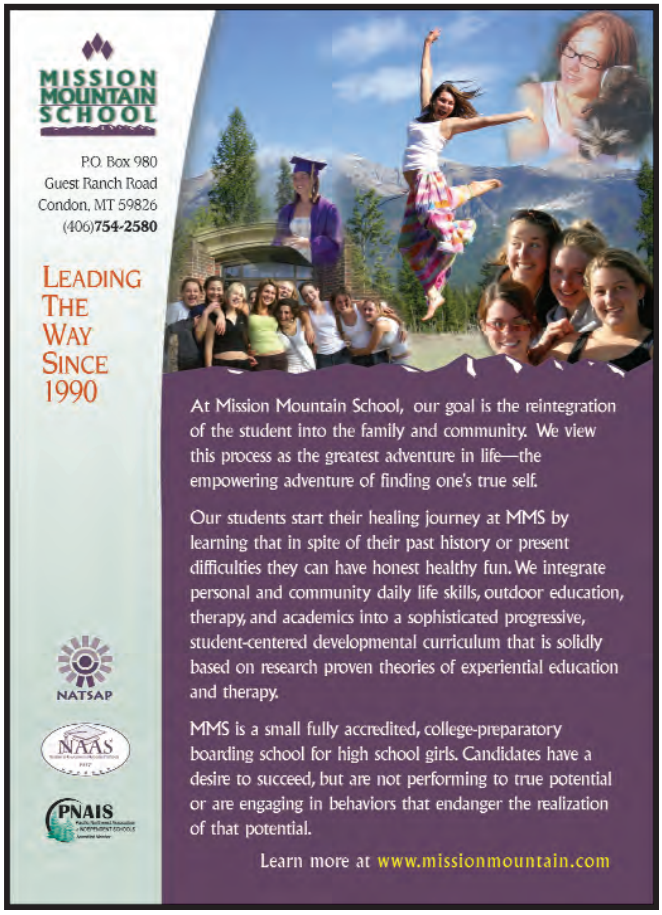




AFTERGLOW

(For privacy reasons, the name of the author and her parents are on file at Woodbury Reports Inc.)

I remember the morning that I was taken to the mountain. It was New Year's Day, 2003. The escorts were in full uniform, handcuffs dangling from their navy blue pants and shiny black boots stomping in the hallway. I sat up in bed and nearly screamed. They told me they were taking me to look at a boarding school because I needed help with my behavior. I was literally dragged kicking and screaming from my weeping Mother and put in a van. I tried to pull on the door. "If you keep doing that, we'll use these." One of them told me, dangling the silver handcuffs in my face.

Why me? I was the typical product of an LA divorce, spinning out of control at the age of 13. I didn't see anything wrong with my household behavior. I did anything I wanted, staying out all hours of the night with Hollywood drifters and misfits. I had been locking myself in my room for days trying to figure out who I was and where I was going. I had completely lost sight of my innocence. My Mother sent me away to an 'emotional growth boarding school' in the mountains, where all of my freedoms were stripped from me. When I arrived they took my ID photo and sent me to my dorm, where I cried for hours.

When people discuss their time in Junior High, they describe it as a stepping-stone into a new chapter and a time of self-evaluation. During adolescence, we are so vulnerable and sensitive to our surroundings that the slightest adjustment of scenery can send us into complete panic. I experienced this on an extremely high level. The first few months of my stay, I would sit up in bed and wail all night long, begging for comfort I knew I'd never find in this strange place.

The students at this boarding school had come from peculiar situations, each differing in content and background. We were all haunted by a tormented past and were required to share these painful issues with each other. I was appalled by some of the stories I heard. There were confessions of severe child abuse and rape and disclosures filled with blood and deceit. All of the people sharing these life events were between the ages of twelve and fifteen.

As time passed, I became more anxious and overwhelmed. I realized that I needed to channel the feelings and memories that were rising to the surface like oil over water. I was made to attend multi-hour groups of intense emotional exercises. At one point, in an overnight group, I was made to sit directly across