

**F**or Ross Cheit, it began with a phone call in the spring of 1992. "I have happy news," his sister promised, speaking from her California home. "Your nephew is joining a boys' chorus. Aren't you pleased he wants to follow in the footsteps of his Uncle Ross?"

Though he could not yet name the reason, Cheit felt sickened by the news—and gradually began sinking into a bewildering depression. He didn't link it to the phone call; indeed, he blamed anything and everything else for what his wife Kathy

# MEMORIES LOST AND FOUND



*One man's account of his painful past raises complex questions about child abuse, human psychology, ethics and American law*

The narrative in this story is based on Ross Cheit's account of his recovered-memory experience, as described in interviews and legal documents. Cheit and Miriam Horn, the author, have been acquainted since junior high school.

Odean now calls "the months Ross lost his mind." It must be professional pressures that had thrown his life into such turmoil, thought the 38-year-old Brown University ethics professor. Or perhaps it was his marriage, which had been happy for 10 years but now seemed dried up, built of sand. He told his wife he thought their marriage was failing. He entered therapy. Then on August 23 while on vacation, he had something like a dream.

He woke with the baffling sense that a man he had not seen or thought of in 25 years was powerfully present in the room. William Farmer had been the administrator of the San Francisco Boys Chorus summer camp, which Cheit had attended in the late '60s between the ages of 10 and 13. Cheit could picture him clearly—the big stomach and bent shoulders, the round head, wispy hair. Over the course of the day, he recalled still more. How Farmer would enter his cabin night after night, just as the boys were going to sleep. How he would sit on Cheit's bed, stroking the boy's chest and stomach while he urged him in a whisper to relax, relax. "I was frozen," says Cheit. "My stomach clenched against his touch. And then he would slowly bring his hand into my pants."

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Fifteen months later, Cheit is engaged in a lawsuit that may have far-reaching implications for one of the most divisive questions ever to emerge in human psychology: whether it is possible for an adult to recover a lost memory of childhood sexual abuse. The charge two weeks ago by 34-year-old Steven Cook that 17 years earlier he had been sodomized by Roman Catholic Cardinal Joseph Bernardin—an event Cook claims he remembered in therapy—heightens an already bitter controversy whose stakes are inordinately high. In 1990, George Franklin became the first person in history convicted on the basis of a recovered memory—his daughter Eileen's recollection of witnessing, 20 years earlier, his rape and murder of her 8-year-old friend. Nineteen states have recently revised their statutes of limitations, making it possible for adults to bring civil suits against sexual abusers, even if decades have passed; several hundred such cases are now in the courts. Juries have made awards as high as \$5 million to adult victims of childhood incest. No institution has been more affected than the Catholic church, which since 1982 has paid close to \$500 million in legal fees and compensation to men and women molested as children by priests.

Equally dramatic countersuits are being filed. Adult children now recanting their "memories" of sexual abuse and parents who say they have been wrongly accused are suing therapists for inducing false memories through methods they charge are akin to brainwashing. In a trial set to begin in March, a California man is suing a medical center and two therapists who, he claims, helped his bulimic adult daughter manufacture memories of his sexually abusing her as a child; on the basis of the charges against him, his wife has divorced him and sought custody of their two minor daughters. Two years ago in Ohio, an appeals court upheld a malpractice award to a woman whose psychiatrist injected her with "truth serum" more than 140 times to help her uncover buried memories of alleged childhood sexual abuse by her mother. The backlash has even spawned its own organization. Since 1992, when the False Memory Syndrome Foundation was founded in Philadelphia to assist those claiming to be wrongly charged with abuse, the organization has received more than 6,500 calls.

