

# INTO ACCOUNT

SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS + ALLIES

## Kathy Leos

Submitted 8/9/2020

I don't have an exact time or date for every experience over the past 37 years, but I will give as much information as I can. I am sorry this will be perhaps a lengthy narrative.

1984-I met Haas at the NPM Regional Convention in Cleveland OH. He was at the start of his career as a liturgical musician. We were serving at a Mass for the convention, and we struck up a conversation afterwards. We were the same age (26), and had many of the same experiences growing up as Midwestern Catholic kids, who became involved in church music in our teenage years. We had both gone to college to become music teachers-I was about to start my 4th year teaching in the summer of 1984; Haas had taken a different path, leaving college in Michigan to head to seminary studies in St. Paul, then taking a leave from there and serving as parish music director. I had moved from Cleveland to Dallas in 1983, to begin teaching at a Catholic high school, and was back in Ohio to visit my family and attend NPM.

At that conference, I was feeling a bit fragile. My move to Dallas followed my leaving the novitiate of a religious community, and shortly after moving there, I experienced an attempted sexual assault from a man I accepted a date with. I was really a very inexperienced, and although not hurt physically, I found myself a year later, in Cleveland, still a bit shaken, and wanting to delve into the world of liturgical music more deeply. Meeting David, we seemed to have so much to talk about, and he was willing to listen and to share his discernment process for the priesthood. We shared some meals, and he asked me if I could drive him off the hotel premises to get something to eat. It would be the first of many "chauffeuring" and errand running I would be asked to do over the years.

I met Jeanne Cotter at this conference as well, as she and David were presenting workshops together. She and I also got along well-she was a college student, and was such a gracious and thoughtful person. Over the next few years, we did become friends-I visited both her and David in St. Paul, stayed at her home, and when she experienced some difficulties in dealing with David, she and I talked about his controlling behavior, and she asked me to help talk to him about going to therapy, which he eventually did.

Fall of 1984-David and Jeanne had been invited to Dallas to give a workshop. I was asked to pick them up at the airport, because I was the only person on the diocesan music commission who knew who he was-hard to imagine he was ever an "unknown." By that point, he and I had talked on the phone a few times, mostly about his music, but he also asked about my love life. Although there was nothing to tell, I had shared my experience of aggressive behavior from that date. When he arrived in

visit us  

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Dallas for that workshop, he was interested in hearing more about it, and sitting in a hotel lobby, he hugged me and said he would like to take that experience away and replace it with a more pleasant one. I thought that would be nice as well, I remember replying, and after that, he began to ask me to consider moving to St. Paul, as I was looking at attending law school the following year.

This visit to Dallas was also the start of the “pony” references. I’ve always thought it a goofy joke, but now, as I unpack some of the encounters we had over the years, it was certainly an ongoing way to draw me back into feeling secure and trusting. He began to joke with me about Dallas being a cowboy capital, and asked if I would come to his hotel room and “bring [him] a pony.” When I laughed, he told me he was serious-that he wanted me to drive from my apartment to his hotel across town and bring him a pony...then he said he meant that I could just come over. I didn’t, and honestly, that running joke has been part of our conversations since that time. “Buy me a pony” or “bring me a pony” became a mantra used to start conversations or text messages that were going to lead into requests that I travel to meet him somewhere, or plan to spend time with him at NPM conventions, or other conferences we attended.

Summer 1985-I attended the NPM Convention in Cincinnati, and David, Marty, and Michael were the breakout stars of the convention. I felt flattered that I was allowed to be part of the “inner circle” of David’s friends and family...when what was really going on was that I was again being used as free chauffeur service, errand running service, and food delivery service. I was unhappy that my talent as a musician and a choral director never seemed to be recognized or asked for-but my hotel room information was frequently requested. Luckily, as I look back, I always roomed with a friend of mine.

That pattern of asking me for my hotel information continued up through the 2018 NPM Convention, where he was persistent in the months leading to it-what hotel was I booking? Would I be alone? Could I book a separate room, where we might spend some time together? (No....) He was always with someone, though-usually Lori True, and sometimes his wife Helen, but he insisted that he needed to visit with me.

