

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Yes, I fully realize now that I was indeed subjected to it for many years. I endured then, because I truly loved (and still do) my late 1st husband, as I am sure it was to do with a mental illness, although in those days I thought it was more to do with his war-neurosis and his tablets/medications trying to treat his war injuries, etc.

When I first met him at a City (Melbourne) dance-hall, we chatted quite a lot, over about a month or so of regularly seeing each other at that particular venue. He said he was from [REDACTED], where he'd been working as a travelling [REDACTED] for a firm that sent him up and down the east coast a lot. He had become tired of "being cooked" around northern [REDACTED], and all the way up the coast of [REDACTED], so had come to Melbourne for a change, and got a different job. He also said he was divorced, had a family in [REDACTED] somewhere "that he never saw, ever, because they'd moved out and left him", so he didn't know where they were now. He added he didn't know anyone now, except me and his work-mates and was very lonely.

This was in early [REDACTED] and over ensuing weeks I quickly fell for his total charm, easy-going way, thoughtfulness and loving (towards me) manner. I soon introduced him to my family, who were quite won-over all round. He told us he was [REDACTED] Aust. Navy, also ex-British Navy, which he had joined for the start of the 2nd W.W., as he'd been on a British Merchant ship, and had been told (along with others in the same crew) to NOT return to Australia to join up, but to join the British Forces, as in "seconding" to them. This he'd done and been "invalided", eventually, from the British Navy and, along with his then British wife and family, had returned to Australia after War's end.

We became engaged at Christmas [REDACTED] and then married at [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. In all of that time we had nothing but a very peaceful, happy relationship. This continued all through the following years, though F. was plagued, from time to time, with various periods of poor health, where he had to go into [REDACTED] Hospital, where different medications were tried out - some disagreeing badly with him, and putting him back into hospital.

He continued his work as a [REDACTED], but seemed to have trouble in holding down a job for longer than a few months, but otherwise it was a serene relationship. By around [REDACTED] we were in our own newly built house, which was literally a roof on four walls and a floor, plonked on a rough block of land. Enthusiastically and with loving care, F. proceeded to work on and around the place in every spare moment to turn the rough shell into a lovely, comfortable, convenient HOME. He was unstoppable in all his efforts, and as we were both working we were able to do what we wanted, buy what was needed and even holiday as we liked and enjoyed.

In [REDACTED] a new job (he had started) required us to move to [REDACTED] for several months, as F. was engaged as Site Manager for that company's project in that City. It was a demanding position. As usual, F. gave it his ALL, again to the cost of his health and another trip to the Repat.

In [REDACTED] our 1st daughter was born, with another in [REDACTED]. I was then a stay-at-home-mum, but had to quickly, in [REDACTED], put both girls into a private child-care situation, and begin full-time work, as F., having failed to now keep a regular job - I thought due to health, but now wonder - had started up his own business and we just could not meet living costs, mortgage payments and were financially in real trouble.

I had been forced to borrow money from my dear uncle to tide us over, frequently and this just could not continue.

Our children, in [REDACTED] were beginning to become "little people" and what with the need to get them to various places at various time, plus the ageing and frailty of my dear mother and her brother (my uncle), I was always "on the run" outside of working hours. I now wonder if this "dug" up a hidden mental illness in F. and unleashed his reaction/s on my unsuspecting self.

I began to notice that after I had been occupied running here and there for one thing and another, then I would be suddenly awakened in the early hours of the morning by hearing F. "prowling" in and out of our bedroom and the lounge and hall areas. Concerned that the children not be disturbed, or upset, I would go out to him, only to be confronted with sheer rage of a type totally unknown to me. Blazing eyes and shouting, he would storm at me for coming to "find him", regardless of my pleading I was ONLY concerned at him not sleeping. He'd shout within inches of my face, then give me a solid blow to the side of my head, then stamp off back to the bedroom, get into bed, and by the time I had recovered myself enough to return to the bedroom, he would be sound asleep and snoring. Next morning, he was his normal, quiet, amiable self, with no sign and no mention of the night's EVENT. After a couple of these episodes, I commented one morning, very quietly, "How is it you're not sleeping well these days?" I was greeted with a look of utter astonishment and the reply "What ARE you talking about? Didn't you notice me there in bed? I'm sleeping VERY well these days, thank you!" I was nothing, if not totally bewildered.

Blows to a head well covered with hair do NOT SHOW UP. It's only when one connected with my face that one showed up. He had caught me there, when I'd (in the usual wee small hours) tried to dodge a head-blow. I went to my lady doctor, in pain. An X-Ray showed a fractured right cheek-bone and a rapidly colouring black-eye. At work and around the neighbours and my family, I admitted to a slip on the wet concrete path, causing me to fall against the back wooden steps - hence the lovely black-eye. F., deeply concerned, immediately fastened an old piece of carpet to the supposedly slippery path and, kissing my eye gently, told me to be more careful!?! No memory, apparently, of the head-blow. And the head-blows continued, whenever.

