

The Underground "Tunnels" of McMartin Preschool

From ReligiousTolerance.org/tunnels.htm [Author: B.A. Robinson, based largely on an article by John Earl]

This essay is based primarily on an article by John Earl called "The Dark Truth About the 'Dark Tunnels of McMartin'." It appeared in the periodical Issues in Child Abuse Accusations, Vol. 7, #2. 1

The first suggestion of underground tunnels and secret rooms may have emerged in 1994-FEB during the interview of a former student by CII.

He said "...like somehow I can't remember. I'm not sure about. Ah, there was a room I wasn't suppose to go in or something....I'm making this up. I'm not sure. Yeah, I can see it, I think."

At the preliminary hearing, he testified how Ray Buckey and the other teachers took him to play "Naked Movie Star" (kiddie-porn) games every weekday.

In reality, Ray was not at the school until after the boy had graduated.

He recalled that the secret room was the size of a classroom was located to the east of the school building and was accessible by a trap door and tunnel.

Background:

"McMartin" was one of the first Multi-Victim Multi-Offender (MVMO) child abuse cases. At 6 years duration, it was the longest US criminal trial in history. At a cost to the state of \$15 million, it was the most expensive. No convictions were obtained. It has become the most famous case of its type. More detailed information is available. https://www.religioustolerance.org/ra_mcmar.htm

During late 1983 and early 1984, the Children's Institute International (CII) counseling agency interviewed hundreds of children who had attended the McMartin preschool. 360 were eventually diagnosed as having been abused. First one, and then many of the kids disclosed being led down through trap-doors in the floor of the preschool and taken through underground tunnels. They described some tunnels as leading to a nearby building, where the children were loaded into a vehicle and taken to another location (sometimes via an airplane flight, train or hot air balloon to another city) and abused. Other tunnels allegedly led either to an underground chamber or above ground room where they described being subjects in pornographic photographs and being sexually abused. The existence of tunnels has been hotly debated since the mid 1980's. If there were tunnels in McMartin, then at least part of what the children said was true; the rest of their testimony would then be much more credible. If no tunnels existed, except in fantasy, then the rest of the children's testimony may also be

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unreliable. To believe in the tunnels has become almost a required article of faith in some quarters. Unfortunately, the site can no longer be examined. The McMartin building has been leveled and replaced by another structure.

The Trap Doors:

The children talked about many trap-doors, and one hole in the floor. These led to rooms either directly or via tunnels. Various groups have committed a great deal of effort in searching for the tunnels. However, the search for the trap doors may well give us a better understanding of the McMartin puzzle. 11 of the children interviewed by the DA's investigators talked about the location of the access holes in the floor. A summary of their trap-door disclosures, sorted by entry location, is:

Classroom 1: trap-door under bathroom sink in SE corner of room; led to a tunnel and underground room trap-door in NW corner of room; led to long tunnel which led to a room under the outer play yard *	Classroom 4: trap-door in SW corner which led to 2 rooms under the school building trap-door in NW corner which led to tunnel which led to a room under the outer play yard *
Classroom 2: no trap-door	Front office bathroom: trap door under sink, leading to underground room
Classroom 3: trap door in NW corner led to tunnel going east to garage next door trap-door in SW corner led to tunnel going east to garage next door trap-door in NW [sic] wall trap-door in middle of East wall; led to a tunnel to adjacent property	Outer play yard: underground room accessible by regular door (presumably flush with ground) teacher and child dug a hole which led to a tunnel which led to a very large room (about half the size of a classroom) ladder led to underground concrete room
Front play yard: trap-door in a playhouse floor; tunnel went West to underground room 1	* These two disclosures were made by the same child and refer to what the child believes to be the same underground room.

Note that all of the trap doors, and other entry routes were described as being in different locations. No two children described the same spot. *If there had been tunnel entrances at McMartin, one would expect that a child would have remembered where it was located.*

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The floor of the McMartin preschool building was a poured concrete pad. "...the District Attorney's investigators peeled back floor tiles and searched other locations to find trap doors at locations described by 11 children at the preschool site. There was no need to look under the foundation where openings or seals in the concrete were nonexistent." 11 None of the access trap doors described by the children were ever found. It would have a straightforward job for the building owners to remove any trap doors, patch the concrete floor where the doors had been, and re-lay floor tiles. However, it is impossible to patch concrete without the edges being obvious to the eye.

Two examples of patched concrete are shown below. Both were taken in Kingston, ON, Canada near our office:



This picture shows a concrete sidewalk at a local shopping mall. A post had been removed and the cavity in the concrete pad had been refilled with concrete. The edges of the original hole where the post was located are clearly visible. There is a difference in the color, the texture and the surface roughness between the patch and the original concrete.



