

The Dana Lawhon story

Part 1

My name is Dana Lawhon and this is my story.

In 1980 I gave birth to a beautiful boy of 9lbs 13 & ½ ounces, and 23 & ½ inches long. He was the light of my life it was the first time in my life that I really had someone to love that would love me back.

We were very close and had a good life until the day he went to school at 5 years old with a bruise. I noticed it before he went to school and asked him how he got it. He told me that he got it outside playing.

Later that day the school called and told me that they called DHS and they came and picked up my son for that very same bruise.

Poor Charlie was a wreck we had never been separated before. They told me that Charlie told them that his daddy had given him the bruise. I told them have no fear if that is truly what happened I will make sure this man never sees him again so when can I come get him?

I was then informed that it would take a few days for them to check everything out. I called every day after that to see when he was going to come home.



Charlie Lawhon, Born January 19, 1980

I was then given the opportunity to get a visit which I took. I went to the store and bought one of those split heart necklaces. I gave one half to Charlie and told him to wear it so we could still be together until they would let me have him back. I then put his on and then did the same to me. Poor Charlie cried so and couldn't understand why he could not come home with me. He said they keep asking me about you hitting me "I told them about your time outs but that you never hit me".

He was so confused and frankly so was I. I felt so sorry for my little guy in fact I still cry everyday knowing I will never see him again.

Later on they told me that in checking, they had found that I don't make enough money to support him and that I need to apply for Welfare. I told them but I have been supporting him by myself for 5 years and as you can see- he is clean, well feed and nicely dressed.

I was then told that as soon as I apply for food stamps etc. I could have my son back. That was on Friday so on Monday, I went and applied for services. I was told it could take 30 days to go through. I told them that my child can't come home without these- is there anything I can do to speed up the process? I was told no.

They moved Charlie to a foster home with a man and his son who sexually molested and physically abused my poor boy every day. Of course I did not know this at the time.



Charlie's baby shoes bronzed
(click image for larger views)

I was turned down for Welfare because they said I made \$6.00 a month too much to qualify. I told them I will give you the \$6.00- I just want my baby back please I am begging you. Child services will not give me my little boy until you do this. I was then told there was nothing they could do for me. I left the building in tears afraid I would never see my little boy and would he think I just abandoned him.

I came up with an idea to picket the Governor's mansion who was George Nigh at the time. I was out there for about 30 minutes before I was approached by Security for the Mansion who told me what I was doing was illegal. He was a very nice man though he didn't arrest me and gave me some numbers of people that I could call. He said that it was also not

safe for a little girl like me to be out alone in this neighborhood at night.

The next day I went to the Governor's Office to talk to the lady the Security Guard told me about. When I got there I was told that she would be on vacation for the next 3 weeks. I then asked can I talk to whoever is doing her job while she is gone. I was told there was nobody I would just have to come back in 3 weeks. I told her I don't have 3 weeks this has gone on long enough. She then started to take care of the person behind me.

So I then took it upon myself to try and force the issue. I walked to the door (it was when they were glass before the nice wood door). I sat in front of it and told them all I am not moving nobody gets in or out until somebody helps me get justice for my son and me. A few minutes later a nice Gentleman walked out of his office and told me to come talk to him so I did. I showed him all my papers and he picked up the phone he called DHS and spoke to Mr. Joe Brown and told him that he had 72 hours to get me what I needed to make Child Services happy so I could get Charlie back. He then told me if you don't have what you need call me back and I will take care of it.

As soon as I left, I called Child Services to let them know what was going on. The next week Charlie was returned but things were never the same.

The first few nights he slept in my bed because he was so afraid they were going to take him away again. He had nightmares all the time. I thought this would go away in time but then I did not know what all was giving him the nightmares.

When it didn't go away I decided he needed to see a doctor and see if that would help. Of course I was not allowed to know about their conversations because of privacy but in the end I did learn what happened to him:

At 12 years old Charlie after having another nightmare tried to kill himself. He got a chair and climbed up into the top of my closet and got my gun out of the box I kept it in. He tried to shoot himself in the head but because I always left the first chamber empty the gun didn't fire. While he was trying to figure out what was wrong with the gun he shot himself in the leg and it broke his femur bone all the way from the ankle to the knee.

He was in the hospital for a long time. They had to put screws in his leg and cast it. While he was there I gave the gun to a friend to get rid of for me and vowed to never own one again.

Charlie was hospitalized several more times after that for suicide attempts of one sort or another.

One night he left the house to go spend the night with a friend. He kissed me goodbye and said I will see you tomorrow. That night the demons in his mind must have gotten to him. He took his friends (big brother) car and his gun and drove to Texas. When he got to the intersection of Pearl and Maine he shot himself in the head and drove his car into the building.

Dallas police called Oklahoma City Police and told them what they had and that the child was still alive.

I had put out an APB 12 hours earlier but for some reason Oklahoma City said they didn't have any missing persons on their alerts.

Because of that my son died all alone and I was not notified until the next day. I told my friend at 10:00 that I was scared Charlie was gone for good. When I got the Death Certificate the time of death was 10:04 true testament as to how close we were. I contacted a funeral home in Dallas called Lincoln Funeral home so they could help me get Charlie home. I didn't know who to call and to be honest I was thinking Lincoln Honest Abe. Big mistake. They told me it would cost \$2,000 and if I did not claim him soon he would be buried in paupers grave.

We drove down to Dallas with \$2,000 only to have the man say that it would now be \$2,500. I was not happy I told the man you told us yesterday it was \$2,000. I told him just because I am from Oklahoma does not mean I am stupid nor desperate. I will find another way- do not touch my sons body at the morgue.

We then had to go to the police station, the hospital, the wrecker service to collect Charlie's property. We then came back to Oklahoma City and I called Rolfe Funeral Home at N.E. 36th & I 35. They were so nice to me and agreed to take care of Charlie for \$1,700 that was to have him cremated.

I couldn't afford a casket etc. When I saw Charlie laying on the table I fainted. After I came to, I pulled myself together to say goodbye. After the funeral I spent many days in his room in the dark just crying and listening to the stereo. I could not bear what I was going through so I took an overdose of Imipramine. I took 4,000 milligrams I never wanted to die so bad in all my life.

Now that you know all of this you can understand why I blame DHS for Charlie's death and why I am so scared for my grandson that they allowed to be abused while in their care. From my point of view- my way of thinking is not so irrational after all especially knowing that it has happened once before. - Dana

Photo Album

Part 2

Dana Lawhon on Fox 25



**Here's the White Paper Report cited in the news story-
A Carrot Among the Sticks, The Adoption Incentive Bonus**