In our well-heeled days, we had purchased a small caravan, so in my holidays, we regularly all went away on holiday - usually towards [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. The caravan parks we frequented were usually well-run and family-type places, but on odd times we found hooligan-type behaviours, which always worried F. and made him belligerent. It was somewhere in the early [REDACTED]'s that F. then bought himself and (in bush areas) practised (or re-newed) his skills with a double-barrelled shotgun. I didn't like that ONE BIT. He got his licence and took it everywhere, and it lived parked against the wall at his bedside. NOW, that article began to rule our lives.

With both children at Primary School, and after a ROUGH NIGHT of F.'s "prowling" ending, as usual in the head-blow (where hair was) I decided I'd had enough. It was, I think, just on Easter, as I had several days leave. I told lovely Mrs. W. when I picked up the children from her, around 6 p.m. I WAS leaving F. and so as not to upset my ageing family was going to a Motel to think things over. She sympathised (being a deserted wife, bringing up her two children). I went to a suburban motel and rang my family, told them I'd left F. a note for when he got home. They said worriedly they knew already. F.'d already rung them, frantic and was begging them to ask me to forgive whatever he'd done, as HE DIDN'T KNOW, and he loved us all so much, it was breaking his heart. It broke my heart, too, as I loved the man as he normally was. My doctor thought it was war-neurosis, also F.'s doctor, whom I'd also spoken to, thought I was over-reacting to his war-neurosis. Everyone seemed to think I was over-reacting - I guess now because I WAS COVERING UP SO MUCH FOR SO LONG, TO EVERYBODY. F. rang me at the motel (my family gave him the number), he was in tears. After a few days, I went back.

It was a tearful reunion. We hugged. He said the children and I were his total life and without us he would not be able to continue living. I genuinely thought perhaps I'd better try again to live with what everyone said was his war-neurosis, as he remained a loving, caring family man, NORMALLY. However, what I was NOT AWARE OF, was the fact that frequently, when on his own with the children, he often yelled at them for minor mishaps, frightening them greatly. They said nothing to me, I know now he threatened them not to tell, but I found marks on my younger one's legs, which I just thought was caused by her being her usual rather tumbling around self, but now believe were "hit marks" caused by something possibly wooden. I have NOT DISCUSSED ANY OF THIS with her, as she is very slightly [REDACTED]

As the years passed, F. continued for a while running his own business and my family were becoming more frail & ageing. I soon found it was better to "delegate" the lovely neighbours close around where my mother and uncle lived, than to pop down to their (not-far-away) suburb. The mostly widowed ladies were only too happy "to take the weight off", as they so kindly said about my many obligations of "the little ones, a sick husband and a full-time job". So unspeakably grateful to them all.

F. was becoming concerned at my unpredictable work-load at my workplace. I was, too. While he was in his "loving husband" mode, he said "If you don't resign from that slave-driving mob, I'll do it for you." I was already quietly looking for another job and it wasn't long before I got one - even closer to home, a higher wage, good hours (promised) and a most caring "boss". I resigned from the "slave-mob" and very happily settled into the new job. It was a dream, after the earlier one. Every 6 months the boss would throw a small dinner (barbeque) at his home and we staff would enjoy a pleasant, social, getting-to-know-everyone-few-hours. I managed to get F. to accompany me several times and he charmed them all, as usual. I was having trouble with my frail younger girl's health and my family-minded Boss insisted I be allowed to take her to any appointment/s, and then make up the time as it suited me. So LUCKY!! THAT way, at any rate.

NOT ALWAYS AT HOME. The shotgun RULED. Suddenly, I was being awakened from a dead, sound, exhausted sleep by the icy-cold double-barrell being pushed hard against my forehead, & the sound of the "safety" being drawn back. NOT good for the heart! Or the terror in the tummy! I would be confronted by a face I did NOT KNOW, with eyes of UTTER INCREDIBLE HATE directed at me. A low, snarling abuse commenced: "You bitch, you whore, you slag! Doing what you usually do, [REDACTED]! Well, I'm going to stop it! Now!" Stunned, I would gasp out my name WAS NOT [REDACTED]! And what was he talking about, that I'd done? His snarl was always the same. I did know and I ALWAYS kept doing it to him! I'd beg and plead and practically have to kiss the floor in front of him on my knees, before he'd suddenly walk away, put the gun down beside the bed, get in, and be asleep before I knew it. Alarmed, as this behaviour began popping up whenever, I asked the police my position. They said, more or less: "Tough, yes, BUT, WE actually CAN'T do anything unless he FIRES it and damages someone!" VERY comforting - NOT! I contacted his (then) doctors at the Hepat, who said THEY had not seen any of THAT attitude ANY time he was there, so could not offer any advice, & he'd just be taken in when his health was bad.

