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Court hears sordid tale of sex abuse from 1950s

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HALIFAX (CP) - A sordid story of sexual abuse that drove the victim to escape into multiple personalities unfolded in provincial court yesterday.

It also portrayed the deaf and mute perpetrator as a victim in his own right.

Albert Nelson Sullivan, 77, a retired stevedor deafened at the age of 2 by the Halifax Explosion, pleaded guilty to having sex with a young girl more than 40 years ago.

He was sentenced to 18 months in jail for having carnal knowledge of someone not his wife between 1948 and 1954.

The victim, now 50, is disabled, has had a nervous breakdown and shock treatments and suffers multiple-personality disorder caused by traumatic experiences, Crown Attorney Chris Nicholson said.

The abuses began with fondling in Sullivan's basement when the girl was five and sexual intercourse beginning when she was 6. Sullivan would pay her a quarter.

During the first rape, the young girl disassociated and created Rosie, the first of her alternate personalities.

The nine are: Rose, 6, who sucks her thumb and needs to be read to sleep; Holly, age unknown, who seeks justice; LuLu, 26-36, who smokes, drinks and flirts; Peanut Butter, age unknown, a vulgar male who eats jars of peanut butter; Boy, 8, an illiterate who uses small words and likes toys; Angel, 7, a deaf girl who speaks sign language; Laura 13, who spends hours fixing her hair and reads a lot; Baby, an infant who only comes out at night; and the victim herself, who doesn't drink or smoke and is quiet.

The victim's prognosis is not good, said Nicholson. She takes anti-depressants, anti-psychotic drugs and sleeping pills.

Sullivan isn't the same man he was when he abused the girl, defence lawyer Danny Graham said. A reformed alcoholic who hasn't had a drink for 29 years, Sullivan has gone from an angry man to a mild-mannered grandfather. He has 11 children and has been married for more than 50 years.

He lived a life of adversity, Graham said.

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"Deaf people at that time essentially lived in a bubble. His notions of right and wrong would have been imbalanced at times."

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