

# INTO ACCOUNT

SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS + ALLIES

## Amy Anderson

Submitted 9/30/2020

My name is Amy Anderson.

I first met David Haas at a summer liturgical music camp at St. John's University I believe between my junior and senior year of high school. I had come to the camp with my friend Chris A at the invitation of our church's liturgist, Mary W. Mary was good friends with David Haas so a highlight of the camp was being introduced to him and spending time with him (always in groups) as a result of his and my mutual connection to Mary.

Flash forward to my freshman year of college at the College of St. Benedict in the fall of 1987. I was 18 years old. David was coming to campus and was performing a concert in Mary Commons. I spent the afternoon before the concert playing and singing his songs in my dorm room. I remember leaving the sheet music scattered all over my bed when I left.

Before the concert started, I made a point to go up to David and remind him that we had met before. That I was Mary W's friend. He remembered me right away, which made me feel amazing and special. He asked me to stay after the concert so we could catch up. Several times during the concert he caught my eye and smiled.

After the concert I waited around while he talked with people and then he asked if I wanted to go get something to drink (non-alcoholic was implied) and catch up. I went back to tell my roommate that I was going out with David Haas and would see her when I got home.

We went out to David's car and were chatting the whole time. We were both on a bit of a high – David from the adrenaline from the concert and me from being singled out with the star of the evening.

St. Ben's is located in the tiny town of St. Joseph, MN, which is mostly made up of bars and pizza parlors so David suggested we head toward St. Cloud. I readily agreed and wasn't really paying that much attention to where he was going, since I figured he had a place in mind. But rather than going to a restaurant, David drove to a quiet strip of farm country, just past the campus, and pulled off the road. There were no other people or cars or buildings around. The moon provided the only light, as there were no street lights or building lights around. He said it was easier to talk where it was quiet and he probably asked me if I minded and I probably said I didn't. What did I care? I was hanging out with David Haas!

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After a few minutes of conversation, David started complimenting me on how much older I looked than when he'd seen me two summers before and how pretty I was. I'll admit -- I had made sure that I looked cute that night. I was wearing a cream-colored light sweater that opened at the top and was unbuttoned into a slight v. And I was wearing my Guess overalls, rolled at the bottom, as that was the style back then. I had wanted to look cute -- but I did not look at all suggestive or flirty.

David reached over and pulled down the strap of one of my overalls as he was talking. I remember feeling a warm flush and still smiling and acting like that was the most natural thing in the world. My brain was in two places. I had a long-term boyfriend, and had dated before, so I knew what it felt like when you were flirting with someone you were attracted to. But I also knew that I had a boyfriend and was not at all physically attracted to David Haas. He was old!

And not very physically attractive. But at the same time, I loved his music and how his music made me feel. And he was a "celebrity" in my world. In the world I was in that night. And I was pretty sure he was flirting with me. And that made me feel special. And bad. And confused.

He reached out and put his hand on my breast. Then he put his other hand behind my head and pulled my head toward him and started to kiss me. I remember him sticking his tongue in my mouth. Poking my mouth. Not soft, like my boyfriend did. I don't remember any talking -- from him or me. I was frozen. I didn't pull away. I didn't say stop. I didn't hit him. He took his hand away from my head and grabbed my hand, and put my hand on his crotch. He was still kissing me and moaning. I could feel his penis and that he was aroused. I remember that it was almost like I was floating outside the whole situation. Like I was above us, watching it happen, but not doing anything to stop it. I was not kissing him back but neither was I pulling away. I was not moving my hand on his crotch but neither was I pulling it away. I was simply there, frozen.

I don't remember how long that went on. Not long. A minute? Two minutes? David's moaning got more intense and my impression was that he had an orgasm. David sat back in his seat and I sat back in mine. He started talking again about how good it was to see me, how we would all have to get together with Mary sometime, how I should come to see him at St. Thomas when I came to the cities (which is where my boyfriend went to college). I don't recall saying anything. We drove back to the front of Mary Hall, which was how I got back into the dorm. I don't recall him saying anything about what had just happened. He was upbeat, talkative, smiling. He parked the car and I opened the door and got out.

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I don't remember him saying goodbye but he probably did. I don't remember saying anything, but I may have. I wasn't feeling fearful – just completely numb and filled with disbelief and confusion. But mostly numb.

I don't remember going into the building. The next thing I remember is walking into my dorm room and seeing my bed and dark pink comforter, covered with pages and pages of David Haas sheet music and my guitar. My roommate was on her bed and started asking all about my night. Where did we go? What did we talk about? I didn't know what to say. I remember trying to decide if I should tell her about it or lie about it. Maybe I could just ignore it, forget about it, not have to deal with it. It's interesting to me now – I wasn't feeling angry (at least not yet), I wasn't crying. I was completely numb – without emotion, without words.

