

## **Nadine Walker Mooney's Response to Boston Sunday Globe Article**

**August 10, 2014**

On Sunday, August 10, 2014, I read the Boston Globe's front-page article entitled, "The Armaments of Domestic War," written by Globe columnist Yvonne Abraham and Globe reporter Gabriel Florit. This vivid article is a frightening look at the ugly face of domestic violence and the danger facing victims and their children as unwilling victims or witnesses. Abuse has no social, economic or cultural boundaries and occurs any time of the day or night, before, during or after breakfast, lunch or dinner.

Although Abraham's and Florit's article was a painful recount of Casa Myrna survivors whom they interviewed and who reported the various types of household items that were used as weapons against them, the fact that the article made it to the front page, and was not buried somewhere within the newspaper, is a hopeful sign that this social disease is getting more exposure. It was also quite telling when Abraham declared the obvious, "The ways to hurt are infinite. When you live with an abuser, everything is a weapon." She then went on to list the various items easily transformed into convenient weapons in the hands of abusers.

During my gut-wrenching reading of this article, I was unnervingly reminded of a time when I was also a victim. In my case, the most common weapons my husband used were his fists when he punched out my front tooth or when he bruised and blackened my eyes or body. Being stomped on or kicked after being knocked to the floor was his habit, as were his frequent slaps across my face or spitting in it. During these violent encounters, that followed the pattern of increasing in frequency and duration, it did not matter to my husband that our young children were unwilling witnesses to these assaults that left them huddled and crying in a corner of their bedrooms.

Prior to the Globe's publication of "The Armaments of Domestic War" and how ordinary, innocuous household items can be used to inflict pain and control, victims were specifically advised to avoid certain rooms during violent confrontations. The kitchen is at the top of the list because there are too many items there that could be used to severely injure or kill a victim. The bathroom is the next room to avoid due to the hard bathroom surfaces such as the sink or tub. Like many victims, my face was smashed into the bathroom mirror on more than one occasion. But the bathroom was always the room I ran to when trying to escape his assaults.

At that terrible time in my life, I did not know who to contact or what to avoid.

Today, I know about places like Casa Myrna and SafeLink, their domestic violence hotline, and many programs for escaping and recovering from domestic violence. Escaping domestic violence once is no guarantee that it will not happen again during a new relationship. That is what happened to me twenty-five years after escaping it the first time. I wasn't so lucky the second time. My abuser turned his violence into an attempted murder/suicide because I tried to leave him. I survived. He did not. As a result of this attack, I walk in total darkness all day, every day, and will for the rest of my life. His attack took my vision.

To avoid being victimized even once, I encourage people to learn the signs of domestic violence to avoid it as quickly as it rears its ugly, destructive head. Never underestimate the damage it can inflict on your life, whether or not you have children who witness it. When you know the signs, you have less chance of becoming confused about what is happening and will be more likely to escape it in time. Call Casa Myrna's SafeLink hotline at 877-785-2020 and read through the resources on their website to understand the signs of domestic and dating violence and ways you can get help and help others.

Do not ever try to handle a domestic violence situation alone. I did during my second encounter and it was to my detriment and almost to my death. Contact Casa Myrna's SafeLink hotline to talk about what you, or someone you know, might be going through. If you witness abuse, do not interfere. Instead, call 911. When victims take back their power, run and never look back or you could find the wrong reasons to go back.

Today, I have turned my domestic violence tragedies into triumphs.

In 2009, I won the R.O.S.E. Foundation's statewide essay contest, receiving a \$10,000 scholarship award and being honored at their annual gala alongside First Lady of Massachusetts Diane Patrick. We were both introduced to the stage by Oscar winning actress Olympia Dukakis. That evening would be the first of many speeches I would present, not only to raise awareness but also to help raise critical funds for Casa Myrna and other DV agencies throughout Massachusetts. I use my voice and stories to expose domestic violence for the evil that it is, just like Abraham and Florit did in their article.

In the fall of 2013, I began a Master's degree program in Non-Profit Management at Simmons College. I am halfway through my program with a grade-point average of 3.90 and plan to graduate with honors in 2015. I am one of the lucky survivors. Please learn the signs of DV, in all its forms, to protect yourself and those you love.

*Nadine Walker-Mooney*