

# A STORY TO TELL

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How does one tell the story of their life? The first thought is that maybe no one will be interested, or that it may be boring. I will try to keep you entertained, informed, and maybe even a bit excited about the events, which formed my existence. I feel that the years have been “eventful” for me, and that this may be a form of therapy for my beleaguered brain.

I guess I should start from the beginning. Everything in this world has a beginning, a middle, and eventually, an end. Although I haven’t gotten quite near my end, I feel I have enough events to fill a book. So let’s begin...

December 3, 1963, at 6:25 am, on a Tuesday, in Riverside, California, on March AFB, a child was born. I suppose such an event wouldn’t spark much interest to the rest of the world, but to me it was a pivotal point in my life. The beginning. I was the fifth child of my parents, all of us a year apart. My family consisted of four girls and one boy, the boy being the middle child.

The memories of my life didn’t become real to me until I reached the age of four. That was the year my father “left”, the year the burros scared the life out of me, the year we found the wild cat in our shed, and the year I fell into the barrel cactus on our driveway. We lived in Arizona that year and all the things that fascinate a child in a desert landscape were in our back yard. There was a ravine across the street from us, in which six burros lived. I was playing out in the front yard, in our “mud pond”, when my sister came running across the street yelling about the burros coming our way.

My mother came out of the house, picked me up, and went to watch the spectacle. As we watched the burros climb the narrow path toward us, I had this unnatural fear that they were coming straight for us with menace in mind. I screamed uncontrollably, and begged to go home. My mother laughed at my paranoiac tendencies and put me down to make the trip on my own to the house. I was paralyzed, afraid that if I moved the burros would trample me before I got to the front door. My mother picked me up, and brought me to the house. I never knew what happened with the burros, my sister said they turned around and went back into the ravine, but since I didn’t see it, I never believed her. I never went across the street again.

Right after that incident, we found a wild cat, trapped in our shed. My brother wanted to go inside to get it, but my mother wouldn’t allow it. We stood there, all five of us, transfixed by this wild thing screaming and tearing around in the small confined space of our shed. My mother called the animal control people, and they took forever to get there. The cat never slowed down, or ceased in it’s screaming. The animal control people got there, took a pistol out of his pocket, followed the cat around until he got a good shot, then pulled the trigger.

It was the loudest noise I can ever remember from childhood. It was my first experience of death. I cried for days for that cat.

The fall into the barrel cactus was quite an event. I was trying out my new trike. We had a very deep driveway, and I let my trike coast down the cement. I didn’t understand the physics of balance at that age, and never saw the tip coming. One minute I was laughing, having the time of my life, the next, I was screaming, with cactus imbedded in both legs. It took my mother at least a half-hour to pull those tines out of my legs. I ended up with a nasty fever, and severely swollen legs for my troubles. Let me tell you, I never coasted down that driveway ever again. The lessons we learn as a child....

That was my first clear memory of childhood. My next was not so humorous. My mother and father were not the richest people in the world; in fact you could say that we were dirt poor. She worked, my father worked, and my oldest sister took care of us and the house from the time she was old enough to stand at the stove and cook dinner. A few weeks after the “burro” incident, my mother came home early, she was fired. My father blamed her

for it, and they got into a huge fight. He blamed her for the money problems, slapped her, then left. He picked up a few things from his room, took the only car we had, and never came back.

That fight was a very frightening thing. My siblings and I were huddled into a room off the dining room, afraid to show our faces. Our father had always been heavy handed, and this was not a time to test his patience. My mother cried for three days, then found work and continued on as if he had never existed. It was a very strange time for us.

Being the youngest, I was left at a neighbor's house while my sisters and brother were at school. My neighbor was never really there, so I would just go home, climb into bed and sleep till everyone got home. I'm quite sure the authorities would have had something to say about our situation, but the town we lived in was very small, and everyone seemed to be having the same problems. You see, we lived in Lake Havasue before there was a bridge, before there was any kind of organized tourism. We lived in a hick town, with hick people; everyone minded their own business.

