

# BUILDING HOPE

By TOM HOLM  
tholm@postregister.com

Matt Morgan, owner of Morgan Construction, is ready to move past the abuse he suffered as a child

An uncle raped Matt Morgan.

Terry Morgan abused Matt when he was 12 and 13, kicking off Matt's lifetime of repressed memories, alcohol abuse and what he hopes, one day, is redemption.

The 49-year-old owner and manager of Morgan Construction, a local design and construction business, buried the memories of the abuse for three decades.

Matt became a rare statistic. He is among the few men who speak out against their abusers. Although research shows that one in six men have suffered sexual abuse before the age of 18, Matt became a rarity because he spoke out about the abuse. He sued his uncle, won a judgment and is now moving forward, trying to be more than a statistic.

Now Matt wants to bring some good from the years of pain he suffered. He won

a civil suit Dec. 2 against his uncle under a fraud claim instead of a sexual abuse claim, court records show. (For more on the legal battle, see Page A3.)

He never wants another child to go through what he endured. That's what his nonprofit organization Building Hope Today is for. Matt wants to have the organization bring awareness to the sexual abuse of children.

Matt wants to give a voice to the voiceless and help them shed the pain of abuse.

"You want to find guys like me? You can find them in the cemeteries and the jails," Matt said. "I have these emotional wounds that I'm working on to become scars and not wounds."

■ Matt was suffering from dissociative amnesia and post-traumatic stress disorder  
**HOPE**, Continued on Page A3

**"I'd give every hard earned penny I got today if I could just help one person not have to go through that and experience that." — MATT MORGAN**

Matt Morgan talks about how being sexually abused as a child has impacted his life.

Monte LaOrange  
mlaorange@postregister.com





# HOPE

From Page A1

## Young, confused, angry

Matt said his parents split up when he was 12 and his father took him to live in a home two houses away from his uncle, Terry Morgan. Terry frequently stopped by the house when Matt's father was at work, court records show.

Terry stepped into the void left by an absentee dad. Court records show he brought pornographic magazines and showed them to Matt. Terry told the young boy the women depicted in the magazines were his mother. Terry reportedly told Matt to pay attention as if he were receiving instruction in school.

"He had me convinced that was my mom in those magazines," Matt said.

Terry called Matt's mother a slut and a whore, blaming her for breaking up his parent's marriage, court records show. After forcing Matt to view the pictures of these women having sex with multiple men, he made Matt view gay male pornography. His uncle said this is how they should show their affection toward each other.

After showing him the pornography, Terry molested Matt, court records show. He raped and fondled Matt all summer. The abuse only subsided when Matt went back to school in the fall.

"I just closed my eyes when he did that to me," Matt said. "I just friggin' left ... I didn't let any of it rent any space in my brain."

He said he spent the next three years flunking school and getting into trouble. He didn't know why he was so angry. He tried to escape his demons by moving to California.

"When I got down to California and I found that set of nail bags and that hammer. It gave me, I found a purpose. It made me feel good about me. I was good at it. It made me feel good.



Monte LaOrange / mlaorange@postregister.com

**Matt Morgan holds his wife Lynne's hand while talking about being sexually abused as a child by his uncle.**

"I was frustrated and confused, I struggled for a number of years. I took a hold of that hammer and just decided I wanted to be good at it. I gave it everything I had and I threw myself 100 percent into it and it became my craft."

Matt repressed the thoughts of the abuse for 30 years until night terrors of his uncle raping him ravaged his sleep.

"I was 44 years old suffering from insomnia getting maybe one or two nights of sleep a week," Matt said. "I'd wake up in a cold sweat and say 'My god where did that come from.'"

The memories came back in bits and pieces. Matt was suffering from dissociative amnesia and post-traumatic stress disorder. Dissociative amnesia is the inability to retrieve memories from a stressful situation such as abuse or war, according to the Cleveland Clinic website, an academic Ohio hospital.

After being diagnosed in 2010, Matt began counseling.

The memories of dissociative amnesia sufferers are not entirely wiped from the mind and can be recalled through therapy or triggered by someone's surroundings. Tom Tueller, a licensed clinical social worker in Idaho Falls, said as memories come back they can be very overwhelming for a person.

"It's not their choice but they start to remember things and it puts them in

a very distressful state," Tueller said.

## Coming to terms

Matt said he used alcohol to help press down the memories. He said he began drinking alcohol to excess at age 14 or 15.

"I've had a problem with alcohol since the first time I put that bottle to my mouth," Matt said.

Matt said he is now four-months sober. But before and during the trial his drinking brought him to a low point.

"I started to tailspin," Matt said. "I was going straight down and straight down fast."

One day Matt looked down at the glass as he was drinking alone and decided he needed to change. Matt got clean.

"I got something the majority of people who are abused don't get, the opportunity to have or have the money to pursue that vindication," Matt said. "Here I sat and thought how ungrateful I am to keep on drinking myself to sleep."

Matt's son, Travis, said he used to worry for his father especially when Matt became more aware of his buried memories.

"He always had this poor image of himself," Travis Morgan said. "We would always tell him 'This isn't who you are, why do you have those feelings.'"

In the summer of 2011 Matt drove by his uncle's home. He saw a swing set out front which stirred

feelings of disgust in him, thinking Terry was inviting children with the swing. Matt said he stewed in the feelings and then went to his uncle's door and demanded he take down the swing, apologize for abusing him and explain why he abused him as a child. The two began to argue and Matt said Terry refused to apologize or to remove the swing. The verbal argument escalated and turned physical, Matt said.

"I'm sorry I did it, sorry I went there. I didn't get what I was looking for," Matt said.

Months later Terry sued Matt for battery. During the trial Matt figured if he was going to be in court with his abuser he may as well counter sue. Matt consulted with his attorneys and ultimately came to the decision to file a suit claiming fraud, court records show. This led to Matt ultimately winning his case against Terry.

Repeated efforts to reach Terry Morgan were unsuccessful.

Matt's decision to con-

front his uncle makes him an outlier.

In a 1988 clinical study of 25 men who had been sexually abused, only one man reported the abuse when it happened. A 1990 study found that 44 percent of the men sampled had never told anyone about being abused, compared to 33 percent of women who had never disclosed the abuse. In a separate clinical study, 31 percent of men abused as a child had told someone about it when they were young, compared to 61 percent of women.

Travis Morgan said after the jury verdict, his father changed. He said his father regained his sense of humor. He carried himself better and saw his self-worth.

"The judicial system said 'You're not crazy, you have been wronged,' " Travis Morgan said. "(He's) better than ever, it helped him feel comfortable in his own skin again."

Travis Morgan, 25, said now that the trial is over, and though it's a victory

the emotions, haven't subsided.

"It's strange sometimes I'm not sure how to feel, we've been fighting so long," Travis Morgan said. "It's nice to move on. Nice to work on Building Hope Today and move forward."

## Building a new life

Despite the alcohol, Matt built a multimillion dollar construction company from the ground up in his free-time. He was working for the Idaho Falls Fire Department and building things on his days off. Eventually he was doing more building than fire fighting and he said he resigned in 1995.

"Kind of unintentionally it blossomed," Matt said.

Morgan began his business by building and designing homes in the early 1990s. Now the company focuses on business projects. Matt said he built his first home in 1991 and from there the

■ Some of Matt's profits help victims of abuse

HOPE, Continued on Page A5