

# “Not THIS time ...

In 2007, Karen Heck, a founder of Hardy Girls Healthy Women in Waterville, spoke to that city's Rotary Club about domestic violence. At the end of her talk, several men came up to tell her about their experiences with domestic violence. They spoke of family members and employees who had suffered at the hands of husbands or boyfriends, and of the pain and anger they felt as witnesses to that suffering.

Heck told us about that day, and how moved she was by the frankness of the men, whose voices are not often heard in public discussions about domestic violence. From that encounter comes today's page of essays by men about how their loved ones and friends were hurt — in one case, an employee was killed — by the men with whom they shared their lives. Last year, the number of Mainers killed in incidents of domes-

tic violence doubled over the previous year, from 8 in 2007 to 18 in 2008. With only a few exceptions, those killed were women. We believe one way to begin to diminish the terrible hold that violence has on the women and children who endure it is for men to acknowledge its far-too-common existence in our culture, and speak out against it. Thus, we offer you the words of Gary Hammond, Joel Kase and Jerry Tipper.

— THE EDITORIAL BOARD: JOHN CHRISTIE, ERIC CONRAD AND NAOMI SCHALIT

# MEN SPEAK OUT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

“Domestic abuse has no place in a civil society . . .”

Every time I read about another act of domestic violence it makes my blood boil. It is important for men to hear from other men that domestic abuse is not OK and we will no longer be silent.

My interest in domestic violence is both personal and professional. My personal interest began when our younger daughter was involved in a destructive and abusive relationship. In this case, the abuse was verbal — but no less destructive.



Jerry Tipper

The abuser was a co-worker, which further complicated the relationship. He was anxious about his job and his economic situation and he took it out on our daughter. He was controlling and tore her down, which really damaged her self-esteem.

She was in California. We were in Maine, so I felt helpless, anxious and angry. I didn't understand why she could not just walk away. I did not realize how much power he had over her.

Fortunately, our daughter did stay in touch by phone. Her mother encouraged her to visit a domestic abuse counselor. After that visit she said, “He exhibits 8 of the 10 characteristics of an abuser.”

Still, it was difficult for her to leave the relationship. He would alternate abusive behavior with kindness and flowers,

but the abuse never stopped.

Ultimately, with a lot of family coaching and coaxing, our daughter was able to escape the relationship. She had to make a midnight move to a motel and then move to another city to live with a cousin.

She and the abuser were both highly educated and had good jobs, which illustrates that domestic violence cuts across all social and economic lines.

Our daughter was fortunate. She got her life back and is now married to a wonderful, caring and supportive husband. She had the resources and support to end the abusive relationship and move on.

Not all women are that fortunate. They need to know they can count on support from all of us in this world who say, “No, we will not let this happen anymore.”

Our other daughter is a singer-songwriter who performs around Maine. She has written a song called “Not This Time,” which is a very compelling piece about domestic violence. She tells me she wrote it about a co-worker, but I am sure she also had some thoughts about her sister when she wrote it.

Every time she sings the song at a concert she is touched by how many women come up to her and say, “That song was about me. Thank you.”

So, speaking on behalf of men everywhere: “Not this time. Not any time.”

Domestic abuse has no place in a civil society and we must continue to speak out.

In my former life, when I owned the Cascade Woolen Mill in Oakland, I witnessed first-hand the impact of domestic

violence on our business.

On many occasions, employees who had been the victims of abuse would arrive at work. In some cases, the victim and the abuser both worked for the mill and occasionally even worked in the same department. The department managers had no skill to deal with these issues and, in many cases, the other employees in the department would take sides depending on whom they were most friendly with.

Needless to say, the disruptions in productivity were significant and costly. The human costs were even higher.

The prevailing attitude in business those days was that what happened outside the workplace was not your business. Fortunately, that attitude has changed, and many businesses throughout the state actively train their employees about the issues around domestic violence and supporting their associates who are dealing with abuse.

For abusers, or potential abusers, the message should be loud and clear. Abuse is not acceptable behavior and there is no shame in getting help. For victims, we must give support and direct them to domestic violence counselors who can provide advice and assistance. Getting involved is both good business and the right thing to do.

In conclusion, I ask all you men out there to stand up and speak out and let the world know domestic violence will not be tolerated.

Our voices will be heard and we can make a difference.

Jerry Tipper is the former owner of the Cascade Woolen Mill. He lives in Smithfield.

## “I am cursed with a virtual library of memories that evoke fear and loathing.”

My mother was born Margaret MacCleish Campbell Rein, but friends and family simply called her Marge. She was married four times (that can be confirmed) during her brief time on this earth. I was the product of union number three, making husband No. 4 my stepfather. It's not clear whether the first three husbands beat my mother, but No. 4 sure did.

Marge and No. 4 met in a little dive in central Texas called the Candy Palace in 1975, a time and a place where the term “victim” would not necessarily be applied to a woman who was being hit by her husband. In fact, there were certainly those at the time who supported the idea that this particular form of spousal interaction was a pastime that was well within the rights of the man of the house.

I am cursed with a virtual library of memories that evoke fear and loathing. One such image is that of me entering my parents' bedroom in a moment of puzzled concern, responding to my mother's screams, as I got off the bus, returning home from school one afternoon. I was in fifth-grade at the time.

On the far side of their bed I found my mother on the floor with No. 4 retracting his work boot-clad foot from her head. His immediate surprise at my presence elicited a reactive, somewhat defensive, statement

of explanation: “Your mother opened her face again.”