My mother was a very pretty woman. She was single, young, and willing to do any kind of job that would take care of her family. She worked as a waitress at the "Nautical Inn" where we would play by the water until she got off work. She was an amazing woman in these days. She held two, sometimes three jobs to make ends meet. When it came time for us to learn how to swim, my mother (who herself never learned) would throw us off the end of the pier where we had to literally sink or swim. We were water rats after that; you could never get us out of that lake.

People tend to believe that having money is the sole reason to exist, I tend to disagree. Although it does make life infinitely easier, the days when we were dirt poor, I feel we were a much closer family, pulled together in a common bond, survival. We were inseparable, the five of us. Some of us were closer than others, but we were a group. If one of us got into trouble, we all took the blame.

For some reason, my two older sisters had a death pact against my brother. They would dare him to do insane things, and he, being a "he-man" would do whatever it was they dared him to do. For example, my sister dared him to jump off the roof onto the grass, and he did. He nearly got a concussion, but he did it, that was the thing. He used to catch scorpions and sell them to the guy at the souvenir shop. He got some real big ones to. He and his friends would go into washes, pick up big boulders, and catch the scorpions living underneath.

The sister closest to my age and I were companions of a sort. Since we were so close in age (just over a year apart) we kind of shared everything. I think this led to her resentment of me in later years, but that's another story. We would play together, walk to school together, and once we even got caught shoplifting candy from the market together.

One time, she went to the store, gathered about \$100.00 worth of groceries in the basket and tried to check them out. She was five years old at the time, and my mother had no idea she had left the house. The people at the store were so amused, that they gave her a hand full of candy to bring home to the rest of us.

My second oldest sister was the troublemaker in our house. She was the one who initiated all the dares, threw the worst tantrums, and got away with murder. Every family has one and she was ours. She was very pretty, and she knew it. She could charm a snake and it would never know what hit it. Her major problem was her temper. When she lost it we all ran and hid till it passed. She had a knack of putting holes into the walls and doors of our house; so much so, that I don't think there was one solid, unmarred wall or door in the place. Her main target was my brother. Between the name-calling, and frequent beatings on his back, he was definitely affected by her. It was a palpable apprehension that was present between the two. Not one of us knows why she had this animosity toward my brother, I, however, think it's because he looks so much like our father. She was the most frequent object of my father's heavy handedness; he beat her most of the time just to get his aggressions out. I may not be a Psychologist, but I have a pretty good idea that that is the reason she singled my brother out for her person torture.

My oldest sister is something of an enigma amongst all of us. She is a very private person, never revealing her feelings, secrets, or personal accounts to anyone. She has always been and always will be a mother to all of us.

She took care of us when we were little and continues to do so even today. I don't think she ever had a childhood. I think she was born an adult. I pity her for that, having been put in that position. Of all my family members, she has my highest regard and respect. I should probably tell her that someday, but she has always been unable to take praise in any form.

I would like to tell some amusing stories of my oldest sister, but I only know of one. When she was a teenager, during the late 60's, she and some friends took a joy ride on a boat moored on the lake. They got caught of course, and my mother gave her a good beating, but that never swayed her to change. She did a lot of things that were rebellious in those days, her way of getting back at my mom I guess for all the years she lost. She had an Alice Cooper album that my mother burned never wore bras wore her hair long, all the things girls did in the 60's.

My brother and I never really knew each other then. He had his friends, and tried to survive my sister at home. He always looked after us, but he and I were never really close. All the crazy things he did, he did to prove he was a man, I suppose. Jumping off the roof, off the top bunk, catching scorpions, falling off his bike, you name it, he did it. He cracked his skull three times that I know of, and ran through a plate glass window once. But he was our brother, and the only man in our house, so his eccentricities were, for the most part, overlooked.

One time, I was playing in our neighbor's yard with the water hose. I never noticed that I was standing on a fire ant mound. The water disturbed the ants and I suddenly had the whole swarm of them up my legs. My brother heard me screaming, pushed me to the ground, and began to wash them off with his hands and the hose. He got bitten as badly as I did. I thought that was the most caring, brave heroic thing my brother ever did for me.