So, all through the [REDACTED]'s that pattern continued. It was ALWAYS directed at me, after I'd been closely involved with either the girls, or my ageing family. THEN, the abuse would include "I know all these others, [REDACTED]! And I'm going for them with this gun! All of them!" Naturally, I felt it was the girls & my oldies at risk, as the abuse would frequently include the words "If you ever leave me, I'm going after them all with this gun!"

Around [REDACTED], our eldest had left school, done office training and got a job, but our home was NOT peaceful. F.'s health was poor, he'd stopped working and we were all literally "treading around him on eggshells", never knowing what "fluke" would make him grab the gun and threaten us with it. Our elder moved out (ran away, actually) to live with a friend's family and our younger was in and out of hospital with [REDACTED].

I could now say my worries about family greatly increased. Our elder girl had moved away from her friends' home. I was not always sure where she was. I knew F. had pulled the gun on her, how often I didn't know, so I guess I could not wonder that she'd been evasive. I was horrified when I got a phone-call, at home, from the Rape Unit of [REDACTED]. (I think). From there, she went to [REDACTED] for a while, then I lost track of her again. In the meantime, F., our younger girl, and my mother were in and out of various hospitals, and I was still working full-time. AND the gun-abuse in the wee small hours continued, AFTER I'd been close with either our girls, or my family.

F., our younger girl, and my mother were all out of hospital when I got a call to pick up our elder, as she was quite ill and needed care. I drove to get her, bring her home & put her to bed. Our younger said quite firmly SHE would look after her and she did. F. was the loving, caring parent at the time and agreed with all we said and did. I think it would have been early [REDACTED], by then. Once improved and back on her feet, our elder sought and acquired some social help & guidance, where she met up with other young people around her own age. She met and began keeping company with a cheerful, polite, young man from the local area and before long they said they were marrying on her [REDACTED] birthday.

She and her husband were settled in their rented home, had announced they were expecting a baby and the Police were presenting a Court Case for the version of the Rape Case being brought up, when I was forced to place my unwell mother into a local Nursing Home. Our younger was once again in hospital. F. and I discussed everything, as is only fair, and I was anxious to attend Court, to support my pregnant girl. Sadly, that brought down (that night) a screaming tirade of abuse, the gun forcing my head back on the pillow, while threatening that if I went to Court with "those others," that would be the last days of our lives, as he'd be "wiping us out," along with anyone else in the way". I then thought of my younger daughter and my frail elders. Next morning, from work, I rang my newly acquired son-in-law's mother and begged her to stand in for me. She agreed and did so. NOT a good move, as it happened, but that's ANOTHER story.

F. expressed total amazement when I said I was not going to Court, after all. However, again that night, there was the "prowling", more gun abuse, but this time I got a good whack, on the side of the head, from the barrell as well. My nerves were not good, by this time - even my nice "boss" commented, enquiring if I was well, "as I seemed very tense". I moved out of our bedroom and into our younger's empty room. F. made no comment on this for a while, then one night, I think, by now it was [REDACTED] (early), the door was bashed open (we had no locks, just a door-handle) and as I suddenly awoke and started up in bed, alarmed, he flew at me, with our very sharp kitchen carving knife, which he then stuck into my throat, then began sawing motion. All that time, I got the HATE-twisted face and the accusation of being "Bitch [REDACTED]". He snarled any more "trouble" from me and I'd be looking at my blood while I died. Our younger girl was in hospital. I'd had TOO MUCH, now. Before I left for work, I gathered a few things for her and myself, while F. slept soundly, then went to work, from where I rang my uncle. After work, I got a hire-van in a caravan park locally, and I'd already told my "boss", so they were prepared, when F. turned up at the premises next day, frightening the girls in Reception by bashing on the window with the gun. Boss and our Chief Accountant both went out to him, treating him with gentle, firm, insistence (they knew he was a returned Serviceman) that he put the gun away and go home and rest, as they didn't want the police involved, which WOULD have to happen, as they didn't want their staff threatened. He listened and went home, but then (so I was told by the Nursing Home where my mother was) went there and raged around the Reception Area, demanding to know where SHE was. They called the Police and they soothed him and coaxed him to go home.

By now, I'd worked out that it most surely was ME AND MY CONSTANT PRESENCE that affected F.'s behaviour. If I WASN'T there, there WAS NO TRIGGER.