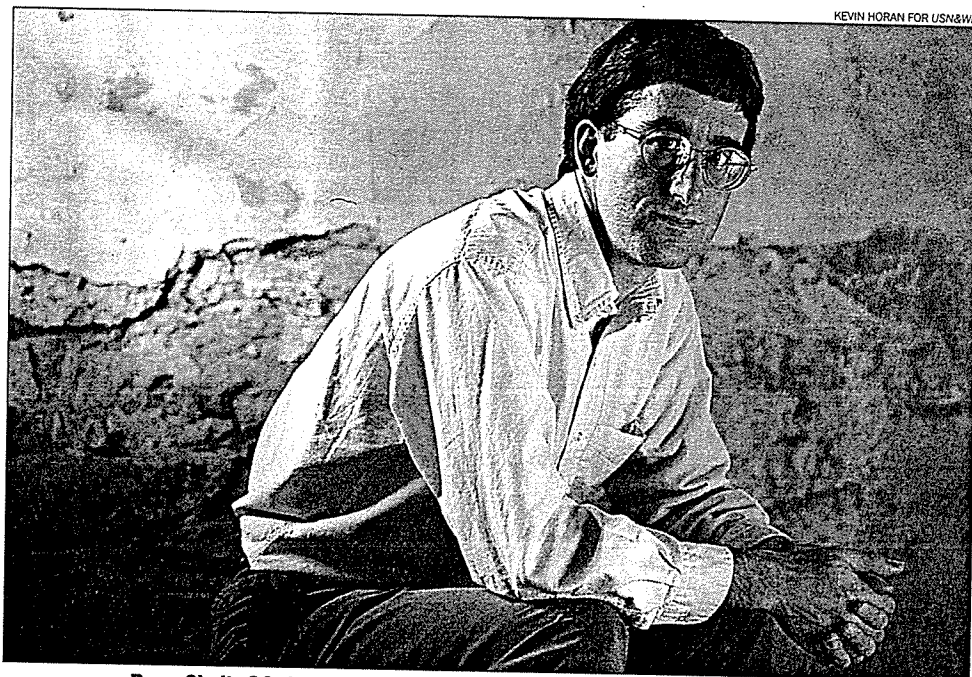
While the debate grows increasingly virulent, most psychologists and psychiatrists are convinced that memories of external trauma can be placed out of reach of consciousness and later retrieved—though many now avoid the Freudian term "repression" (box, Page 60) in favor of a more purely descriptive vocabulary. Judith Herman, a clinical professor of

psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and author of *Trauma and Recovery*, refers simply to "amnesia and delayed recall," which, she says, are "beyond dispute." Others refer to dissociation, which describes the mind's protective detachment from a traumatic experience as it is happening, effectively fragmenting consciousness. Researchers who study dissociative disorders maintain that memories of traumatic events formed while a person is in the altered state of mind induced by terror are frequently inaccessible to ordinary consciousness.

Although unconscious, experts say, dissociated memories remain indelible and can be triggered decades later by a related sensation or event. Eileen Franklin's memory returned, she told the court, when an innocuous gesture by her 5-year-old daughter brought back a similar ges-

ture by Eileen's childhood friend as she tried to ward off George Franklin's murderous blows. Frank Fitzpatrick, a 38-year-old insurance adjuster in Rhode Island, was lying in bed, trapped in an anguish he could not explain, when he remembered being molested as a child. "I began to remember the sound of heavy breathing," he said, "and realized I

had been sexually abused by someone I loved." When Fitzpatrick went public with his suit against Father James Porter, several of the nearly 100 Porter victims who came forward said they remembered only when they heard about the case on the news. The physiology of such memory loss and recovery is only beginning to be understood. Memories are stored, scientists believe, as electrical patterns in neurons deep in the brain's hippocampal region. Over time, these patterns are translated into new neural circuitry in different brain areas, creating a permanent record of the events. Intensely traumatic events, says Yale University psychiatry Prof. Michael Davis, "produce unusually strong nerve connections that serve as long-lasting memories." Years later, the right stimulus can set those nerve circuits firing



KEVIN HORAN FOR USNEWS

**Ross Cheit, 38, is a lawyer, political scientist, ethicist, husband. Now, as much as anything else, he is a crusader against childhood sexual abuse.**

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and trigger the fear, with no immediate understanding of its source.

