



## Dr. Roland C. Summit

Contributing to the McMartin hysteria, alluded by MacFarlane in her congressional testimony, was the public campaign of Dr. Roland C. Summit. Summit was already widely known in the mental health field for his theories on child sexual abuse when the McMartin case began. He had written and lectured extensively on the subject since 1975 and had served as a consultant on child sex abuse to law enforcement officials, including the Los Angeles District Attorney, since 1979. He had also been consulted for the production of numerous television news reports and articles (written by others) on child sex abuse. Summit's most notable achievement was a 1983 article explaining the dynamics of child sexual abuse that he says form a "Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome" (CSAAS).<sup>31</sup> The CII child interviews were guided by one of the fundamental principles of CSAAS — that sexually abused children remain silent about their abuse experiences.<sup>32</sup>

Summit's deep civic and emotional involvement in the McMartin case came about while he served as a prosecution witness during the 18-month-long preliminary hearing and in his role as the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health liaison to Manhattan Beach during McMartin's early stages.<sup>33</sup>

Summit praised the hysteria-inducing media hype and community gossip (that MacFarlane capitalized on so well) as a public service. "Without such press coverage we would be trapped by our old myths [about child sexual abuse]."<sup>34</sup> Summit complained that investigators were limiting the ability of parents to cope by discouraging them from meeting and discussing the case. The community's priority, he explained, should be to support the children and to "renew the awareness of the importance of the world presented to children and the need to invest money and energy in presenting that environment." Hundreds of children had escaped sexual assault, he claimed, because of the publicity about the McMartin case.<sup>35</sup>

Summit's call for a "vast expansion" of therapeutic resources for the children of Manhattan Beach was coupled with his warnings, in almost apocalyptic terms, of the consequences of public debate and denial. Discovery [of sex abuse] will turn into suspicion and, "There will be a predictable turn around and challenge to whether this happened." There will be scapegoating too: "Kee MacFarlane will be called an amateur. . . . The advocate for the sexually abused child will be defiled and discredited." The battle between disclosure and denial will pit "neighbor against neighbor" and the abused child will remain silent because he is not believed.<sup>36</sup>

Summit warned the community not to divide into separate factions of believers and nonbelievers. "Polarity of views . . . is destructive . . . There is a need to realize that more than one generation of kids has been damaged."<sup>37</sup> He added that without proper therapy, and a speedy court resolution of all rumors, i.e. quick guilty verdicts for the defendants, the community will be divided, justice is unlikely to prevail, and

the Manhattan Beach community will rest on the brink of psychological disaster:<sup>38</sup>

If it reconstitutes itself, Manhattan Beach will be a different community for having faced the crisis. If every effort were made to tear away all the scabs, then you would have distressing outpouring of pus, but you would have . . . a basis on which to assign urgent priorities . . . there would be a chance for full recovery. It could take 20 years to reconstitute a comfortable sense of trust in the community.<sup>39</sup>

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