

# NEWSLETTER

**. Volume III Issue No.3 St**

## *Special Issue Newsletter*

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### **SPECIAL ISSUE**

FRWC supporters often ask if we have stories. There are many stories about battered women and from women assisted by FRWC. Often women who have fled a batterer are still fearful, threatened, or stalked. We have chosen not to share their stories for their safety.

A few months ago FRWC received an e-mail of support from a former victim who is concerned about *pro bono* legal help for battered women. As she corresponded with FRWC and offered her help we were impressed with her articulate telling of her story and that she was willing to share it through FRWC.

A friend of FRWC about the same time shared a poem she had written about a marriage of unequal partners. Here are their words.

### **I'M A LITTLE DOLL WHO WAS DROPPED AND BROKEN. . .**

My mother loved to sing. Many of the tunes she sang were those she had learned as a child of the 1920s. I remember especially well a song about a china doll that had been shattered at the hands of her owner and was worried that if she weren't put back together perfectly the girl who had once loved her wouldn't want her any more. Little did I realize that there would be a time in my life when I would feel like that doll whose life was devastated by a person who supposedly loved her. I was dropped and broken, but it was my fault. It really was, but not for the reasons my husband gave.

"Are my ears on straight? Is my nose in place? Do I have a sweet expression on my face?" asked the little doll of the song. Had I done anything or said anything that morning or the evening before? What mood would he be in when I arrived home? Did I have the right expression on my face? Would he take offense at some imaginary act of mine or had some news story upset him? I can remember driving home from a ten-hour day at work, desperate to see my baby girl and yet becoming more and more anxious as I drove the miles home. Would he greet me at the door with a smile and

a kiss, our daughter on his arm and dinner on the stove? Or would it be a glowering sneer as he stared at me from the living room couch, television set blaring, my little girl afraid to move from the end of the couch where he had seated her for countless hours. I never knew what to expect.

My daughter was barely four years old when I escaped with her from that marriage. She still remembers the fear generated by her father even though she was not the direct recipient of violent physical and verbal attacks. She told me for the first time more than two years after we'd left - and she having had no contact with him - that each day when I left for work she remembered making believe that there was a wall around her and that she would set up a 'safe' area and imagine that he couldn't enter it! She spent her days behind this imaginary wall, 'protected' from his inattentiveness and disregard. Even now, more than three years later, if she wakes and comes into the room early on weekday mornings she begs me to turn the news off as it reminds her of him. He would sit for hours watching the news - repeated over and over, as if awaiting some development that was vital to him. Sometimes I thought that it was the news stories that set him off on a "bad day." There was nothing else to explain the pattern of

"good husband" - "bad husband" days. Except, as he often told me, I wasn't being a "good wife."

That's what he told me; I just wasn't a good wife. Wayne [not his name] reinforced his righteousness and my stupidity and pessimism constantly. In speaking with a counselor at the battered women's shelter where I lived with my daughter for a month after leaving him I realized that he had used brainwashing tactics from early on in our relationship. Wayne is an expert at manipulation. From our first conversation he of the charming voice started pushing the idea of how much he "loved" me and how I should reciprocate. We met over the telephone and talked for three months before he came across country to meet me. Then in a whirlwind two-month relationship he convinced me to marry him. It wasn't all smooth sailing for him. I had ended a ten-year marriage five years before and was not planning to get married again anytime soon. He didn't take no for an answer, however, and pushed and pleaded and coerced me into believing that I had to marry him to prove my love. This is why I say that the despair and desperation I felt throughout that relationship was definitely "my fault." If I had listened to my inner voice I would never have married him, never have allowed him to convince me of my need for

him. He is a sick person, but I walked forward into the trap *knowing* that I should have been backing up.