During this "poor" time, my mother went thorough several jobs, several residences, and several men. One of the worst places we lived was when I was in kindergarten. We lived with my mother's friend in a single wide, one bedroom trailer. She had three kids; my mom had five, so there were 10 people living in a very cramped place. I got the bathtub for a bed, my brother got a closet, and the rest made due with a pull out couch or the floor. This lasted for a long time. It was very uncomfortable.

Then, when I was 7 years old, we hit pay dirt. My mother met a man who decided that we were worthy of his care and patronage. He bought my mom a house, a car, and gave her living money. All he wanted was to come out to Lake Havasu and have his "visits" and he would take care of us. That was not enough for my mother. She wanted something more secure than that, so she got pregnant. That was how we got our new dad.

This man literally saved our lives. If not for him, I have no idea where we would have ended up today, probably all the girls would have been pregnant at 14, and my brother would have ended up in a job he hated with a wife he didn't love. Our salvation came and took us away to Las Vegas.

He married my mother on his birthday, inherited five children with another on the way, and moved us all into a mansion by our standards. Our new house was 5000 square feet of euphoria. There was a separate apartment wing at the back of the house, which the four girls occupied. Each apartment had one bedroom, a bath and a small living room. My brother had a room in the main house with my mom, new dad and the baby's room. I don't think I need to tell you how we felt at the new circumstances we faced. We were in awe.

My new sister was born December 10, one week and 8 years after me. She was so cute, blond, blue eyed, looked just like our new dad. We all spoiled her rotten. It wasn't long after she was born that the new circumstances started to change us. My oldest sister was pretty much the same, I don't think she ever really changed at all, however, my second oldest sister became a "Ms. Hyde". She met up with a group of "privileged" kids at school and learned what it was to be rich. She personified the debutante, and placed herself above us in every way. It was almost as if we were beneath her and that she never experienced the poor days like we did. My brother became a computer freak, and had his own "crew". My sister nearest me tried her best to emulate the second oldest. I was pretty much left to myself.

I had always been painfully shy, only having one real friend from the day the day I was born. Her name was Sharon Buelard. She was a Jahova's Witness. When I was 6, she died of pneumonia, because her parents thought that God would heal her. They were wrong. After my sisters made their friends in our new environment, my loneliness became a deeper entity. I started to invent a life for myself, and pretty much made an ass out of

myself. The more inventive I became, the more obvious it was that I lived in a dream world. People on the whole don't like dreamers, and I was no exception. I was pretty much on my own.

My family didn't help much; they were too wrapped up in their own new lives. My mother made some halfhearted attempts to "make" my closest sister hang out with me, but those things never work, they only cause resentment. I thought that a good solution would be to remove my troublesome self from the family that didn't really need me or, in my own warped mind, didn't notice me, by running away. I got as far as the end of the street and turned around and came back. I was a coward then.

Meanwhile, my closest sister (the one only a year older than me) was having her own internal struggles with this new way of life. Her solution was to burn the house down for attention. We all believed that it was an accident, that she was a hero by saving the baby from the fire, but later she told me that she had started the fire herself to "see what would happen". We lost our house, everything we owned, and a cat. It was devastating.

I remember that day so well, it could have just happened. I was coming home from the private school my parents sent me to. My sister was playing sick at home. As we turned the corner to my neighborhood, we saw smoke. The smoke, the fire trucks and the general excitement that came with a fire fascinated the busload of children. I was one of those excited children. I wanted to see the trucks, the fire, was curious whose house it was. When we turned onto my street, it was blocked by the police. I looked down the street, and stared in shock at my house engulfed in flames. I don't remember getting out of the bus, or walking down the street. The next thing I knew, a reporter was asking me if I knew who lived there and I answered, "That's my house." My mother wasn't home yet, neither was my new dad. It was just me, my two sisters and the police. I was terrified.

After it was all over, one of the firemen came out with a roast in his hand. It was fully cooked, even though it was in the refrigerator. He was amazed at how hot the fire was. I remember hearing him talking to his friends about it, and I started to laugh. It just seemed so funny that he would have found a cooked piece of meat in the refrigerator. What was he doing? Looking for something to drink? I was hysterical. I wanted my mom.

We moved to a rental for a few months then found a huge house on a golf course, and moved in. We lived in that house for over 20 years. It was home.

