

*An inside look into a broken home. A story of sadness, brutal times and finally finding true love. Things were different for women in 1960's America. There was nowhere to turn if in an abusive relationship.*

## **Shattered Dreams Vs. Her Will**

By Michael Marmer

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# Shattered Dreams

-vs.-

# Her Will

A vintage kitchen scene. In the foreground, the back of a young boy's head and shoulders are visible; he is wearing a blue t-shirt. In the background, a woman in a floral dress and white apron stands by a light blue refrigerator, covering her face with her hands as if crying. To her right, a man in a grey button-down shirt stands near a white sink, gesturing with his hand towards the woman. The kitchen features a checkered floor, a round table with red and white chairs, and a window with patterned curtains. The lighting is warm and indoor.

**Michael Marmer**

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# CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| PROLOGUE .....  | ix  |
| CAUTION .....   | 1   |
| EARLY LIFE.....   | 3   |
| MARRIED LIFE.....   | 9   |
| 3510 FARTHING DRIVE.....  | 11  |
| INSIDE 3510 FARTHING DRIVE.....                                   | 27  |
| THE CAMERA SHOP SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND.....                      | 39  |
| NEW JOBS FOR MY MOTHER AND MY FATHER.....                         | 43  |
| MARCH FOR MACARTHUR.....  | 51  |
| MOM'S SURGERIES .....   | 57  |
| MARCH, 1968.....  | 59  |
| THANKSGIVING: NOVEMBER, 1968.....                                 | 63  |
| JUNE, 1970 GRADUATION.....  | 69  |
| HOW I DEALT WITH ALL THE FIGHTING .....                           | 73  |
| WITH MY HELP, MOM BUYS A CAR IN MARCH, 1971.....                  | 97  |
| THE JACKET AND EASY CREDIT .....                                  | 107 |
| DECEMBER, 1973 .....  | 109 |
| MARCH 11-12, 1975: DEATH ALMOST COMES TO MOM..                    | 113 |
| EPILOGUE FOR 1975: I WAS KICKED OUT OF THE<br>HOUSE FOR GOOD..... | 117 |
| MOM MAKES ME GO GET PSYCHIATRIC COUNSELING<br>IN 1977 .....       | 119 |
| MOM LEAVES DAD THE FIRST TIME.....                                | 123 |
| MOM RECONNECTS WITH DAD, AND THEN LEAVES<br>HIM FOR GOOD.....     | 125 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| NEW BEGINNINGS AND NEW HORIZONS WITH LT.<br>COL. WILLIAM McREYNOLDS, OR JUST BILL..... | 127 |
| CHRISTMAS, 1987 ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND.....   | 131 |
| DEATH.....   | 135 |
| EPILOGUE.....  | 141 |
| MEETING MY FUTURE WIFE.....  | 145 |
| MOM AND MAURICE SENDAK 2005.....   | 147 |
| THE PLANE CRASH THAT CHANGED THE LIVES OF<br>THE LUBEROFF'S FOREVER.....               | 165 |
| PHOTO SECTION.....   | 171 |
| WEDDING PICTURES.....  | 181 |
| TRIPS AND VACATIONS.....   | 189 |
| THE VACATION TO OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND 1963.....   | 221 |
| BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 1965.....   | 241 |
| THE PLAYBOY MAGAZINE.....  | 251 |
| THE WORLD'S FAIR.....  | 257 |
| GOING HOME.....  | 267 |
| WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA OCTOBER, 1967.....  | 273 |
| VARIOUS TRIPS TO BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.....   | 281 |
| VARIOUS SOLO ADVENTURES I DID WHILE IN<br>BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.....                      | 289 |
| GOING FROM BROOKLYN TO THE UNITED NATIONS<br>BY MYSELF 1968.....                       | 293 |
| MY CLOSURE.....  | 301 |

## MARCH FOR MACARTHUR

My dad did poorly to fair in sales 11 months of the year but, come March of each year, he was up for the annual March for MacArthur promotion. March 7th was the birthdate of John D. MacArthur, the owner of Bankers Life so March was contest month and he really got into it. He would win so many trophies, huge trophies, each year, a different set of four golden coffee mugs, etc. And, of course, all would be thrown by my mother in their fights and that, of course, would set him off deeper in his attacks on my mother.

I had a career in food sales for twenty years, until my third back surgery did me in, and I hated sales contests. To me, it's not about the contest, it's about your customer, and then the sales would come.

I was an incredibly quiet kid. I was scared to death of people and I never dated till I was 23. My quiet and scared personality was due to my parents' fighting. I still remember hearing my dad yell at my mother, in a fight, saying that I was gay since I never dated. That hurt me badly as I don't have anything against gay people but what he said has stayed with me until this day. In 1975, my mom forced me to see a psychiatrist so I went to a free clinic run by Montgomery County. The doctor asked me what my problem was. I just sat there, and stared at him, saying nothing. I had no clue. He finally said, "Okay, leave." That was the end of that. I finally broke out of my shell when I got into restaurant management

for Arby's as a general manager and then I was a dining room manager for the Family Fish House.