Hindsight lets me see the whole production: I knew I did not want to marry him, but I remember feeling trapped in his dream even at that early date. He would listen to everything I said I wanted in a man and play it back at me that he was "the one." I was working at the time and he wasn't...a pattern that would establish itself throughout the marriage. I had to be up early and give presentations and talks at 9 or 10 a.m. while he slept and watched TV all day. Wayne would start up an argument about getting married and I would finally, after midnight usually, go to bed while he stayed up and watched TV. Just as I dropped off to sleep he would come into the room, snap on the light and yell my name. Not just call to me to wake me, but bellow out my name like a D.I. at boot camp. I remember snapping awake in a sitting position with adrenaline shooting to my toes! This would reoccur not once, but five or six times throughout the rest of the night. Each time he approached me with a sweet/sad look on his face, telling me that he "couldn't stand us fighting" but that he just wanted to marry me so much. He would beg forgiveness and start talking about marriage again. I would

start out on the same level as I had taken earlier in the night, but by five in the morning and several awakenings, I would be begging him just to let me sleep for an hour or two, and agreeing that marriage wasn't such a bad idea!

Believe me, I know that it seems insane now, but he "loved" me so much I couldn't just throw him out. And with each repeated cycle of sleepless nights and his convincing me of his true love I began breaking down, until I announced to shocked friends and family that we were getting married in three days, the soonest it could be arranged. My mother and close friends were horrified, but their protestations just elicited my "You just don't understand him..." talk.

He never did do the physical things that some batterers do...nothing that left obvious physical marks. He began by slapping me across the face, not hard enough to bruise, but enough to hurt. Then he began telling me things that his Navy career had supposedly taught him: "I could kill you with a slap to the ear. They'd never know why you died." He, all 6'5" of him, would shove me to the floor or ground and kneel on my chest with hands loosely around my throat telling me how "easy it would be" to kill me. If I argued about giving him spending money {he rarely worked} he

would just go to my purse and take everything, including the bankcard. After my daughter was born he would threaten me with, "If you try to leave me I'll burn everything down around you and take her [our daughter] to Mexico." He'd add that by the time they found my body he'd be deep in Mexico, and dropped hints about how much people paid for blonde haired, blue eyed girls "down there." My blood still runs cold when I hear the echo of his voice in my thoughts and nightmares.

By then we were so poor that I could barely keep food on the table and still he refused to work ["Stupid f...ing bosses!" or "Those idiots don't know how to..."]. Within a month he quit or got fired from the few jobs he got. I would cry not knowing how I was going to make the gas stretch enough to get me to work and back - he had moved us out into the country far from my friends and family. I enlisted us on the Welfare rolls and on Food Stamps. Wayne refused to enter the office except when he absolutely had to sign papers. And although he would load the shopping cart with the foods he liked, he would disappear at the checkout while I cashed us through with Food Stamps. He was too proud to be seen using Food Stamps.

We have nightmares. My daughter still hates morning news shows and anything else

that brings back memories of the farm where we lived. She and I have created a new life, and I have created a new life, and a very happy one. But somewhere in the back of my mind, and probably hers as well, there lurks the fear that he will pop up in our lives again some day. We've struggled without child support, and in the shadow of the enormous debt that he ran up in my name. But we've gotten afloat... barely, but afloat. Because of his total destruction of my credit I can't even get a normal loan on a used car with a down payment and the car as collateral! Our friends know not to give anyone our unlisted phone number or address. His mother keeps me informed of his whereabouts, as she is afraid of him, too; she tells me that he's gone through several other women and their money since our separation. He drives a new truck bought by his latest wife - yes, he's done it again - while I struggle to keep a 16 year-old gas-guzzler chugging. Wayne has never paid a bit of child support to our daughter or to his other children. He has six that I now know of, and probably more on the way. Like many batterers he is fairly attractive, charming - when he wants or need to be - and can lie faster and smoother than you would believe humanly possible.

As the song goes, "I'm a little doll who has just been

mended....” But mended is not the same as whole. The cracks are still there, deep and hidden mostly, but there.