Feeling sure of this, I contacted our elder daughter, who, along with her supportive new husband would HOPEFULLY, POSSIBLY, be able to keep an eye on the man (the NORMAL ONE) I did love, always. She and her husband did this, and somehow it all worked, for the next several years, and actually right up until eventually¹ passed away in [REDACTED], in [REDACTED] Hospital. I NEVER sought divorce, ever.

I should add, after the knife episode, my doctor DID agree it was high time to take myself and our younger girl out of the continual trauma. Also, as I discussed, over the phone, the situation with the Repat. doctors, they, too, agreed that I really had no choice but to do the obviously WISE thing - even though THEY'D SEEN NO SIGNS OF IT '!

Reading up about other people in similar situations, I am sure it was NOT just war-neurosis, or bi-polar behaviour, or manic depression. The THREE people I lived with, in the latter part of our marriage WERE three different personalities - the vicious TWO being triggered by ME ALONE, for some UNKNOWN REASON.

Now, I refer to them as Person "A", the loving, caring, amiable one; Person "B", the raging, gun-waving one; Person "C", the insanely hate-filled one calling me "[REDACTED]".

Even my [REDACTED] cat knew the difference. When Person A was around, Puss was happy, digging small silver-paper balls out of F.'s trouser pocket, to be thrown for playing with. When Person B showed, Puss ran from the room, down to another part of the house, with ears held sideways. When Person C showed, Puss first spat, then hissed, held ears flat to the head, then crawled fast on his belly to the front door, screaming (as a [REDACTED] can scream) to go out immediately. I think that says rather a lot.

It WAS a difficult decision to leave a (then) [REDACTED] year marriage, as when F. was Person "A", he was the dearest person, to me. I hesitated for so long because I feared he would carry out his threats to "come after" precious members of our family if I "removed" myself. In those days I do not remember any Womens' Support (for ANYTHING) Groups being around. It has also taken me some years to try and make sense of what I was UNKNOWINGLY dealing with, as I just kept hoping it would all pass.

I do recall that several of our good friends (former close neighbours) DID rather suddenly move away over just a couple of years. Immediately opposite, with 2 littlies, went first. Then to the left, next door, also with 2 littlies next, and then to the right, next door, with 3 teenagers, went. They all promised, when saying they were moving, to send their new address. THAT never happened. I now believe they perhaps had "run-ins", unknown to me. I also heard, later, that F. had often run out, with the gun, to chase children from in front of the houses - ours and the close ones, and that the Police had been called about it. F. had thus been "warned" several times about it. In later years, I have found (so far) I was, possibly, his 4th wife, and NOT his 2nd. Also, 3rd? elder daughter caught up with us & we are in touch with members of his (3rd?) [REDACTED] marriage. Daughter T. made the comment to me, one time, that, as kids, she and her younger sister used to hear F.'s footstep "coming up the side path of the house, and we'd just then clutch each other and start to shiver." They DID know happier times, as their mother re-married and they were adopted by a man they all grew to love very much.

So, the regrettably LONG preceding story is truly one of Domestic Violence, but not from bullying, bad temper, or alcohol. It has to do with Mental Illness, though I'm not sure what kind.

In all fairness, I must advise that F. had a fairly traumatic childhood, along with his brother. He told me his mother was brought up by HER grandmother, and he knew nothing of HER parents. His mother (whose name was [REDACTED]) was then widowed in the 1st World War and had to work to support them. She could not always take her children to her work - or perhaps preferred not to - as she usually was employed on outlying sheep or cattle stations as a cook/house-keeper. So, the two boys were usually fostered-out, where sometimes fosterparents were kind and sometimes NOT. He recalled being chased and hit with brooms and tree-branches. Also, once or twice, they had been placed with the Salvation Army's Boys' Home, in [REDACTED] somewhere.

He said he took off as a [REDACTED] as soon as he could, though at some time he apparently did an [REDACTED] - I don't know where or when. Then, when the 2nd W.W. commenced, he was often on [REDACTED] ships for convoys, and travelled to and from [REDACTED] and up to [REDACTED]. He was a [REDACTED] often and in the course of the trips was wounded. He had shrapnel in his back, which could not be safely removed and suffered from it with difficulty in his limbs. When things got too unbearable, he would have to spend time in the Repat. Hospital, where different treatments were undergone, to try and ease the trouble. As mentioned earlier, some "new" medicines violently upset him and he'd be rushed back there.

All of the above HAS to have some effects on a person's mental well-being and I know nothing about the genetics involved. Whether there were "streaks of instability or insanity" way back, on one parent's bloodline, or the other's, we don't know. Also, maybe the "new" treatments, pills, powders, potions, may have small bearings.

MENTAL HEALTH is a continuing issue with ALL GOVERNMENTS, State and Federal, and to my continuing horror and despair, the pittance allowed for it grows smaller. For both F. and my younger daughter, plus sundry young relatives of friends, I plead for more attention and money to be focused on it.