For me, my life pretty much started when we moved into this house on the golf course. All my tragedies, happiness, tears, scares, all are much clearer in this house. I guess the human mind chooses what to remember, and what to forget. I think I chose to forget all the time when we were in Arizona. A sort of self-preservation strategy. The funny thing is the things that happened to me in Arizona were nothing compared to the events of my life here in Las Vegas. I suppose that when you are young, things seem so much more magnified. There are times (more frequent, lately, than not) that I wish I was back in Arizona, a much easier time, much more controllable.

I'm not saying that my life went to hell after we obtained our new father, I am saying that, for me, life was so much more difficult. I had no idea of how to be rich and I mucked things up. So much so that there was no turning it around. I had no friends; I had no family to "hang" with. I was a loner. My grades weren't all that, and my attitude was horrible. I was self-conscious, shy, terrified of any confrontation, and usually the only one at the house.

Being children, my siblings caught on to my timidity and exploited it to, in my opinion, excess. There was an incident with a radio that I remember so well, it still makes me flush angrily to think about it. I received a clock radio for my birthday one year. I was listening to the music, thinking I was all alone and my sisters and brother were safely gone from home. Being secure in my privacy, I started to sing to the song playing. It cut off. I picked up the radio to find out what happened, put it down, turned it off, then back on. It started to play. A few seconds later, it turned off again. I went through the same routine as before and the radio turned on. This went on for a few minutes. I was so mad, that I began to hit the radio, thinking that the machine was at fault. Then, as I was beginning to get teary-eyed over this phenomenon, I heard my sister laughing in the back yard under my window. She and her friend had been flipping on and off the breaker to my room. I was humiliated beyond all comprehension, just another incident in a long list of insecurities for me. This was two weeks before the fire.

Enough about my siblings for now. Their actions are those of children struggling to accommodate to a

foreign world. They were confused, mean, scared, and just trying to cope. My mother, on the other hand, should have known better.

Let me back track a bit to the time we just moved to Las Vegas and into that wonderful house. Like I said, I was usually the only one home during that time. Everyone else had friends and things to do. I had a metal kitchen set placed in our big kitchen so that I could play while my mom cooked. I was playing with my kitchen, when my mother came into the kitchen with a basket full of laundry.

Now, nothing had happened all day. There were no unusual noises, fights, mishaps, anything to spark the anger I saw in my mother's eyes that day. I was playing quietly, my baby sister was sleeping, and everyone else was gone. Some people would call that a perfect day, not my mother. She came in, saw me playing, dropped the basket on the table, and screamed at me to fold the clothes. Now, I have seen her in these moods before. You don't say anything, don't cry, just do what she wants you to do if you want to be able to sit for the next few days.

I dropped what I was doing, and began to fold the clothes. Now, understand, I am 9 years old at this time, I had as yet to master the art of folding clothes. My mother went ballistic on me. Screaming that I was doing it wrong on purpose just to spite her. She went into my brother's room, got a "Hot Wheels" track from his closet, and proceeded to whip me with it, until I got the folding right. It took hours of crying, screaming, beatings, and bleeding welts before it was over. In between all this, she would go into the baby's room, and soothe her back to sleep, or play with her.

To this day, I think my mother is insane, and I worry for my children.

I was quite frequently the object of her rages. She would go off out of nowhere, it was quite unsettling living with her. She never showed this side of her to our new dad, so he never had an idea of how bad she really was.

After the fire and we were all settled into the new house, our new dad gave us the greatest gift he could give us, his name. He adopted the lot of us. We were his. Part of an old respected family, a large family. It was the best day of our lives. He never beat us, never hit us, never yelled at us. We respected him thoroughly, completely. We did everything in our power to please him, to prove to him that we deserved his love. It was all consuming for us.

He was 51 when he married my mother. He had never been married, no children of his own. He was a bachelor, playboy, number one pick in Las Vegas, and my mom tagged him. It was a sad day for quite a few debutantes in Las Vegas the day he tied the knot!

His wanderlust never left him even after he married mom. After a bit, he would take a trip for a few weeks, then come back as if he never left. We got used to this, and really, we never cared. We had money, food, clothes, all the necessities for life plus some. We just missed him when he was gone. For after he left, mom would go back to her psychotic self, blaming us for all her problems, and taking it out on us.

