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Picking Up the Pieces

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No day would trouble her as much as that day did, February 12, 2005. No day after would begin as normal.

Darlene Doxye Calvin woke that Saturday, slipped on a robe, and padded barefoot down the stairs of her two-story Lakewood home to make breakfast for her 11-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter. The weather would turn chilly and drizzly by afternoon. Darlene figured on going to work for a few hours, and then maybe taking the kids out to dinner and renting some movies.

A single mother, Darlene regularly took her son and daughter to church, drove them to their various practices, worked two jobs—development director for both an elementary school and a pediatric cancer research organization—and co-directed a yoga studio. Other needs were covered by her ex-husband.

Ex-husband. The word didn't have as much sting as it once did. Divorced for 15 months, she'd come to terms with the fact that, despite his humor, despite his talk of raising a family, she and Todd had never connected in their decade of marriage. Yet they'd remained close enough. Todd Calvin lived two miles from Darlene, and his dental office was a little less than a mile and a half away. The weekend before, they'd all gone out to dinner. Darlene was the contact person for his home security company, after his own cell phone and office numbers.

And it was a call from his home security company that day, a little past noon, with Darlene at her office, catching up on work, that changed everything. Her cell phone rang, and the voice on the other end said an alarm had gone off at Todd's home on Palo Pinto Avenue. The security company couldn't get in touch with him. And here was the weird thing: when the security company called his home number, a man answered the phone and identified himself as an agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Did Darlene have any idea where Todd was?

"The FBI? That couldn't be right," she says. "I tried to call Todd and got no answer. I called my home and asked my son if anyone had come to the door. He said no, and I reminded him not to let anyone in the house if they did. Then I called my parents—they live just down the street. If there was anything to this, I didn't want the FBI coming to my house and scaring my kids. So I asked my father to go over to my house and hang out with them. I decided I had to go over to Todd's house."

When she pulled up to his two-story brick and wood frame home, there were Dallas Police cars and black SUVs parked in front and on the driveway. A few neighbors were milling about outside.

"I sat in the car for a couple of minutes, and I thought, 'What the hell have you done, Todd?' I mean, he's a lot of things, but doing something illegal? No. I couldn't fathom something like that from him."

Darlene got out of her car, and a woman in a dark suit asked if she was the ex-wife. Darlene nodded, rendered speechless for a moment. The FBI agent asked if she would come into the house with her, but to be sure not to touch anything. It was surreal. Was Todd in trouble? Was he dead?

The lead FBI investigator, Special Agent Michael Call, sat down with Darlene in Todd's living room.

"Do you realize that Todd Calvin is in San Diego?"

Darlene shook her head.

"Did you know that he was trying to go to Mexico?"

Mexico?

"You mean in his airplane?"

"No, ma'am. He flew commercially. American Airlines flight 1675 from Dallas to San Diego yesterday."

"That can't be right. Todd never flies commercially. He always flies his own plane. You got the wrong guy. He won't fly commercially."

"We have his ticket. He's under arrest in San Diego right now."

Call continued, explaining to Darlene the charges against her ex-husband. Based on an investigation headed by the San Diego office of the FBI and assisted by a number of state and local departments, Todd Calvin was charged with conspiracy to travel and traveling in interstate and foreign countries for the purpose of engaging in illicit sexual conduct—specifically, sexual conduct with young boys.

Darlene let out a scream. She fell over and began sobbing. Her cell phone rang a number of times—Darlene's father, trying to find out what was going on—but she didn't answer. Agents brought her some water. They asked her if she had ever heard of NAMBLA, the North American Man/Boy Love Association. They asked her questions about her own children. It only sunk in after a few minutes that they were asking if her ex-husband might have sexually abused her children. They had been with him just a week before.

None of it made sense. A picture. Did the agents have a picture of the man they'd arrested in San Diego? Darlene held onto a desperate belief that it was a case of mistaken identity.

She said to Call, "You can't go throwing our lives into something we'll never recover from unless you're sure."

Call showed her a photo.

It was him. Phillip Todd Calvin.



FOR PHILLIP TODD CALVIN, NO DAY WOULD begin as well as February 12, 2005, did. And how could it? He was known as the Singing Dentist of Lakewood because he belonged to the Dallas Symphony Chorus and was known to sing to his patients. He earned as much as \$250,000 a year, affording him a spacious two-story home, a white Mercedes, a Beechcraft Bonanza single-engine plane, frequent international vacations, and, on this morning, a hotel room in San Diego with the promise of a Valentine's Day trip to Mexico where he'd have sex with young boys.



MOVING ON: Darlene Calvin says of her ex-husband: "He threw away every memory I cared to still have."