### "My God, that's me."

For Cheit, there was no spectacular epiphany. The memory of Farmer was embarrassing and disgusting but hardly momentous. It was not until October, when at his therapist's suggestion Cheit went to a bookstore to buy Mic Hunter's *Abused Boys*, that he felt the full impact of what he had remembered. "As soon as I pulled the book off the shelf, I began to shake all over. I thought I was going to collapse. I looked at the title and thought, 'My God, that's me.'"

Compelled now to know more, Cheit began to dredge his past. From his parents, he recovered the letters he had written from camp, and reading them brought the most painful revelation yet. "He broke down and cried with his whole body, as if he would never stop," says his wife. "He came into the bedroom where I was half asleep, saying over and over, 'But he was such a great guy.' He was so hurt that someone he loved did this to him." It was only then, says Cheit, that he fully understood the damage that had been done. "These were not just perverse sexual acts," he says, "but the most profound betrayal possible for a kid."

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While many scientists accept the idea that a memory can be lost for years and then accurately recovered, a growing number do not. "Sixty years of experiments have failed to produce any empirical evidence that repression exists," says University of California at Berkeley sociologist Richard Ofshe. "People forget things, of course, or intentionally avoid painful subjects. They may even have selective traumatic amnesia, if the terror of an experience is so great that the normal biological process underlying information storage is disrupted—as in an alcohol-induced blackout. But no one has ever shown that the memory of repeated abuses can be uncontrollably and completely stripped from a person's consciousness." In fact, says psychiatry Prof. Paul McHugh of Johns Hopkins University, "most severe traumas are not blocked out by children but remembered all too well." In one study of children ages 5 to 10 who saw a parent's murder, not one repressed the memory.

Psychologists also dispute the possibil-

ity of any kind of reliable retrieval. "What's being claimed," says Elizabeth Loftus, a memory researcher at the University of Washington, "is that traumatic memory is driven into a corner of the unconscious where it sits like Rip van Winkle and doesn't age and wakes up 20 years later. But memory is not a computer or videotape recording. We don't just pop in a tape or call it up in perfect condition. Memory is not objective fact but subjective, suggestible and malleable." In experimental situations, Loftus has firmly implanted in adults false memories of unhappy childhood incidents simply by having the event recounted by an authoritative older sibling.

The possibility of retrieving pristine memories is made all the more unlikely, say skeptics, by the use of such methods of "memory retrieval" as age regression, hypnosis and injections of sodium amytal ("truth serum"), all of which are known to promote confabulation of extraordinarily vivid memories and to ce-

Intent on  
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Frank Leontieff.

tion for complex problems and a special identity as "survivors."

Therapists may be eager to dig up evidence of abuse, says University of Minnesota law Prof. Christopher Barden, "to turn a \$2,000 eating-disorder patient into a \$200,000 multiple-personality disorder." Or they may be politically motivated; since most charges are brought by women against male relatives, some critics perceive a radical feminist agenda,

another avenue for women to voice rage against sexual violence. Due process is sometimes thrown to the wind: For \$10 and the name of an alleged perpetrator, one organization will inform neighbors, the police and local employers without the accuser having ever to be named.

When the charges become most extreme—involving alleged "satanic cults" engaged in baby breeding for human sacrifice and cannibalism—critics see a misguided form of fundamentalism at work. In the most notorious case, in 1988 in Olympia, Wash., allegations of sexual abuse against Paul Ingram by his two daughters—based on memories "recovered" at a Pentecostal retreat, assisted by the

visions of a charismatic Christian who claimed to be filled with the Holy Spirit—quickly spun into accounts of witch covens and ceremonial weddings to Satan. Under pressure of zealous investigators, Ingram confessed to crimes more horrible than those charged; his wife, her eyes rolling, described a book spilling blood. "We now have hundreds



Ross Cheit (in front with glasses), shown here with other campers in 1968, spent four summers at the choral camp in the Sierras.

ment in the patient's mind the certainty of their truth. The American Medical Association has twice warned against the use of such techniques.