In the old days, when we were in Arizona, we were dirt poor, hardly any food, hand-me-down clothes, you get the idea. Mom would go shopping at the market for herself, then go to Catholic Charities to get us food. The difference was staggering. There was a shelf in the refrigerator that was reserved for mom. On it was; skim milk, 7-Up, Oreo cookies, M&M's, and a variety of sandwich meats. We were not allowed to touch anything on those shelves. She measured the 7-Up, counted the cookies and pieces of ham. Our shelves consisted of boxes of freeze dried milk, freeze dried potatoes, canned food (meat, fruit, vegetables) and bread.

We were starving, and our mother was snacking. We still refer to our old meals as "poor food" to this day. Her habits never changed, only now, we could have our own snacks, and we ate considerably better.

My mother's fixation on me being no good started to grow as I left the fifth grade. She seemed to think that I was mentally imbalanced and sent me to a clinic in San Francisco. Personally, I think she just wanted a vacation, and used me as an excuse. You see, when I was going through puberty, I experienced what a small percentage of girl's experience when their time comes. I would get black outs. My hormones were raging, and my

mind shut down to accommodate. It is quite common, and nothing to fear, but my mother over reacted, as she tended to do, and sent me to this clinic. They performed all kinds of tests on me, EEG's, EMG's, Cat Scans, allergy tests, you name it, and they did it. My mother, of course, exaggerated the symptoms, and confused all the doctors. It turns out that I am allergic to bees, mushrooms, Iodine, and have slight lactose intolerance. Hardly the cause to spend thousands of dollars to find out.

After the San Francisco incident, she held me back a year, saying that my mental instability had caused my grades to sink past the point of any hope. Thankfully, she moved me to another school so that my humiliation wouldn't be too overwhelming. It was bad enough as it was. Fortunately, she must have been going through a period of calmness for the next two years, for nothing much happened during that time. It was the year I started to baby sit for Frank Rosenthal that I could see that trouble was coming.

Mr. Rosenthal was a big name in Las Vegas. He was connected to organized crime, gambling, etc. His wife and my mother were friends, they lived at the end of our street, and I baby-sat their kids. I had a pretty good business going those days. There were a lot of kids in our neighborhood, and my mom needed to fit in, so she hired me out to watch their kids. I never got less than \$20 a night, so in kid terms, I was rich. It wasn't until I got older that I realized why I got the jobs I did. But that's another story.

I was thirteen, doing well for myself, grades were OK, and I had lots of money to spend. My dad took a trip to France (I think; we never knew where he was going), my mother was having an affair. The fact that she was having an affair was really no big thing; it was whom she was having the affair with that caused a lot of trouble. She wasn't being very discreet, neither was he, and she got pregnant. Dad came home to a pregnant wife, headlines in the paper, and a general mess.

He managed to clean it all up, but once a rumor gets started, it's near impossible to squash it down. People still talk about that affair; it was 21 years ago. Mom was so "traumatized" about the whole thing that after the baby was born she left. Moved to Washington, D.C. to be near my sister who was a Senate Page. She dropped the baby in my lap and left, I was fourteen.

During her absence, we hired a nanny/housecleaner, but the real job of caring for my baby sisters was mine. Everyone else had things to do, places to go, people to meet, that left friendless me to take up the yolk of motherhood. My oldest sister was in college; besides, she had already done her share of parenting, so I took on the job. I loved my sister as if she were my own, still do, always will. Dad, being who he is, still had the wanderlust, still took his trips. He would leave a checkbook with a bunch of signed checks in it, so that I could go shopping for us. I was pretty good at parenting, or so I thought. No one complained, we always had food in the house, I even managed to get some toys for the babies for their birthday. I lost two years of my life.

The year of my 16th birthday, my mother came back. She resented the fact that my baby sister called me mama, and that the other baby (now 8) hardly noticed my mother at all. My mother's solution to this problem was to move us to Coronado, California. She said I was a separation trial from my father, his being so difficult to live with and all.

