

Testimony of Mickey Rooney
Senate Special Committee on Aging
March 2, 2011

Introduction

Chairman Kohl, Ranking Member Corker and Members of the Committee, my name is Mickey Rooney and I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We are here today on a critical issue – preventing the abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of seniors. Unfortunately, I am testifying before the committee today not just as a concerned citizen but also as a victim of elder abuse myself.

Statement

Throughout my life, I have been blessed with the love and support of family, friends, and fans. I have worked almost my entire lifetime of ninety years to entertain and please other people. I've worked hard and diligently. But even with this success, my money was stolen from me, by someone close. I was unable to avoid becoming a victim of elder abuse.

Elder abuse comes in many different forms – physical abuse, emotional abuse, or financial abuse. Each one is devastating in its own right. Many times, sadly, as with my situation, the elder abuse involves a family member. When that happens, you feel scared, disappointed, angry, and you can't believe this is happening to you. You feel overwhelmed. The strength you need to fight it is complicated. You're afraid, but you're also thinking about your other family members. You're thinking about the potential criticism of your family and friends. They may not want to accept the dysfunction that you need to share. Because you love your family and for other reasons, you might feel hesitant to come forward. You might not be able to make rational decisions. What other people see as generosity may, in reality, be the exploitation, manipulation, and sadly, emotional blackmail of older, more vulnerable members of the American public.

I know because it happened to me. My money was taken and misused. When I asked for information, I was told that I couldn't have any of my own information. I was told it was "for my own good" and that "it was none of my business." I was literally left powerless.

You can be in control of your life one minute and in the next minute, you have absolutely no control. Sometimes this happens quickly, but other times it is very gradual. You wonder when it truly began. In my case, I was eventually and completely stripped of the ability to make even the most basic decisions in my own life.

Over the course of time, my daily life became unbearable. Worse, it seemed to happen out of nowhere. At first, it was something small, something I could control. But then it became something sinister that was completely out of control. I felt trapped, scared, used, and frustrated. But above all, I felt helpless. For years I suffered silently. I couldn't muster the courage to seek the help I knew I needed. Even when I tried to speak up, I was told to be quiet. It seemed like no one believed me.

But I never gave up. I continued to share my story with others. I told them about the abuse I have suffered. I am now taking steps to right all the wrongs that were committed against me. I am so thankful to my family, friends, and many fans all over the world who have expressed their love and support for me.

Closing

Ladies and Gentleman of the Committee, I didn't tell you my story so you would feel sympathy for me. I came here for you to think of the millions of us seniors. I am here today because it is so important that I share my story with others, especially those who may be watching at home, suffering silently as I was.

To those seniors and especially elderly veterans like myself, I want to tell you this: You are not alone and you have nothing to be ashamed of. You deserve better. You have the right to control your own life, to be happy, and not live in fear. Please, for yourself, end the cycle of abuse, and do not allow yourself to be silenced any longer. Tell your story to anyone who will listen and above all, HAVE HOPE. Someone will hear you. If we all stand strong together and speak up, we can begin to take the necessary steps to end the cycle of elder abuse.

If elder abuse happened to me, Mickey Rooney, it can happen to anyone. Myself, who I am, what I hope to be, and what I was, was taken from me. And I'm asking you to stop this NOW.

THANK YOU.