In Mexico, he would be free to explore his sexual fantasies in the company of other men who shared his tastes, who told him that his longings were not wrong. This was the support he'd found in NAMBLA: a departure from the guilt and fear he'd felt for decades. He found people there who told him that it was society and its laws that were unjust, that sexual relations between grown men and young boys were healthy and normal. Speaking to his fellow NAMBLA members was liberating. They understood. They welcomed him. He didn't have to go through the effort of maintaining a façade of normalcy—a marriage and children and all the other things society and his own family and friends expected. NAMBLA knew who he was and what he wanted.

Calvin had met his new friends, David Cory Mayer, 49, of Chicago; Paul Ernest Zipszer, 39, from Deltona, Florida; and Robert Hamer, from Los Angeles, at a NAMBLA convention in Miami during the weekend of November 12, 2004.

On Saturday, November 13, the national meeting had adjourned for the day, and Calvin, Mayer, Hamer, and another NAMBLA member had dinner together. Over burgers and fries, amid the throng of young couples and families, the men discussed putting together a trip to Mexico where they could indulge their desires with local youths. Mayer and Calvin hit it off, discussing the places they could go and when it might be possible.

Calvin flew back to Dallas after the convention, and within days he and Mayer were firming up plans. About two weeks later, a date and place had been selected. In a December 5 e-mail to Mayer and Hamer, Calvin could barely contain himself.

"The whole thing sounds fabulous, almost too good to be true. I'm so excited, just thinking about it."

Through December and January, in telephone calls and e-mails recorded by the FBI, Mayer and Calvin discussed techniques for picking up young boys on the beaches of Mexico. They discussed the kinds of boys they wanted and what sorts of gifts they could use to bribe them. Robert Hamer reached Paul Zipszer, who agreed to join them on the Mexico cruise. Hamer helped coordinate the whole thing.

Calvin's own taste ran to 12- and 13-year-olds, preferably hairless. The few experiences he'd had with young boys were the highlights of his sexual memories, ones he never shared with Darlene Calvin. According to e-mails, phone transcriptions, and in-person interviews collected by the FBI, Calvin recounted his days as a nursing aide, bathing young boys, and how he'd get "slight opportunities while bathing a kid ... You might get to touch it, for like half a second." He also recalled a time, years before, while he was in dental school, when he had a frantic encounter with a boy who was just days away from his 14th birthday. They had met in a health club.

Calvin told Hamer one day over the phone, "We got in my car and I drove around the neighborhood. ... He was in a rush. He had to get back before his mom was ready to go home. I'm trying to drive. I'm looking for a place where, hopefully, nobody would spot me and, like, call the police. He, uh, came down on me once. Me on him twice, and then we rushed back to the gym."

Calvin had another sexual encounter with the same boy two years later. And on a trip to Costa Rica, Calvin had paid an underage boy to perform sexual acts on him. To his NAMBLA friends, Calvin admitted he held no regrets about his past encounters. In fact, he wrote in an e-mail to Mayer and Hamer how much he was "really looking forward to the [Mexico] trip!" He told them he wanted to have encounters with several boys, but only one at a time. In a phone call with Hamer on December 14, 2004, Calvin said he really hoped to be able to have anal sex with the boys, because he was "into that kind of stuff," but he also had trouble imagining "the typical 10- to 12-year-old having the ability to accommodate in that way" He even talked about finding a way to bring a boy back to Dallas with him.

By January 14, Calvin had paid a \$558 deposit on the trip to a travel agency that was actually an FBI undercover operation. The plan was for him, Mayer, and Zipszer to fly to San Diego on Friday, February 11, and stay there overnight. The boat was to depart for Harbor Island at 10 am Saturday.

The week before the trip, Calvin worked feverishly to get patients in and out of his dental office. The Singing Dentist had to clear his calendar. He had his kids over for their weekend and ate dinner with Darlene that Saturday. Things were looking great.

But for Calvin there was one problem. Robert Hamer, the NAMBLA member from Los Angeles, was actually an undercover agent from the FBI.

THE NORTH AMERICAN MAN/BOY LOVE Association was founded in 1978 and bills itself as a political and civil rights organization. Unincorporated and based in New York and San Francisco, NAMBLA has been protected by the courts on a First Amendment basis because it positions itself as an advocacy group intent on changing, not violating, laws prohibiting sexual relationships between adult men and young boys. While the group's membership is small—the FBI estimates about 300 formal members nationwide—its rationalizations lend support to pedophiles, says FBI Special Agent Brooke Donohue, head of the Dallas office of the national Innocent Images initiative, which targets child sex predators. Donohue investigates and refers for prosecution about 50 federal child sex and child porn cases a year in the Dallas region. He has more cases than his agents can handle.