Then, one day in food sales, I met the love of my life on the day Ronald Reagan was shot. I knew the moment I saw Linda Wilce, that she was the one and I was so right. We just had our 43rd wedding anniversary on July 31, 2025. I think my problem growing up was the effect of my parents' fighting. And, who would not be affected by that as a 10-year-old, and up to 20 years old? It took time to overcome that but I had no clue it was that at the time. And, my mother did not think of that, either. But, overall, she took a lot of abuse from my dad while protecting us kids. I am forever grateful to her.

The fights continued over time and became more brutal on my mother.

My dad's career changed temporarily. He did become a manager but he soon lost that position and was back as an agent. Being a manager, I am not sure how that worked with income. He got a small commission from his agents.

Mom went on from Montgomery Ward to Microbiological in Bethesda, in the orders department, where she helped get my brother a job working with the mice they breed for cancer research. He had to pay for his own college at the University of Maryland.

Then, she went to work at Flow Labs, another cancer research company that made tissue cultures. She was the Export Manager. I got a weekend job there in the tissue culture

department because I had to pay for my own college, too. Even though my major was marketing, I was the weekend Foreman of the Tissue Culture Department by the time I graduated. It was a particularly important job because I was responsible for the product being made and then shipped to research centers all over the world.

Then, Mom moved to Vitro Labs in Aspen Hill, MD, after her divorce from Dad. That's where she met the love of her life, Lt. Col. William McReynolds. I am forever grateful to him as he took care of her before she died in 1988.

Back to the timeline with my parents.

Dad grew more violent. In one fight at night, he was angry at my brother for something. He kept threatening to kill him in front of my mother. My brother and I shared the same bedroom. We locked the door. My dad kicked at the door and put a hole in the outer part of the door, as indoor doors have an outer and inner wall and the doors are usually hollow.

My brother thought he should leave, jumped out of a window, and was gone.

My father never entered the bedroom and, in the morning, when that battle was over, my mother came into the bedroom to check on us. She saw that Harry was gone and she just lost it. She was crying and she could not stop. I had to console her. I knew Harry was probably okay somewhere.

Moving on, my brother was later living at college and, of course, the battles were getting worse.

I am was sixteen. My brother graduated high school in 1970. Things really got bad with my parents after that.

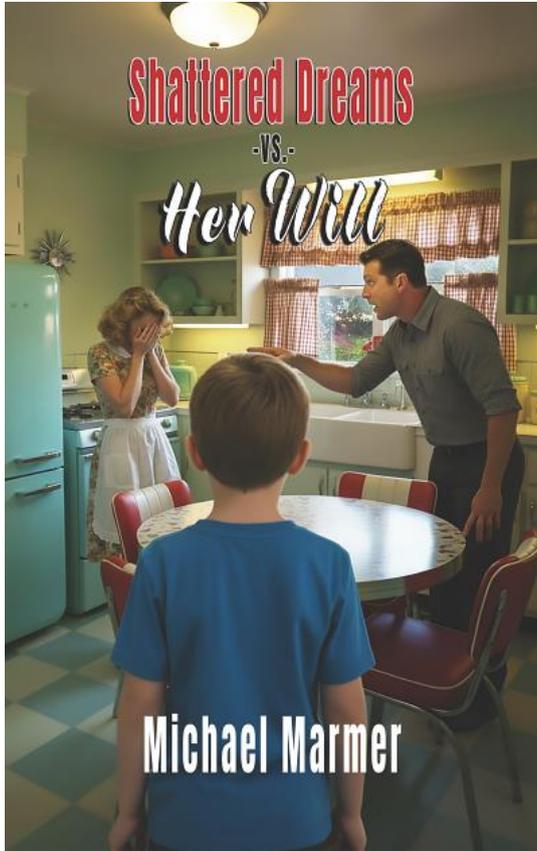
I decided it was time for me to run away from all of that; just leave for good. An excuse, maybe on my part, was to get away from my father. Terrible of me. But, it was a fall night, and about 10:00 p.m. It was a Wednesday, and a school night. I took off for Georgia Avenue to walk to the Capital Beltway, about seven miles away from the house.

I got to the beltway and proceeded up to the ramp. I was then walking on the shoulder of the Capital Beltway at age sixteen, on a school night, while my father was beating the crap out of my mother. Where was I going to go, I thought. St. Louis, for some reason, came to my mind. Why? I have no clue. I started to walk and I realized it is silly and stupid. I turned around and started for home. I managed to get off the beltway with cars whizzing past me. Wow, I could have been killed myself! What other kid was doing that, I thought? None.

I was then walking in the dark, past midnight, thinking I would get picked up by the police since it was a school night. Might be a good thing, I thought, since I could tell them why. That might be the ticket to have them get my father some help? Nope. I got home probably around 3 a.m. and all was quiet. My parents had no clue I was gone since my bedroom door was closed. Another adventure in my life had come to a close. In four hours, it would be time to get up for school. Wow, what a

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story! I would tell no one at school, not even a teacher and not even a mouse. And, to all a good night. Really? Was it?



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