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—Harold Cox, editor, *Checkmate* magazine



Jack Fritscher, seminarian attending the
Pontifical College Josephinum, visiting home, 1959

What They Did to the Kid

Confessions of an
Altar Boy

Jack Fritscher



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For author history, reviews, and literary research:
www.JackFritscher.com

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Here's for the plain old Adam, the simple genuine
self against the whole world.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals*

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Author's Note

Yes!

I confess!

I was for six years, at the Pontifical College Josephinum, a school-mate of Bernard Cardinal Law who became scandalous in the priest sex-abuse cover-up. But I ripped nothing from the headlines. I wrote *What They Did to the Kid* from journals I kept when I lived inside the seminary culture of the 1950s and 1960s that produced Vatican II period's crop of accused priests. I wrote this memoir as a positive "novel of the closet," not as an exposé, well before media focus on the sexual judgment of priests. *Kid* is a cautionary tale of how a boy's emotional growth becomes stunted at 14, which may explain why some priests later in life seek out the familiar company of 14-year-olds.

What happens to a boy when he is 14 marks him for life. At 14, I was recruited by the Catholic Church into the custody of priests. It took me ten years to escape and then grow up. For all that, *Kid* is a comedy of coming of age, coming unglued, and coming out.

—Jack Fritscher
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