In his mind it was somehow as if Marge, supine on the floor, accelerated her forehead into the corner of his steel-tipped work boot, as he was simply towering over her, minding his own business. (The “again” portion of his remarks was a reference to his ability to recall a previous assault, when he caused a laceration-contusion to my mother's silver screen features, necessitating 111 sutures to repair the extensive damage.)

As a child, I spent countless nights lying awake in bed, full of angst, as I overheard the bickering, dreading the moment that the conversation would deteriorate into unwanted physical contact.

There were sometimes subtle clues to identify the moment when the threat of violence became the act of violence, such as a sudden crescendo, or even a pause in the dialogue, although there were more often less subtle indicators such as the shattering of glass or ceramic, or the thud of steel or wood, announcing the impact of flesh and bone.

Marge was torn between wanting to preserve the June Cleaver-Leave it to Beaver model of an intact family unit, providing a home and a father for me, and the harsh reality of needing to ensure her own, and my, health and well being.

In the end, although it took five long years to build up the courage to do so, one day my mother and I finally got on a Greyhound bus and left Texas and No. 4 for good.

No one ever laid a hand on Marge again.

Joel Kase is an emergency physician at MaineGeneral Medical Center in Waterville.



Joel Kase

## RED FLAGS FOR ABUSE: DOES YOUR PARTNER...

- **MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU NEVER DO ANYTHING RIGHT**, that nothing is ever good enough?
- **TRY TO MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE “CRAZY”** or that you are “imagining things?”
- **WITHDRAW INTO SILENCE**, and you have to figure out what you've done wrong and apologize for it?
- **THREATEN TO LEAVE** you frequently?
- **GO OUT ON HIS/HER OWN** if s/he wants to, but you can't because the kids become your responsibility?
- **SPEND MONEY** on whatever s/he wants and then gets mad at you when there is none left for things like the bills or groceries?
- **NOT LIKE IT WHEN YOU SPEND TIME WITH FRIENDS** or family, acting jealous of time you spend with anyone besides him/her?
- **CALL YOU NAMES?**
- **CONSTANTLY CRITICIZE** your parenting and threaten to take the children if you leave?
- **BLOCK THE DOOR** so you won't leave during an argument?
- **FORCE YOU TO HAVE SEX** when you don't want to?
- **THREATEN TO HURT YOU** or someone you care about?
- **SHOVE, HIT, punch, kick, choke, or beat you?**

Source: “When Love Goes Wrong” by Susan Schecter & Ann Jones

## “What happened next was such a needless tragedy.”

Way too often, we hear, read or learn about cases of domestic violence. Like all other tragedies, it is much more personal and alarming when it happens to someone who is close to you in one way or another.

This was my unfortunate and horrible experience.

Nancy (not her real name) was a strong, independent and ambitious woman. She worked with me at my business for several years and had been married to the same man for many years. The couple had a grandson who she really enjoyed. Nancy and her husband had been through some challenging times financially, but things were on the upswing. They had just built a new house in the country.

We worked together and spent a lot of time talking and visiting. I tried to be a positive mentor, as she did not always receive that caring concern at home. We talked a lot about her new house. Although her husband was self-employed and had been working on their home, the house was not completely done after considerable time.

Nancy was so ambitious and determined that she bought her own carpentry tools and machinery and worked on completing the house herself with no one helping most of the time. She would bring in picture after picture of the progress. I have done a fair amount of building and construction and could pass on my suggestions. The outside landscaping and gardens were her real joy.

Nancy built many gardens all by hand with shovels and a wheelbarrow. Backbreaking, strenuous, very hard work. I had given her truckloads of large and small flat rocks that she would come and pick and load at one of my properties.

During this time, one day her husband tells her he does not love her anymore and wants a divorce.

We talked many times about what to do. Nancy decided there had been many ups and downs throughout the marriage and that it was time to move on and attempt to find happiness and peace in life. I felt she could be taken advantage of, and I encouraged her to handle the divorce firmly and in a timely manner.

She went to an attorney and got all of the paperwork prepared for the divorce. At that

point her husband started delaying the process and continued to live at their house. It was almost like he had no place to go and just wanted to share the house because it was convenient.

This uncomfortable situation continued for a fairly lengthy time. Nancy and I discussed this several times. She had definitely decided the divorce was the best option.

With everyone's encouragement, Nancy finally insisted her husband sign the divorce papers and move out. The papers were signed, the house was transferred to her name but he continued to live at home.

Nancy finally insisted that her ex-husband move out of the house and they chose a date. She came to work that day as she did not want to be home during his move.

The following day she was very upset when she came to work, saying that her husband had taken all of her carpentry tools and most things of value from her home.

I tried to comfort her and convince her that he was finally out of her life. She now perhaps could start the rebuilding process and try to find some happiness and self-esteem.

After a brief period of time, her ex-husband contacted her and said he needed to pick up some financial papers at the house. Nancy agreed to a time.

Little did she know that was the last decision she would make.

Her ex-husband arrived that morning as agreed, but the request to pick up papers had been a lie.

What happened next was such a needless tragedy.

He shot and killed Nancy, set fire to the house and then shot himself. The nearly new home burned to the ground.

He had planned everything. All the details were left in his truck. He explained where he had put the more valuable items from the home in storage, so that his son could retrieve them.

This entire sequence of events seemed like a movie. Yet the sad truth was that it was very real and the world lost a dear person. We could only pray for all of Nancy's family and remember her for her smile and caring personality.

However, perhaps we can help prevent domestic abuse by caring, talking and encouraging anyone in this situation to seek help that is available and by promoting awareness of this very serious subject.

Gary Hammond runs his family-owned Hammond Tractor Co., with operations in Fairfield, Union and Auburn.



Gary Hammond

# ...Not ANY time.”