This picture was taken indoors in a corridor of a local industrial building. A portion of the concrete floor had been removed, some under-floor services had been installed, the excavation was backfilled and the concrete floor re-poured. The line between the original concrete floor and the new concrete can be easily seen. The carpenter's square tool in the pictures is 9.5" long. A wall and doorway can be seen in the right part of the picture.

Patches in concrete slabs are very obvious. They cannot be made invisible. You can check this out for yourself. If you know of any places where concrete has been patched, examine them and see if the patch is clearly visible.

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The outside playhouse at McMartin was also described by some of the children as an access point to the underground tunnels. The building was mounted on a solid concrete slab. Police inspection of the concrete showed that "no trap door had ever been located there".

Searching for the tunnels

For additional details, refer to the article by John Earl. ¹

1985-MAR, Parents Search:

On MAR-4, some parents of McMartin students searched the vacant lot to the West of the school. They dug a random series of holes a few feet deep where the children had described tunnels and underground rooms. No evidence of tunnels was uncovered. About 4 dozen parents returned on MAR-15 with a backhoe. They dug a 60' trench running north to south beside the west wall of the McMartin building. They then dug 6 east-west trenches, each 30' long, starting from the original trench. They were searching for the remains of sacrificed animals and for any signs of underground rooms or tunnels. If any had existed, then they would have been easily found. The soil in the area is sandy and would have required elaborate shoring with wood or concrete to prevent cave-ins. 10 No evidence of such shoring was ever found.

1985-MAR, Archaeological Search:

A few days after the parent's search, an archaeological firm began to excavate. Scientific Resource Surveys, Inc. (SRS) had been hired by the DA's office. They brought children onto the property to help them search for trap doors, tunnels and rooms. They scanned the area using a "terrain conductivity meter", an instrument that detects the presence of underground caverns or changes in soil consistency by measuring the electrical conductivity of the earth. They detected two trash dumps, but no evidence of underground tunnels or rooms.

1990-APR, Parents' Search:

Some parents dug a hole 15' deep under the north-east section of the school building. This would be underneath Classroom 3, the region where three children described tunnels that led to the building next door. No tunnels (and presumably no trap-doors or rooms) were found.

1990-APR, Gunderson Search:

Ted Gunderson coordinated a 38 day excavation project. He had been an FBI agent in charge of their Los Angeles office. Consulting archaeologist Dr. E.G. Stickel was hired. He had become famous by claiming that he had found 40,000 year old human artifacts in the Santa Clara Valley of Northern California. (Most archaeologists believe that North and South America were devoid of human beings prior to about 9,000 BCE).

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After team members were interviewed by reporters, stories were published that a filled-in tunnel had been found or that an opening that could lead to tunnels was found. The team complained that District Attorney Reiner was ignoring their evidence; they would not release any of their findings because they did not trust the DA's investigators.

A one-page report written by Dr. Stickel was distributed to reporters and spectators on 1990-JUL-27 - the day that the final verdicts were announced in court. They implied that a number of tunnels had been found. The longest went 45' from the south-west wall in an easterly direction, and 10' along the north wall. This description makes no sense to us, because the building is aligned in a north-south direction; there is no south-west wall. If that was the longest tunnel, then presumably there were others found. They also claim that one tunnel led to a 9' chamber. It is not known whether the dimension refers to its length, width or height.

Dr. Stickel's final report totals 186 pages. It contains many confusing points

- a photograph is shown of a fast food wrapper with a 1982/3 copyright date. This is said to have been photographed in situ i.e. exactly as it was found, before it was removed from the earth. But the photograph does not show the wrapper in situ.

- some photographs of soil variations are too dark to decipher

- many artifacts allegedly recovered from the "tunnel" were also not photographed in situ

- the report claims that they found one possible tunnel, one certain tunnel and one possible room. But all of these structures would have required elaborate shoring and bracing with wood or concrete walls. They would be quite obvious if excavated and not open to doubt. Yet no such shoring was found.

- a consulting geologist, Dr. E.D. Michael frequently viewed the digs and concluded that "Generally, the results of my examinations were negative insofar as proving the existence of a tunnel"

- Dr. Stickel concludes that Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) detected tunnels. But Spectrum, the firm that conducted the GPR scans, reported that they turned up no evidence of tunnels.

- If tunnels and rooms once existed, they would have been filled in about 1983 in order to destroy any evidence. But the fill material that Dr. Stickel says came from a filled-in tunnel consisted of pre-1940 trash, discarded before the building was constructed.