There was also a summer (sorry no date comes to mind, but mid-80s) when he was vacationing in Maine, and he would call me each night to share music he had written. No cell phones back then, just landlines, and we would be on the phone for hours-he would play new music for me and ask my opinion. Blest Are They-I have (ok, had) a handwritten copy of the first choral version-he asked me to try it out with my high school choir...We Are Called, You are the Voice, and many other songs I

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heard before most folks, making me think I held a special place in his life. The conversations would inevitably move from his music to the romantic thoughts and suggestive dreams he had had about me. He also asked for advice about his relationship with Jeanne-she was hesitant to become more involved with him, but he was anxious to be married. I was confused by his contradictory behaviors, but he explained it by saying that God allowed us to love more than one person intimately, and that his ability to feel love toward more than one woman was part of that.

Fall of 1985-I was still in Dallas, and had to have vocal cord surgery during Thanksgiving. He invited me to recuperate in St. Paul, and to stay at the home of a friend of his-[name redacted], whom I also knew. He was also staying in another spare room in her home that week, and more than once, I would wake up in the middle of the night to find him climbing into bed with me, whispering that it was ok, all he wanted to do was to cuddle. But he tried to touch me inappropriately, and there were a few times when I was just so groggy from pain meds that I couldn't get him to move. I had no voice, because of the surgery, so there was literally no way for me to say no. He did not attempt to rape me, but the touching of my breasts and behind, was still unwanted and uncomfortable.

Over the years, David's interactions with me ran hot and cold. I met my future husband shortly after that Thanksgiving encounter, and we married in 1988. David traveled to Ohio for the wedding, and served as the music minister. A few months later, we traveled to St. Paul to attend his and Jeanne's wedding. Over the next 30 years, we maintained a friendship of sorts. We saw each other at NPM every summer, and he would always ask for private time with me, but if he saw I was there with others, he became angry and a few times would corner me and either yell at me for not being available to invite him to my room, or he would cry-expressing how depressed he was and lonely, and stressed out, and overwhelmed with demands placed on him. I tried to be a good friend and listener, but there were also times I did not commiserate with him, but told him in strong terms that I thought he was hurtful and disingenuous in minimizing and ignoring people like me, who found him a man with a gift for crafting text and music into prayer. He really did begin to believe his rock star status entitled him to brush past the many people who wanted to say hello to him after workshops, and I tried to call him on that. When I did that, he would "freeze me out," with no contact for some period of months, even.

Physical/aggressive behavior-over the years, i can attest to having experienced physically abusive behavior against me by David, including being grabbed by my arm and forcibly turned around when I

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was trying to walk away from a conversation with him, being asked to help with the clean up after a workshop at an NPM convention, only to find myself cornered in a hotel ballroom, with David telling me how much he loved my breasts, and asking me if I would meet him for some fun. A convention volunteer came in and he began hugging me, and telling the volunteer how we were old friends. He often referenced wanting to touch my breasts, or to be in bed with me. His language was always objectifying-I knew that even 20 years ago-and I still wonder why I reacted with silence, laughter, or changing the subject.

Other times, he would ask to meet with me, or would call or text me in later years, in a state of despondency, anxiety, depression. We would talk about the counseling he was undergoing, the "rebirth" he experienced after his medical scares, and of course, the conversation usually made its way to how he regretted that he and I never got together.

Once, he cornered me in a back hallway of a hotel, pinned me in by placing his hands on either side of me, and began kissing me and pushing himself against me. I kept turning my head to try to avoid the kissing, and he became angry, saying how he knew I had had a thing for him since we first met, and he was tired of waiting. He said things about how upset he was at my wedding, thinking it should have been him. I heard that more than once over the years. During this particular incident, he became more irate as he pressed against me, but I still remember thinking that I could not yell or even speak up loudly, because I would be to blame for having accompanied him to this back hallway, and surely I was misinterpreting his words and actions...then another composer came around a corner, and saw the situation. He called out David's name to greet him, and I was able to move past them and head to a more public area. That was in 2011. That composer, now a friend, later told me that he long suspected David of what he called "creepy" behavior, and thought the scenario he walked in on, did not have a consensual vibe to it.