The current "tabloid and talk show" culture of abuse, experts believe, is an equally effective creator of false memories. The bestselling self-help book *The*

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of victims alleging that thousands of offenders are abusing and even murdering tens of thousands of people as part of organized satanic cults," says Kenneth Lanning of the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit, "and there is little or no corroborative evidence." The epidemic of allegations, contends Ofshe, who testified for the Ingram defense, is a "way of reasserting the authority of fundamentalist perspectives on society."

In the discussion of recovered memory, the distinction between satanic rituals and sexual abuse is often obscured. But if the prosecution of the former is indeed a "witch hunt," the latter is all too real. More than 200,000 cases of sexual abuse are documented annually, according to the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, and evidence suggests that the majority of cases go unreported.

Of all traumas, many researchers say, sexual abuse may be the most likely to result in memory disturbances, surrounded as it is by secrecy and treachery. To fix a childhood memory so that it lasts into adulthood requires shaping those events into a story, says Emory psychologist Ulric Neisser, and then rehearsing the narrative, telling the tale.

of life's events." When the abuser is in a position of power or veneration, the child's ability to make sense of the event is more compromised still.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that studies show that from 18 to 59 percent of sexual-abuse victims repress memories for a period of time. In one follow-up study of 200 children who had been treated for sexual abuse, Linda Williams of the Family Violence Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire found that 1 in 3 did not recall the experiences that had been documented in their hospital records 20 years before. A study by Judith Herman of women in group therapy found a majority reporting delayed recall of abuse; approximately 75 percent of those were able to obtain corroborating evidence. "False claims of childhood sexual abuse are demonstrably

Until that moment, Cheit had been embarked on a private search for private solace.

being used to discredit people making legitimate assertions. Some question the motives of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, which gathers data on denials of abuse charges but concedes it has no way of knowing the truth or falsity of any report it receives. "Denial signifies little," says Herman. "Research with known pedophiles has illustrated that they often exhibit a cognitive distortion, minimizing or rationalizing their behavior." In fact, the FMSF recently asked one of its board members, Ralph Underwager, to resign after he gave an interview to a Dutch journal in which he seemed permissive and sympathetic toward pedophilia.

### "The strongest compulsion in my life"

Content on finding William Farmer, Cheit hired private investigator Frank Leontieff—a man he had known from his own previous career as a lawyer—and in January went to visit the 87-year-old founder of the chorus, Madi Bacon, in Berkeley. It was under Bacon's guidance in the '60s that the chorus became one of San Francisco's most revered arts institutions. Nicknamed "the Singing Angels," it regularly performed with the San Francisco Opera and sang for U.S. presidents, the pope and the queen of England. Much to his surprise, says Cheit, at the mention of Farmer's name, Bacon launched into how she'd once almost had to fire the man for what she called "hobnobbing" with one of the boys. When Cheit told her he had been one of those boys, he says, Bacon said that if he'd been a strong kid he would have shaken it off. And why didn't he tell his friends, she wanted to know. Didn't he want to protect them? (Asked about the conversation, Bacon told *U.S. News* she "may well have said those things, but I don't remember." Elsewhere, Bacon said that had she known of the abuse, she would have done something.)

Until that moment, Cheit had been on a private search for private solace. Now, he had not only his first external evidence of the authenticity of his memory but a recognition that there might be more at stake. He was not, it seemed, the only



The San Francisco Boys Chorus is one of the city's most revered cultural institutions. The "Singing Angels" have performed for U.S. presidents, the queen of England and the pope.