She picked out an \$800,000 house, moved us in after remodeling it a bit (to spend more money), then went into local society as if she had been there all along. She had an affair with our neighbor, proceeded to irritate my father even more than before, and completely ignored the fact that she had three children living with her in the house.

On my 16th birthday, my dad came to California to take me out to dinner. That was when I discovered I was allergic to iodine. He ordered me steak and lobster (my first try at it), I took a huge butter dripping bite of lobster, proceeded to go into anaphylactic shock, and ended up in the hospital. Happy Birthday.

My mother milked it for all she could get out of it, then was anticlimactic when I didn't end up with brain damage. To give her some credit, she sure knew how to stage a drama. I always thought she should have been an actress.

A few months later, an event that would change me forever happened when my mother was gone. I was

walking home from the beach. It was a hot, breezy, perfect California summer day. As I passed a hidden park (recessed from the road), a hand grabbed my arm, and pulled me into the sheltered area. There were two men dressed in sailor garb, both drunk, and both filthy. They knocked me to the ground and raped me. I tried to fight back, but they beat me to a pulp. I ended up with broken ribs, nose and jaw. I crawled home, called 911 and spent the next two days in the hospital. My mother was gone the whole time. They finally reached her at the end of the second day, when she came to the hospital to pick me up.

I tried to get in touch with my dad, but he was gone too. After my mother got to the hospital, she raised such a stink, that it felt like I was living the nightmare all over again. The doctors kept trying to get her to shut-up around me, but she wouldn't listen. She milked this for months. They never caught the guys who raped me. She eventually tried to get me to admit that I made the whole thing up, that nothing ever really happened, except that I was a promiscuous slut and deserved what I got.

I had nightmares for two years after that; I still have them today. It's a miracle that I never ended up in a mental hospital, but I have one person to thank for that, and he died a long time ago. His name was Scotty Barr, he was a surfer who lived on Coronado, and he told me he loved me. I believed him. He showed me that sex wasn't a horrible thing, and helped me go beyond my fear of men. He saved my life. He was blind in one eye, a surfing accident, but he could grab a wave and ride it till there was nothing left of it. He was like a dancer in the water. He taught as much as he could about surfing, and I got pretty good at it.

It was a great year for me. I discovered that I meant something to someone, that I was worth something to myself. I had a talent that none of my other siblings had, it was my own, and I felt special for the first time in my life. Then my mother wanted to go home. After a year and a half in Coronado, we went back home to Las Vegas. That was when I began to really hate my mother.

When I came back, I had a different air about me. My old friends looked at me differently treated me with a little more respect. I made some friends, hung out at the lake, all the things a kid of 17 does. Had a few boyfriends, but always in the back of my mind was "how is mom gonna screw this up for me?" I met, and started to date a college kid named Kishan. He was Indian (from India) and gorgeous. I brought him home to meet the folks one-day, and mom was there alone. I introduced her to him, went upstairs to change, and then came back down. We were going to a concert, and I wanted to look good for him.

I rounded the corner into the kitchen, and heard my mother coming on to my boyfriend. She told him that she could do more for him in bed than I could, and that he should give it a try. He was repulsed. I never saw him again. I never brought another boyfriend over to the house again.

I married the first man who asked me out of school. I was 20. It was the biggest mistake of my life. He was a very strange man who thought that sharing his wife with his friend was something to consider. I divorced him after only 10 months of marriage. I immediately moved in with the first guy who wanted me, ended up marrying him. This lasted for 8 years and produced two children. I was a fool. He was a money grubbing, lazy Mexican, who thought I was put on this earth to work for him, take care of the children, and provide a home for him. He knew my family was rich, and exploited it as far as he could. I held three jobs, took care of the kids and the house, he played tennis.

During the first year of marriage, we were pretty happy. I was making a lot of money as a fire fighter, and he really didn't have to do much. He was a construction worker, built, handsome, and good to me in his way. I was going to school on the days I wasn't working. I got pregnant after a year, had the baby, and then went back to work. I loved being pregnant. I felt so good, so peaceful.

It was after the baby was born that he changed. Money meant everything to him. I had to get back to work as soon as possible and I even took an extra job. You see, being a fire fighter gives you options. You work two shifts a week, leaving the other days free for an extra job, relaxation, school, whatever you want to do. I worked. Between the department, the job at the hospital, and the kids, I had no time to breathe. To this day, I don't know how I did it.

