



KATHLEEN FOUNTAIN
THRIVER...*NOT* SURVIVOR
3rd Place Prize Winner
2008 Victorious Woman Essay Contest

After years of living with an emotionally unpredictable husband, I made the decision to leave. I was honest and communicative with my husband on my intent to leave the marriage. He was against me leaving but accepted my decision.

The evening that I was leaving, having already moved a few things, he asked if we could work it out. When I said no, he told me to have a nice life and left. Within 15 minutes he returned to the house with rage in his eyes. He grabbed me and threw me on the floor and started strangling me. Somehow I was able to get away but he grabbed me again and began strangling me for the second time. I remember thinking, as I had the feeling of unconsciousness coming on me, that I was going to die.

I have always believed that there are angels around us providing protection and I now firmly believe it because I was able to throw him off me, a man more than twice my weight. Through his abuse continued, somehow I was able to get to the phone and call 911...*and I survived!*

We often hear in the news about these terrible domestic violence scenarios but never hear what happens to the survivor and what challenges they face when they do survive.

The day after the assault, the District Attorney told me to get a medical evaluation which included nude pictures of my wounds. He indicated this was important evidence in the charges against my husband which included resisting arrest, domestic violence, 3rd degree assault and 2nd degree assault with a deadly weapon. Believing in the system, I complied with the District Attorney's orders. However, my husband broke the restraining order three times, and the police never arrested him. Also to my surprise, the DA dropped the two assault charges and only charged him with domestic violence and resisting arrest.

Being fearful that he would come after me again, I talked to the police in my town about protection, but they said they could not protect me and advised me to move. My husband, with the help of his family, eliminated most of my resources, so when I left the town where I had lived for 20 years, I became homeless and had few resources.

Searching for an attorney was a challenge because of the severity of the assault; many were not interested in helping me. I finally found an attorney who would help. I had to borrow money to pay her but unfortunately the attorney did not do her job and I got nowhere. Though she lost her job, it was a small comfort. Her poor performance impacted the rest of my life.

Fear is an emotion a survivor deals with continually. Seeing programs on TV that have abusive scenes brings back the whole incident, and going out in public you are always fearful that he will find and hurt you again.

Five years later, I am a board member of a domestic violence shelter and I volunteer my time to talk to organization about domestic violence. I have financial challenges but I have peace of mind. My therapist gave me a nugget that I held on to: forgive my husband's behavior in order to release his control over me. Though it took some time, I did it. Since then, a tremendous burden has been lifted from my shoulders.

Having gone through this experience, I have learned how amazing the human spirit is and, when faced with challenges, our survival instincts provide the strength to continue on. Today I am not without challenges but I am a thriver who has successfully moved on and I am grateful for all my blessings.

My victory is that I am alive, a victorious woman!

KUDOS KATHLEEN!

***You've shared a story common to so many women,
but which few women want to tell.***

***May your story support other women, fearful of the unknown,
And encourage them to find the good that waits for them
on the other side of surviving!***