Yet in cases of child sexual abuse, the events are rarely confronted, shared, ratified, even adequately described. Psychologist John Dagnault, who teaches at Harvard Medical School and evaluated more than 40 of Father Porter's victims, says children "lack the perspective to place the trauma in the overall course

rare," says Herman (in the range of 2 to 8 percent of reported cases), "and false memories of childhood trauma are no doubt equally so. To fasten upon false memory as the main event is far-fetched and bizarre."

The debate over the credibility of some memories, researchers worry, is

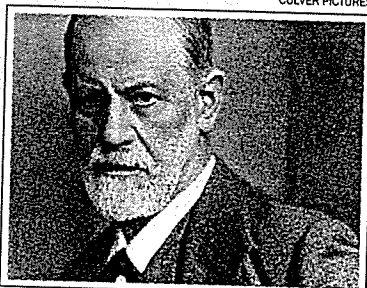


## FREUDIAN ORIGINS

# Is it abuse or fantasy?

The battle over the nature of memory has its origins in Freud, who was the first to propose that painful or dangerous memories are "repressed"—buried beyond reach in the unconscious. The goal of psychoanalysis, as Freud conceived it, was to bring repressed material into consciousness where it could be disarmed.

Over the course of the 1890s, Freud's beliefs shifted, an evolution critical to the present battle.



CULVER PICTURES

Seductive theories. Sigmund Freud

In 1893, he believed that many of his adult patients had been sexually abused as children by adults, and that it was the repressed memory of those "seductions" that caused their "hysteria." Four years later, he was insisting that most such memories were actually the child's repressed incestuous fantasies and desires. Freud critic Jeffrey Masson deems that shift a cowardly and destructive lie, an attempt to avoid professional ostracism. But others dismiss Masson as politically fashionable, contending that Freud feared his patients' stories were being suggested or distorted by his own analytic problems and deemed them fantasies in order to dodge that conclusion.

Freud's focus on childhood fantasies as opposed to real trauma has dominated psychotherapeutic thought for most of the century. Only in the '70s did the return of damaged Vietnam vets rekindle interest in post-traumatic stress reactions. Today, that interest has once again expanded to include the effects of childhood trauma.

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one. Worse, it appeared chorus officials had known. It was at that moment, says Cheit, that the investigation became "the strongest compulsion in my life."

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The history of responses by organizations confronted with accusations of child sexual abuse has not been particularly noble. A recent report by the Boy Scouts of America revealed that between 1971 and 1991, 1,800 scoutmasters suspected of molesting boys were removed from their positions—but "quietly," so that many simply went elsewhere and continued to abuse scouts. The Catholic Church, concerned to protect its reputation, has similarly relied on what child advocates call "the geographic cure." In the course of the Father Porter trial, church officials admitted that they had witnessed the priest's assaults or were told of them but permitted him to continue supervising altar boys and youth activities. When parents complained, documents uncovered in the lawsuits revealed, Porter was simply transferred from parish to parish. Porter's was not an isolated case. In *Lead Us Not into Temptation*, Jason Berry chronicles the decade-long nationwide effort by the Catholic Church to protect itself from its flock. Kids who made accusations were asked what the state of their soul was that they could cast such judgment and were forced to face the accused; defamation suits were often filed in the secular courts. At one point, Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert Weakland went so far as to suggest that "not all adolescent victims are so innocent."

To conceal the criminal behavior of child molesters is exceedingly dangerous. Most experts consider pedophilia an incurable disease, and studies of known sex offenders have found that men who target male children will, over a career, assault on average more than 100 boys. Still, in conversations with *U.S. News*, Madi Bacon expressed dismay that Cheit had broken the code of silence. "I don't see what good it's going to do for a young man with a family to be known publicly as having been abused. I mean it's such bad taste. And for Ross to involve other

boys is serious. The boys would say that's snitching, wouldn't they?"