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the physical effort to fill in the cavities would take a very large number of trips with wheel barrows, at a time when the preschool was under observation. Yet, nobody noticed anything. 5"...one would think that the line of dumptrucks around the block would raise a few eyebrows, especially given the controversy and attention surrounding the school at the time the tunnels were alleged to have been filled (after 1982)." 10

Conclusions:

Prior to the parents' excavation in 1985-MAR, none of the children disclosed memories of a secret room under the school building itself. All were in the vacant lot to the west of the preschool. Shortly after the parents' backhoe excavations turned up nothing, some children started to remember rooms under the school building. We suspect that the parents were disappointed that no tunnels were found where the children said they were. They probably sought other answers from the children, and easily persuaded them to reveal alternative, fictional locations underneath the building.

The "tunnels" and "room" that Dr. Stickel found were probably remnants of old trash dumps that were dug and filled many years before the Preschool building was constructed.

11 children described the locations of 13 entry doors. Yet the police were unable to find any trap doors or any remains of filled-in trap doors when they thoroughly inspected the building and playhouse. The obvious conclusion is that these are non-existent, fantasy trap-doors. The children simply made up stories in response to the interviewers' repeated direct questions. Recent studies in the US and New Zealand have indicated how easy it is to pressure very young children to fantasize if questions are not properly asked. Simply repeating a direct question is often enough to get an invalid answer. The child initially answers correctly, but soon recognizes that they are not giving the investigator the "right" answer. Thus, they make up another answer to satisfy the adult. Other components of the children's testimony were clearly fantasy.

For example, child molesters would hardly transport children to an abuse location by a hot air balloon, which is at the mercy of air currents. Even if by some miracle the balloon landed at the right location, the probability is extremely low that the winds would conveniently reverse direction exactly 180 degrees, in order to push the balloon back to the starting point. No child abuser with even a small amount of common sense would use a balloon to transport victims. We would assume that the trap-doors are like the balloons; they also exist only in fantasy.

We predict that investigators could select a few preschool hundred children in any locality in North America; interview them about their preschool experiences, using the same manipulative, suggestive methods as were used by the CII; and find dozens of children who would describe trap-doors, tunnels and underground rooms. Such a study could be designed without references to sexual abuse and thus could be conducted without any

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possibility of emotional harm to the children. Unfortunately, to our knowledge, such a study has never been conducted. If it were, the results would be very revealing.

The Real Tunnels:

Although no underground tunnels existed at McMartin, another type was present. The children referred to them as "tunnels". They were open-ended, brightly colored, plywood boxes about 16" wide, 24" tall and 24" deep. The children arranged them in various combinations on the floor like dominoes and crawled through them. These real tunnels were probably the root source of the belief in the mythical underground tunnels. 8

English Tunnels:

A case of real child sexual abuse within a family occurred in Nottingham, UK. Many children from an extended family were placed in foster care. After the foster parents had been briefed about "signs" of ritual abuse, the parents and children started to report child abuse in many underground tunnels throughout the district. A very thorough police investigation was conducted of each location; they turned up no evidence of any tunnels in the present or past. It is obvious that the belief about tunnels under McMartin has been embraced by Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) promoters in England as it has in the US. Their belief was then transferred to the foster parents who in turn prompted the children for memories of tunnels. Eventually, the children responded with fantasies of tunnels. These fantasies have probably developed into false memories.

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R.C. Summitt, "The Dark Tunnels of McMartin", The Journal of Psychohistory, 21 (4); 1994-Spring, P. 5 - 13

Alex Constantine, "McMartin Preschool Revisited" at: <http://www.mk.net/~mcf/axmrtn2.htm> reaches an entirely different conclusion about the tunnels.

Issues in Child Abuse Accusations, Vol. 7, #2, 1995-Spring. Cover photograph and Page 76.

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"Archaeological investigations of the McMartin Preschool Site," Santa Cruz Ritual Abuse Task Force, at:

<http://members.cruzio.com/~ratf/McMartIntro.html> The report appears to interpret garbage dumps as filled-in tunnels. But it does not address the problem of how children were able to gain access to the "tunnels" through solid concrete floor without openings.

"The McMartin Preschool Tunnels," at: <http://www.axiomatic.net/ragnar/mcmartin.htm>

"Analysis of the report on the 186 (minus one page) Manhattan Tunnel Project (MTP) by E. Gary Stickel," at:

http://www.ipt-forensics.com/journal/volume7/j7_2_1_26.htm

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