Until I wasn't. And then I told her. Everything. As I told her I started to weep. Just a little. Not like I was crying and sobbing. More like the tears just started to spill out. I was still standing in the doorway and she came over to me and we hugged and then she physically pushed the sheet music off my bed onto the floor and we sat down on the bed. I don't remember how long we talked. I remember talking about whether we should go talk to our RA or call the police. I didn't want to do either of those things. I just wanted to go take a shower because I felt so gross and dirty and exhausted.

I don't remember much about that night after that. My mom remembers me calling her crying, telling her that something bad had happened with David Haas. She asked if I was safe and okay and whether my roommate was with me and she told me she would see me the next day.

I remember not going to classes the next day, and I remember my mom coming and packing me up and bringing me home to Rochester, where I spent the weekend. She brought me back to college on Monday, and she and I talked to someone in the counseling department about what happened and arranged for me to see a counselor on campus.

At some point that fall, I remember meeting my parents in the Twin Cities, on the St. Thomas campus (which is where my boyfriend went to college), and going with them to the St. Paul Seminary (which was on or near campus) to a meeting with someone (I believe it was Fr. Froehle) who was connected to David and telling him what had happened. My memory is that he was sympathetic and said things that led me and my parents to believe that David was somehow going to be held accountable for what happened.

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I remember at another point having a conversation with my parents about the fact that they had been told that what happened to me would only qualify as fourth-degree sexual assault, which would have minimal or no charges associated with it, and asking whether I wanted to pursue police charges. I said no. I just wanted to move on – with my life, with my boyfriend, with my freshman year.

I remember my mom telling me at some point that she had talked to Mary W. and expressed her anger and dismay and frustration about David and what happened to me. And Mary W. told her that David had done some of the same things to her. But that she had never done anything about it because she had felt ashamed and didn't want to hurt her chances of continuing to perform and collaborate with David. Mary had put it in the category of "bad behavior from an otherwise good person" and encouraged my mom to do the same.

In January of 1988, my parents received a letter from David Haas, on his own letterhead. He started the letter by saying "he thought it would be time for me to write you both, and share with you my feelings regarding what happened last fall in regards to your daughter Amy."

I think we were all surprised but also relieved to get the letter – despite all the pains he took to qualify his behavior, the letter felt to me like hard evidence that I was telling the truth. I knew my parents believed me – but the letter felt validating nevertheless.

The letter continued with David stating: "Being a public person, I am continually growing in my understanding as to what that means, and what responsibility it holds, especially as a minister. I am a human being like anyone else, but I also realize that being somewhat of a "celebrity" holds with it many areas of responsibility and sensitivity, which I am growing in every day. All of this being true, it by no means lifts any responsibility off of my shoulders as to what did or did not happen in regards to your daughter."

He went on to write: "I know that the stories regarding the specifics regarding what happened that night are in conflict. I apologize for that. I do however, hold ultimate responsibility for the entire incident – I had know (sic) idea that I was making Amy uncomfortable. I asked her several times if I was, and I am deeply sorry for any hurt, anger, or feelings of disappointment in me that she or you may feel toward me." An editorial note here – if you have to ask someone "several times" whether you are making someone uncomfortable, you probably are.

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In that same paragraph he writes: "I used horrible judgement that evening, and in light of that poor judgement, I have decided that it would be good for me to reflect deeper on how I am as a public person and as a minister. I have since the beginning of November been doing some counseling with Fr. Kenneth Pierre, a liscended (sic) therapist here in the archdiocese who has been very helpful. I want it to be known, that I plan to continue to explore the areas of my life as a public person that could potentially lead to a situation like this again. Nothing like this has ever happened before, but I still feel that this warrants some deeper reflection and growth on my part."

From the first time I read the letter, there were two parts that jumped out at me and stayed with me. His choice to use the phrase "what did or did not happen in regards to your daughter" (why would you write a letter if something did not happen) and his choice to write "Nothing like this has ever happened before" because I knew that was a lie. Who chooses to document a lie?

He concluded the letter by telling my parents what a wonderful young lady I was, and asking them to "pass on to me my embarrassment and my sincerest apoligies (sic), for an incident that should never have happened."

My mom kept that letter for more than 30 years. And she gave it to me a few years' back, and I kept it. Because it proved to me that he knew that what he did 30 years ago was wrong.

Then earlier this year, my mom sent me the article from the National Catholic Review outlining David's history of assaults over the last 30+ years and I read the accounts of the women in the article and couldn't believe that he had repeated this pattern of abuse -- literally, down to the same invitation to go out for a coke and catch up -- for 30+ years. And I knew that it was way past time to do something about it.