### "This is your one chance, Bill"

After his visit to Bacon, Cheit accelerated the investigation. Using chorus records from the time, he tracked down dozens of the 118 boys who had been at camp with him in the Sierra foothills 25 years earlier. The conversations usually began with warm reminiscences of greased watermelon races and idyllic afternoons floating in inner tubes in the warm sun. Soon, however, the recollections turned dark. For a professor at a Michigan university, Cheit's phone call brought back his own lost memory of a time Farmer invited him to his cabin, unzipped the child's pants and began to fondle him. He began to cry, he now recalls, and ran away. A librarian in the Midwest told Cheit on the phone that Farmer had invited the boy into his sleeping bag, but that he had refused; he wrote in a troubled letter the next day that he had been deceiving himself for years and now realized he had in fact climbed in. "I remember feeling something warm and hard pressed up against my lower abdomen. My T-shirt must have been pushed up and it was sticky. . . . Then I saw his penis. . . . I'm

glad you called me, but I've been feeling sick about it all day." The camp nurse from the time, Lidia Ahumada, told the investigator and *U.S. News* of an event at the end of the summer of 1968, when she walked into the infirmary and caught Farmer in bed with a sick boy. Bacon recalled for *U.S. News* the nurse's angry report, adding: "I think Farmer's somewhat sick. To me it's an illness. But the man apologized, said to the chairman of the board that he would never do it again. What do you do when camp's over? The chairman certainly wanted to play a thing like that down from a public standpoint because he didn't

want to embarrass anybody." The investigator subsequently tracked down the child identified by the nurse. He has spent the past 15 years in San Francisco flophouses and has no memory of a man named Bill Farmer.

In letters and phone calls, former campers alleged what Cheit's first conversation with Bacon had implied, that at least two other men on the staff had been molesting boys and that on at least four

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occasions both children and adult staff had told the chorus director of the abuses, with no result. One alleged report came in 1967, when a whole cabin full of boys ran to Bacon to tell her of molestations by a staff member who is now dead. A second allegedly came at the beginning of the summer of 1968, when a counselor, 21 years old at the time, twice witnessed Farmer's molestations of a boy and went with the child to report it to the director. Bacon doesn't recall the incident. Farmer remained.

Cheit's investigator, meanwhile, had tracked Farmer's movements over the years. Farmer had been a student minister from 1966-68 at the Point Richmond, Calif., Methodist Church, the investigator learned from church historian Mildred Dornan (who confirmed the account for *U.S. News*), but had abruptly left after parents overheard children discussing the "massages" he had given them. Farmer then secured a ministerial position in Georgetown, near Sacramento, Calif. He hadn't been there three weeks, the church's district supervisor from the time told the investigator (and confirmed for *U.S. News*), when a former El Dorado County Municipal Court judge complained that Farmer had molested his son. If Farmer would leave the ministry and seek help, said the judge, he would not press charges. Farmer signed a statement withdrawing from his position and surrendered his ministerial credentials, according to the supervisor. He then moved to Oregon, where he held teaching credentials for several years and for a time ran a ministry out of his home.

Having located Farmer, now 55, in the tiny town of Scio, Ore., Cheit began to dial his phone. After 34 attempts, Farmer answered. "What can I do for you?"

Farmer asked his former charge, whom he had quickly recalled. "You can tell me whether you have any remorse," responded Cheit, his breath rapid and fierce. "Give me your number so I can call you back at another time." "This is your chance, Bill. This is your one chance." For nearly an hour, Cheit

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held Farmer on the phone, a tape recorder running all the while. Farmer admitted molesting Cheit in his cabin at night, confessed he had lost jobs and fled California because of "it," acknowledged that Bacon knew what happened at the end of the summer but allowed him to remain camp administrator because "no act had been consummated." Though Farmer conceded knowing that the acts he committed were criminal, he balked at Cheit's suggestion that he register as a sex offender.