In a more isolated incident, David had come to Dallas for a parish workshop, and he asked if I would transport him from hotel to parish and back after the evening reception. When we returned to the hotel, I carried things into his hotel room. He was very depressed and wanted to talk, and we sat on the couch and talked about some personal difficulties he was having in his marriage-I don't remember the exact year, but it was maybe 2008?-I just remember it was after his heart attack. We had stopped to get pick up a late dinner, and we sat and ate and after a while, he began to be suggestive. I decided to leave, but when I stood up, he grabbed me and pushed me backwards onto

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the bed, laid on top of me, and then began trying to take off my shirt, and then moving my hands toward his penis, He said he wanted me to feel what I did to him. He tried to unzip his pants, and I was able to roll away from him, stand up, and head out the door. The next day, I was foolish enough to show up to drive him to the workshop again-I think I was just unwilling to believe he would be so unkind to me. On the way there, he apologized, but said again that God did not intend us to be monogamous, and that he and Helen had an understanding, and she knew he loved more than one woman romantically and was ok with that.

Over the years, David talked to me about some of his beliefs and thoughts about love and relationships. The ideas he talked about the most were:

1. that God did not create us to love only one person, and that we were called to express that love in physical, as well as spiritual, ways. He said that he was lucky that his wife (Helen) understood that;
2. he often reiterated how angry he was when I married my husband, and how he felt we were supposed to be together. In the last few years, a number of his text messages reflected that same thing
3. he did talk to me a lot about his bouts with depression, and indicated that when he worried about becoming "obsolete" or "irrelevant", he would suffer from anxiety and do things he felt took him down roads of darkness;

During most of the years I was married and raising a family, I saw David primarily at conferences and conventions, and we had conversations that began with him asking about my kids, but always turned to his issues-he was never interested in my life or in my work as a colleague in music and ministry-the focus was going to be on him, no matter what. It made me sad that he could look through or past people, to see who might be more important that he should be seen with.

I started avoiding and distancing myself from him as I realized his words of concern, interest in my life and my work were meaningless, and when I did create distance, and just go about my work, he became aggressive in trying to contact me and set up dinner dates, so we could "catch up."

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More times than not, those appointments would not materialize, and when they did, there were favors that were asked for—sexual ones, personal ones (like running errands for him), or programs he wanted me to buy into.

MMA was one such program. The premise seemed like a worthy one—to help in the formation of young people to minister as musicians in the church. His faculty reflected many known names in the field of liturgical music, and so I recruited some students to participate in the first year. I was surprised at the lack of a youth-focused structure—I chalked it up to first year missteps that could be corrected for the future. It wasn't until 2011 that I next took students to participate, and again in 2012 and 2013. Thankfully, I have contacted all students who participated, and all have responded to me that they do not feel they were subjected to any grooming tactics. My own observations of the MMA program was that it had become a bloated playground for David. He hired too many faculty, which kept driving the costs up, and yet the amount of free time for students had increased, while the “meetings” for the faculty left those kids without adequate supervision, instead of providing a cohesive day of workshops or lessons. Then, in the evenings, worship services often became emotional tell-alls, where teens were encouraged to share stories that they may not have been ready to share, to an audience they did not know, and the other students were left trying to figure out how to best “counsel” their new friend through his/her trauma. That, in turn, led to participants staying up late in the dorms and often creating the kind of quasi-drama that led to many tears, misunderstandings, and gossip.

I see I have been writing for hours now, but I do need to talk about the last few years, where the most intense spiritual manipulation took place, as I was going through a divorce, due to my husband's infidelity. I saw David at a conference in San Antonio shortly after my husband had left our family, and I confided in him what was happening. He was concerned and supportive, and in the weeks following, he often called to check up on how I was doing. He sent cards and books of prayer, and messaged me both on Facebook and on my cell.

The text messages seemed to come in concentrated time frames—I might get messages almost every day for a period of 2 weeks, then not hear from him for a couple of months. The messages themselves would start out concerned or lighthearted, with the running joke of thirty years—“Will you buy me a pony?” as the opening line. Just as often, they would devolve into sexually inappropriate comments. I am embarrassed at my reaction to, and participation in, these exchanges. I would

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respond by sending LOL kinds of responses, or would flirt back in ways that were self-deprecating, or would change the topic. A few times, I even allowed the online conversation to continue-maybe I was so traumatized by my own abandonment that I was happy that someone still seemed to think I was attractive or worth flattering...It was like being the proverbial frog in that pot of water. The heat was so slowly intensified, that I never even realized what was happening to me over the years. I carry a lot of guilt over that, and also spend a lot of time wondering about my own complicity in allowing myself to be drawn in, let alone my responsibility for not speaking up to him in more stringent manner, and would that have kept some others from being harmed, if he had been identified and removed as this icon of liturgical sung prayer?

And even on Friday, July 31, I received a text message from him, asking me to call so we could talk (no I did not respond.)