mean person, and I was told later by relatives that she beat me regularly. Fortunately for me, I don't remember the beatings but my father did. He eventually requested that the welfare department find another home for me where I wouldn't get hurt so much.

So "God" came along and whisked me back to the Faulkners. They had a new addition this time; his name was Reese. There was a palpable tension in the house. Johnny was still crying a lot. I was being molested again by Mr. Faulkner. I continued to have intestinal problems, painful urination, and lots of diarrhea. The doctor came to the house a couple of times to see me.

In later years, I have often wondered what it was about sex that was so important to these people that they would hurt a child for their own pleasure. When a baby is born, it passes from the warmth and security of the mother's womb into an immediately hostile environment. Its mother is the only true security it has—an unconditional chain of trust. That baby is

born with original goodness until its environment changes. The chain of trust becomes slightly broken and the baby starts to do instinctively what it must to survive. The next line in the chain of trust is usually the father, then the extended family.

Every time one of the people in that chain even slightly breaks that trust, the child struggles a little more to survive. An overabundance of these breaks in the chain is where I believe allergies, respiratory, and intestinal problems begin to manifest themselves. It is an involuntary reaction on the part of the baby, but it provides a way for it to reject or fight back toward the environment that has caused it harm. The ultimate break in the chain of trust is physical or sexual abuse from someone high on that chain. The child will be forced to try to mend that chain—or undo it—for the rest of his or her life. At least that has been what I have been doing for my entire life.

Along came “God” and whisked me away once again. This time, I went to Mrs. Beyers; she was my last stop before I was sent to the Home. I have only fond memories of her and her family. I would get hurt sometimes and she would hold me and love on me. She also taught me to work. I loved to scrub floors for her or squeeze the margarine bags to add color to the margarine. We would pick blackberries on a farm behind her house. On Sundays we would go to church, which I really enjoyed. This is the earliest I remember hearing about God—the religious God, not my caseworker. Mrs. Beyers had a friend who visited often. She would bring me gifts and play with me. She later would try to adopt me after I had been sent to the Home, but my father wouldn’t allow it. Again, it was that sense of entitlement he had over me.

Looking back, I find it ironic that women—excepting my mother and grandmother Dahler—have tried to make my life pleasant, and men always seemed to make it unpleasant and try to control it. My father, in particular, who I missed the most, was the one who hurt me the most. Each foster home I lived in presented to me a nurturing woman (again, except for my grandmother). Each foster home I lived in presented to me a man who either ignored me or tried to molest me.

Most foster parents take in kids because they really want to help. I was told in later years that I was moved around so much to avoid getting attached to them and vice-versa. Although it may be hard for a foster parent to let a child go, the impact on a child is far more devastating. The constant moving around causes the “I’m no good” or “something is wrong with me” syndrome in a child. I think I believed moving from one place to the other—gleaning a little love from each place—was the way life was. But after so much abandonment and rejection, it becomes ingrained in the psyche. For me, it became the basis for the “self-destruct” mode I created for myself during much of my life. I believe we have a tendency to invite what happens to us into our own lives. That’s why a pecking order always exists. The weaker thinking people are weak, and they usually attract those who pick on the weak.

I sometimes went with Mrs. Beyers to see her mother who lived at Augsburg Lutheran Home for Orphans and the Aged. I got to see my sister there, although I didn’t really know her. We would play outside on the playground while Mrs. Beyers visited her mother. On September 6, 1949,

soon after I had turned six years old, Mrs. Beyers took me with her to visit her mother. But this time, she never took me home with her. It was already the eighth time in my short life I had been abandoned.

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“And then what happened?” Aguilar prompted.

“At the age of six, I was sent to Augsburg Lutheran Home,” I replied.

“And who made that decision?”

I thought for a moment. “I believe it was an aunt.”

“Okay,” Aguilar nodded. “And essentially that was an orphanage?”

“Yes.”