"It's 25 years, Ross," he said, his voice weary. "It's nine months, Bill, [since I remembered]. And I have to live with it for the rest of my life."

Six months earlier, says Cheit, he had been terrified of anyone finding out what had happened; now, he says, "I realized that is the problem." On July 2, Cheit's lawyers sent a letter to the chorus offering to settle without litigation if the orga-

at this point in even attempting to challenge the charges," stated the letter from Pillsbury, Madison & Sutro, the esteemed law firm handling pro bono the chorus's defense. It went on to raise doubts as to the chorus's liability, pointed out its meager financial resources and concluded "it is hard to imagine how bankrupting or ruining the reputation of an organization that has done so much to serve the Bay Area community would serve any good purpose."

The response infuriated Cheit. "The chorus's attempt to disconnect from their past is a luxury I don't have. To claim their reputation is to cash in on their past, but selectively; they don't want those parts of their history that might be shameful. And if this is how they handle a corroborated claim from an adult, how would they respond if a 10-year-old came to them right now? Would they value their reputation over their moral responsibility to children?" On August 19, Cheit and his parents filed suit, charging that the chorus "negligently or intentionally" permitted molestation of boys in its care. The chorus denied all the allegations.

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The entanglement of psychology and the law is not an entirely easy marriage.



Bill Farmer was the administrator of the chorus's summer camp, which Cheit attended from age 10 to 13. Farmer is circled in this staff photograph from the summer of 1968.

nization would publicly acknowledge what had happened, investigate evidence that the problem had persisted over many years, install safeguards to ensure it would never happen again and provide \$450,000 to Cheit "for injuries beyond compensation." On August 6, the chorus responded. "The SFBC sees no purpose

The clinic and the courtroom have different criteria for establishing truth. Those who dispute the possibility of recovering memories insist the courts should not be admitting what Barden calls "pseudoscience" into testimony. Ofshe questions the wisdom of extending statutes of limitations designed to protect the accused,

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who after decades may find it impossible to gather the necessary evidence and witnesses to mount an effective defense. Of the 19 states that have extended their civil statutes on child sexual abuse, 16 have done so on the basis of the "delayed discovery doctrine." Just as a patient can sue who discovers 20 years later that a doctor had left a surgical instrument in his abdomen, so too, the theory goes, should a victim of child abuse be permitted to sue when he or she discovers the injury through recovering a memory. "If that's the premise, then how you characterize the forgetting is critical," says Ofshe. "If the plaintiff just avoided thinking about it, or later forgot how as a young adult he'd agonized over it, that's different than if the memory was put wholly out of reach by some imagined trick of the mind." Three states have simply extended statutes for civil prosecution of sexual abuse a set number of years beyond the victim's age of majority; nine states have no statutes of limitations on criminal prosecution of such crimes. "That's a straightforward social choice," says Ofshe, "not predicated on some mythic mental mechanism."

### "Let a jury decide"

Addressing the three demands made in the suit—for open accounting, protective procedures and financial compensation—chorus lawyer Kim Zeldin told *U.S. News* that efforts are being made to investigate the allegations, though "it is difficult because so many years have passed." She has not been able to evaluate the validity of the Farmer tape, she says, because she has not been provided with a copy. But Farmer has called her firm to deny Cheit's charges, she added, and to deny ever telling Cheit otherwise. (Farmer's lawyer, Carleton Briggs, confirms that his client, who now lives in Corpus Christi, Texas, says he has never admitted to any of the charges. Farmer himself would not talk to *U.S. News*.) As for protecting the boys in the chorus's charge, Zeldin listed unwritten procedures she says have been in place for 10 years, including careful screening