I wonder when, if ever, I will feel totally safe from him. I know that I am doing well, compared to the statistics of abused spouses, but the ideal would be to never have experienced the suffering and abasement of life with someone like him. My beautiful daughter should never have known the fear that she’s already faced - I only pray that it will make her stronger and more aware of the dangers of not listening to that inner voice that warns you that something isn’t right.

There are so many more twists and turns to the story, but as I learned at the Shelter, my ex fit a pattern well established by batterers. People of all levels of education and socio-economic status should recognize the problems faced by women in these types of relationships. Often poverty is the prominent feature locking women and children into these situations, as is a severe lack of pro bono attorneys, or at least attorneys willing to work in conjunction with shelters and grants in lieu of up-front payments and retainers. Women trying to break out of these situations need to know that there is help available instantly and long-term to help them survive the tortuous legal battles for

children and property, and to keep a safe roof over their heads until life is calmer and saner. Believe me, the struggle is only beginning when a spouse manages to escape the will of the batterer. There is no better cause to fight for.

Margie Vichnair-Pray  
Louisiana

### **MARY WAS MARRIED**

Mary was married  
John was, too.  
Mary loved freedom.  
John did, too.  
Mary gave John freedom.  
John liked that.  
Mary wanted one day free.  
John didn’t like that.  
Mary said, “No fair.”  
John threatened Mary.  
Mary was found dumb.  
John felt masterful.  
Mary contemplated these things in her heart.  
John said he love Mary.  
John asked to take a trip without Mary.  
Mary said, “Sure.”  
Mary asked to take a trip without John.  
John said, “No way.”  
Mary contemplated these things in her heart.  
John felt masterful.  
Mary held her anger.  
Mary said, “I’m going.”  
John said, “You’re not.”  
Mary said, “I am. I will.”  
John said, “you’re evil.”  
Mary said, “I’m not.”  
John said, “You’re scum.”  
Mary contemplated these things in

her throat.  
John got the flu.  
John expected Mary to nurse him.  
Mary hated nursing him. Mary nursed him.  
Mary was mad. Inside mad.  
Mary nursed John mad.  
John wanted more. John wanted to share the flue with Mary.  
Mary said, “Please, no.”  
John said, “Why not?”  
Mary said, “Please, no.”  
John said, “Yes.”  
Mary said, “No.”  
John called Mary a “bitch.”  
Mary kept her head.  
John came to Mary’s workroom.  
Mary kept her head.  
John called Mary names.  
John bestowed guilt.  
John trapped Mary at her desk.  
Mary got mad.  
John got madder. John got strong.  
Mary stopped talking.  
John said, “I can be petty, too.”  
John said to Mary, “I will show you tomorrow how petty I can be.”  
Mary began to write.

The next day, John asked Mary to breakfast.

Mary writes, “the end” and goes to breakfast. Susan Taylor, Psychotherapist

**HELP WOMEN STAY FREE  
SEND CONTRIBUTIONS TO  
Financial Resources For  
Women & Children, Inc.  
645 Boylston St. c/o PPUF  
Boston, MA 02116**

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## NEW BOARD MEMBER

Trish Bonica joins the FRWC Board. She is Program Director of the Jewish Women International in Washington, DC. She brings a long-term commitment to helping battered women to financial freedom. Welcome, Trish.

## CONGRATULATIONS

Sheryl Jaynes-Andrews, Ph.D.

May 31, 2001 Dr. Sheryl Jaynes-Andrews, FRWC President and founder, successfully defended her dissertation at the Boston College Graduate School of Social Work. The title of her dissertation is "Explaining the Severity of Injury to Battered Women Using Male Partner Characteristics and Behaviors." Stalking and threats were found to be major predictors of increased injury.

### MADISON & RI STAFF MEET

June 11 Gena Hull, from the Madison TN Domestic Violence Program, and Bette Humeston, from the Women's Resource Center in RI, met to discuss their projects and their collaboration with FRWC. Both work closely with victims of domestic violence to assist women to become financially competent and independent. FRWC is grateful for the work of both women and their willingness to increase their "load" by working with FRWC.