"What they do is use the model of other legitimate groups who have fought for acceptance, legally and socially," Donohue says. "They want to numb people to what their agenda is, which, at the end of the day, is to have sex with children. A lot of the pedophiles I've arrested don't think they've done anything wrong, and it's because they are supported by groups like this."

Disturbingly, the NAMBLA web site echoes the wording of the civil rights, gay rights, and women's rights movements. "NAMBLA's membership is open to everyone sympathetic to personal freedom. Our goal is to end the oppression of men and boys who have freely chosen, mutually consensual relationships," the web site proclaims.

The association holds regular conventions across the country, and various chapters have monthly meetings. These are done in a low-profile manner, of course. Law enforcement and child advocates say that the meetings are a cover for members to exchange information on child porn, methods of child seduction, techniques for skirting child-protection laws, and child sex tourism.

The feds take child sex tourism seriously. In 2003, the government passed the Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to End the Exploitation of Children Today (PROTECT) Act, increasing the penalty to 30 years for engaging in child sex tourism and making it easier to prosecute the crime. Since then, there have been more than 20 indictments across the nation and a dozen convictions of American child sex tourists, according to the U.S. State Department.

CALVIN WAS SO EXCITED THE MORNING OF THE cruise he was jittery. He wanted to break into song. On the dock in San Diego, he double-checked his designer travel bags. He and Mayer had brought DVDs, CDs, and video games to offer Mexican boys. He knew it was going to be a Valentine's Day weekend he wouldn't forget.

At 10:05 am, a dozen FBI agents in dark suits surrounded the four men on the dock. The would-be travelers were under arrest. In a related sting, at almost the same time, four other NAMBLA members were arrested on similar charges at a Los Angeles marina.

Five minutes later and 2,000 miles away, in Dallas, agents armed with a search warrant entered Calvin's home. Items seized included NAMBLA bulletins and publications, a novel titled *Diary of a Pedophile*, a graphic novel with illustrations of men having sex with pre-pubescent boys, and several computer hard drives.

A few days later, employees at Calvin's single-story dental offices found NAMBLA publications and a book with pictures of nude boys and men together.

A week earlier, Calvin's office had mailed out a four-color promotional brochure. It told prospective clients: "Put your family's dental care into the hands of a respected dentist."

IN THE HOURS FOLLOWING THE ARREST, Darlene Calvin felt as though she were living outside her body. She was, at times, in near physical shock, shaking and cold. Todd Calvin? A pedophile? NAMBLA?

While an agent explained to her the support that the FBI's Victim Outreach Program would offer her and her children, Darlene called her family and a few close friends to tell them what was happening. There was a coppery taste in her mouth that wouldn't go away. She didn't cry. It was as if she was standing behind herself, watching her body go through the motions.

By the time she got home that same Saturday afternoon, February 12, her parents, her brother and sister, her attorney, and her closest friends were already there. Knowing it was only a matter of days, maybe hours, until there would be a swarm of media at her door, she asked her best friend to take her son and her daughter for a few days.



The kids asked if their dad was dead. Darlene said no, told them to go and have fun. She wouldn't let them see her break down. (Darlene asked that the names of her parents and friends not be used.)



Her family stayed with her that evening. They ordered Mexican takeout. Darlene's nachos sat uneaten on the coffee table as she asked over and over, "Who was he?" between fits of crying. At one point her father had to bring her a paper bag to breathe into so she wouldn't hyperventilate. Sleep came only fitfully that night, her dreams as bad as her reality. She felt broken. And the worst part was, she knew more was coming.

Her mother says that at some point during the night, Darlene called a crisis intervention hotline. Darlene has no memory of it. She asked her mother at 5:30 am to bring over Starbucks coffee. Darlene doesn't remember that, either.

She sat with her mother Sunday morning. Darlene's vibrant, olive complexion was sallow and drawn, her eyes puffy and bloodshot. She curled up next to her mother like a little girl. But then she started to talk about her children. She sat up on her own. Gone was the refrain of "Who was he?" and in its place she methodically planned out how and what she would tell her children, how she would guide them through the looming crisis. She leaned forward in her seat, listing her directives for herself as if she were making a battle plan.

On Monday, February 14, an agent called to tell her that the FBI and U.S. Attorney's office would be releasing the files on the arrest publicly. It would only be a matter of hours before the local media picked it up.

"I brought my kids home and asked everyone else to stay downstairs," she says. "We went up into my bedroom and I told them what was happening. I told them the truth. That's what you do when you deal with this kind of trauma. I answered what few questions they had with only what they wanted to know. They didn't understand what it meant that he was attracted to boys. I knew that when they were done asking what they needed at that moment, it meant they couldn't process any more. I knew that over the next several years—maybe for the rest of their lives—they will have questions."