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of staff, involvement of parents in many camp activities and policies to ensure boys are never alone with any staff member. In response to Cheit's letter, she says, the chorus also retained over the summer an outside consultant to instruct the boys on how to avoid unwanted contact. As for money demands, she questioned Cheit's motivations, saying "he's trying to reach into a deep pocket that doesn't exist." Cheit responds that the demand for money was made to ensure that his suit be taken seriously, but remains his last priority. "If they offered me a million dollars tomorrow, with the condition that they admit no liability and that I keep silent, the answer would be no. We are now in a suit requesting unspecified damages. I'm perfectly content to let a jury decide." In one last odd twist to the suit—signifying just how important the cultural climate now surrounding memory has become to the resolution

the sexual abuse of children does enduring damage. A summary of major studies published this year in the bulletin of the American Psychological Association concluded that, while no one set of symptoms characterized all victims, abuse tends to produce an inappropriate conditioning of sexual responsiveness, the shattering of a child's trust and an enduring sense of stigmatization and powerlessness. The report further hypothesized that for some, traumatization may occur later. Studies of adults who were sexually abused in childhood have consistently found them to be more prone to depression, substance abuse, sexual problems and thoughts of suicide.

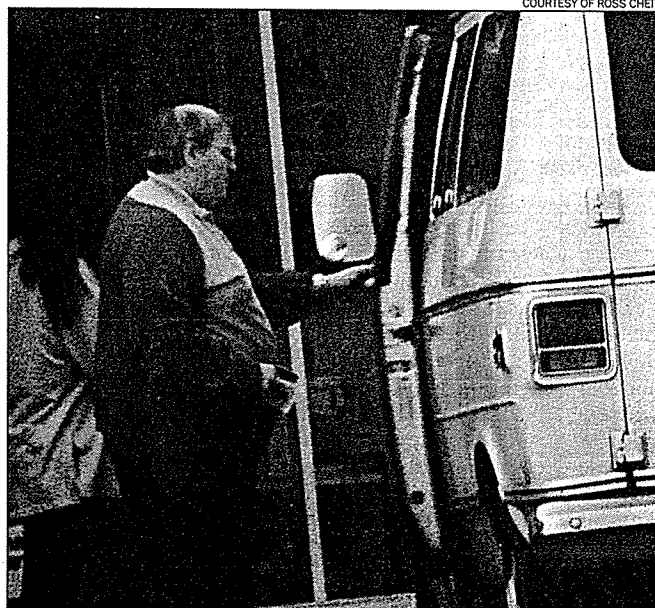
### "Forever, my childhood"

The boy who was allegedly molested by Farmer at the beginning of that summer of 1968—now a professor in New York—lives with an injury of a different kind. When he and his counselor reported Farmer to Bacon, he says, she assured him that she would fire Farmer and tell the boy's parents the whole thing, but did neither. For 24 years, until Cheit's call, he was left believing that his parents knew about Farmer's actions but had left him to cope on his own. "Even more than the molestation, it is the lie that changed my life."

The past remains a persistent presence for Cheit as well. In the past year, he has often wondered whether he could go on teaching ethics. "They're such moral relativists," he says of his students. "In the midst of this whole thing, one of my seniors asked, 'Aren't these moral taboos just cultural constructions? Isn't incest bad just because we think it is?' I wanted to shake her and say, 'There is evil in the world. I just got off the phone with it.'"

The loss he suffered, Cheit says, can never be redeemed. "Forever, this is going to be my childhood." And he knows that more painful disclosures may yet come. "I think they thought all along I couldn't stomach the publicity. But if I have to divulge in a courtroom the most private consequences of this, I will. It's not me who should be ashamed of this, but them. And I can't be upset with people who did nothing then if I do nothing now, for the same reasons. I have so much support. If I don't do this, who ever will?" ■

By MIRIAM HORN



Bill Farmer, now 55, was photographed earlier this year in Scio, Ore. He now lives in Corpus Christi, Texas.

of these cases—Pillsbury Madison & Suto submitted to the court a two-part *New Yorker* story on Ingram's apparently false recovered memories of satanic abuse.

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If there is one area of consensus among warring psychologists, it is that