Gena recently persuaded the family courts in Nashville to allow orders of protection requests to be submitted by fax.

This is a major help to women who do not have to appear in person to make the request at a time of risk and stress.

## MC AULEY INSTITUTE

### USES FRWC MATERIALS

McAuley Institute of Silver Spring, MD requested 500 FRWC Your Money And You brochures for use in their June conference.

### BOOK REVIEW

*Banker To the Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle Against World Poverty,*

by Muhammad Yunus, founder of The Grameen Bank, Public Affairs, New York, 1999

FRWC has used as a lending model the Grameen Bank's micro-credit approach to battling poverty among the world's poorest people. *Banker to the Poor* tells the 30-year struggle to make small loans to enable the poorest of the poor to better their lives in more than 50 countries. Yunus believes that loans to a poor woman makes a difference to her family and children.

Victims of domestic violence often have no credit or bad credit in their names. Starting over financially is a part of getting free of the abuse and the batterer. FRWC loans have enabled women to get cars so they can drive to work, get jobs, find better housing, go to school, move away from the scene of abuse. Micro-credit is working for battered women.

### HELP WOMEN GET LOANS

## **MONEY SKILLS FOR KIDS**

Kids learn early that money doesn't grow on trees but it takes longer for them to learn how to manage money. Learning to be responsible financially is a part of growing up and learning how to be independent. Children who respect money and how to take care of it are not easily victimized by those who would take advantage of them.

Economic independence is necessary to remain free of abuse. Women without financial resources and with young children are more likely to return to a batterer. Girls who are fiscally naive are at particular risk of victimization.

The FRWC brochure *Your Own Money* will soon be followed by *Your Own Budget*. Those who have found the first brochure useful have requested the second. FRWC needs \$2500 to produce it. Both are written at a basic vocabulary level. Financial materials are often written surpassing the reading and understanding level of many users, making FRWC brochures valuable.

The FRWC website [[www.frwc.org](http://www.frwc.org)] is linked to numerous other financial help sites. Under development are links to financial help for children and youth.

## **PARENTS, YOUTH & MONEY SURVEY**

[www.asec.org](http://www.asec.org)

The American Education Savings Council and the Employee Benefit Research Institute surveyed 1,000 parents and children ages 6-17 in January, 2001. The study found that parents offer little help and set a poor example for their children financially. Less than half make a budget and stick to it. At least 55% roll over credit card debt each month.

### **TIPS FROM THE SURVEY**

- Discuss the family budget, allowances, and financial matters
- Share financial education materials with your children
- Use media and online opportunities to teach finances
- Talk to your children about job and business prospects
- Explain how various financial institutions and their products work
- Help your children set priorities for saving, spending, investing, and giving money they receive.

Adapted from The Tennessean Business, April 30, 2001, 1E

**HELP BATTERED  
WOMEN**

## **Q: How can children be taught to value money?**

**A:** When Mimi Wallace, stock broker with UBS PaineWebber, was asked that question she suggested the 4-jar system. The system is based on the expectation that in addition to regular family responsibilities, there will be opportunities for children to earn an allowance for doing certain chores. When the child completes the agreed upon job, the allowance is paid.

Both chores and payment reflect the age and ability of the child to do the chore and manage the money. A rule of thumb is a dollar a week for each year of the child's life. A 10-year-old would get \$10. In addition to learning to value money, the children learn to save money.

Each child has four jars. One jar is mad money to be spent as the child wishes. The second jar is intermediate savings which is for items that require the child to save in order to purchase them [computer games, etc]. The third jar is for college and is eventually entered into a money-market account or mutual fund. The last jar is for charity with 10% of each week's allowance going to church or someone in need.

This is a concrete way for children to see what their money is spent on. They learn to save, give, and spend thoughtfully.