The story broke just before the evening news. Todd Calvin's picture was shown on a local news station with the story of the arrest. It was 4:45 pm, Darlene recalled specifically. Valentine's Day. It led the news at 5 pm and again at 6 pm.

Her first instinct after that weekend was to flee and find a place to hole up. She took her kids out of school for a week and stayed home with them. The school sent a letter to parents explaining the situation without naming her or her children, asking them to be sensitive to Darlene and her son and daughter. Darlene took another couple of days after that before she returned to work, and even then she had to will herself out of her car and into the building. She tried to delay that first morning back at the office by fussing over her outfit.

It was maybe three weeks before she went out—and only then because it was a fundraiser dinner for the Lakewood Service League at Mariano's, a Mexican restaurant. Everyone she knew was quietly supportive—they didn't want to talk in front of the children—but every moment she spent during dinner, she felt like eyes were on her and people were whispering. "Isn't that her?"

SIX MONTHS ON, IT'S THE LATTER PART OF summer, and Darlene welcomes a guest to her home. She's barefoot but dressed smartly in a designer skirt and blouse. She is guarded, but she wants to be candid. While she's dealt with the issue daily since last winter, she hasn't reflected on the time in between all that much. She's willing to talk now, but she's very clear about what's off-limits.

There are pictures of her son and daughter all throughout her living room. There's not a single picture of Todd Calvin. No trace of his existence in the house.

"Was he a good father?" Darlene asks herself. "I can't answer that. The minute he stepped foot on the plane, the minute he agreed to go on this trip, he stomped his foot on something beautiful and he threw it away. He threw away every memory I cared to still have."

She says that she and her kids talk about it from time to time. They curl up on the couch or in her bed, and she asks them if they have any questions. They're at the age when it's hard enough to understand normal sexual issues, much less the idea of pedophilia. Trying to understand it in context of their father—that's going to take time.

About one thing she is sure; however: "I am very comfortable that he did not abuse my children either sexually or in any other way. We really were a separate part of his life.

"During that week that I had my children 'sequestered,' they spent time with FBI counselors who are trained in these issues ... They didn't interrogate them, but they talked to my kids at length and we're all comfortable that he never directly abused them. There may have been something they saw on his desk or in a closet—we can never be sure—but as sure as we can be, there's nothing to suggest he abused them in any way, or any kids who may have been here for a sleepover or playing with my kids. But it may have just been a matter of time."

She says people have asked her whether she divorced Todd because of what he was doing. "That's so insulting," she says, "like I would send my kids off with him every other weekend and I wouldn't turn him in in the first place. Others have asked, 'How could you miss that? How could you not know?' And the truth is I don't blame them for asking that, because I ask that every night. I go through moments and memories in our lives and I ask at what point it was present? Could I have seen it? How deep inside him was it? And will my children ever wonder, 'How could you send us there? How could you not know?'"

When she heard about the items in his home and office, Darlene wondered if they were in her house when he was. She feels like she's interrogating herself.

"He didn't go through my old bags in storage with my old cheerleading outfits any more than I went through his old boxes from his childhood. Do other married people go through each other's stuff? Was I supposed to? Was there something there in the top shelf of our closet? If he was a member of these organizations, was he getting newsletters? Where were they?"

At the end of it all, after all the therapy (which she still attends, periodically) and self-recriminations and questions upon questions, after months where the anger at her ex-husband was only matched by the anger at herself, Darlene came to accept that she couldn't know. There are plenty of moments when she's so angry she could scream or break down crying. In moments like these, she leaves the house. She goes for a walk or a drive or she sends her kids to the neighbor's house. She's spent entire afternoons—the bad days—staring at White Rock Lake.

Despite the concern that Todd's estate won't be able to keep its financial commitments, Darlene quit her job at the elementary school because she had to spend more time with her children. "They only know what they see from me," she says. "If I'm not strong, they won't know how to be. They won't know how to be strong unless they see the one person they trust be strong. So I choose to be strong. I choose to let them see me being strong, so that they can be."

"I've gotten to the point where I'm ready to move ahead with the new chapter in my life. I won't live in grief, and I won't live in anger."

IN SAN DIEGO, TODD CALVIN'S CASE IS pending in the U.S. District Court for Southern California. He and his lawyer, Elizabeth Missakian, declined to be interviewed for this article. Through court petitions, he has argued that the government violated his first-amendment rights (and fourth and fifth), and that by sending an undercover agent to the Miami NAMBLA convention without reasonable suspicion of illegal activities, it entrapped him. No trial date has been set.

Portrait of Darlene Calvin by Allison V. Smith
Photos by Elizabeth Lavin