The more I worked, the more he played. He tried to start up his own business as a contractor, but he never

advertised, never really tried to find work. He bounced checks left and right, and pretty nearly put us in the poor house. Actually, I felt as if I was right back in Arizona again, only this time, it was my kids who were suffering. I had to get away from him.

When I got pregnant with my second boy, I developed some problems. I was put on bed rest for the last trimester because of bleeding. I took a leave of absence from work, and tried to take care of my other boy. My husband was never home, and when he was he had a love affair with the television. When it came time to have the baby, I checked myself into the hospital, and my husband came later. After 10 hours, it looked like I was finally going to have a baby.

I started to push, but the doctor told me to stop. I could see into the mirror over my head, the progression of the birth. I could see the baby's head, just barely popping out. A pain hit me. It wasn't right. I pushed, and a flood of blood covered my doctor. The baby was born, but so was my uterus. Everything came out all at once. The pain was unbearable. The doctor took two clamps from the table next to him, and clamped off two of the biggest bleeders. I screamed, kicked him in the face, and nearly passed out. I looked at the nurse holding my baby, and asked her to bring him to me. I wanted to say goodbye. I knew I was going to die.

I am not only a fire fighter, but I am also a nurse. I knew what all that blood meant, and I knew that I didn't have that much time. I could feel my self getting weak, the pain was subsiding, and I could hardly see. I touched my new baby, said goodbye, then blacked out. Next thing I knew, I was in a hospital bed, with IV's running out of every vein, and a morphine pump by the bed. I was alive.

I pushed the button for the nurse, and she came in the room. It was rather quick for a nurse to respond. Usually they take forever or just call in on the intercom. I suspect they were waiting for me to wake up. The first thing I asked to see was my son. He was so beautiful, so small, he was perfect. Next, I asked where my husband was. Nobody knew. I called home and his sister answered. She was watching my other boy; my husband was nowhere to be found.

I went home after three days. My baby had to stay because of jaundice. At home, I was weak, hurting, and just glad to be alive. I cried over my older boy, hugged him until he fought to get away. Then I came down with a fever. Infection. I was terrified. I drove to the hospital (we lived a block away) and checked myself into the Emergency ward. My husband was at home with the babies. They treated me with IV therapy, gave me some phenergon, then sent me home. I went up to bed, and passed out. When I woke up, the new baby was on the bed next to me, sweating from my heat. When I asked my husband why he would put the baby in the bed with me when I was so ill, he said it was the only thing that would keep the baby quiet. I knew then that I could not trust him with the boys.

From then on, it was me struggling to survive, to make a home for my boys. I couldn't have cared less for my husband. He was nothing to me, not hatred, love, tolerance, nothing but indifference. He did nothing to help our situation, only to make it worse. When, during the course of my duty, I was shot, he never visited me in the hospital, claiming that he had to take care of the boys, and that the hospital I was in was too far away. I quit the department after that, and worked full time at the hospital.

I decided to get a divorce. I went home to Las Vegas, hoping that my family there would help me get through this difficult time. While I was gone, my husband raided the bank accounts. You see, ever since we were kids, after my dad adopted us, he gave us gold coins for every birthday and Christmas. Every birthday and Christmas of our children's he gave them \$1000 bonds. All this I kept in a safe deposit box. Saving it for a rainy day. My husband cleaned it out while I was gone, including the money in the joint accounts. He also hawked all of my jewelry just to spite me. I was broke, penniless.

I asked my family for help, and they were reluctant to give it. My father gave me enough to get an apartment, but that was it. I had to find a job and fast. I thank the Lord every day that I chose nursing for a profession. I found a job very quickly, and tried to make ends meet. It was hard then, because I had two children under school age and all my money went to day care. I spent more on day care than I did on rent.

My husband, hoping that I would change my mind, and using the children as an excuse, followed me to Las



Vegas to be “near” the kids. He made my life a living hell. He used the kids against me, telling them that I was a terrible person, that I didn’t want them, and that I was trying to keep them away from him. I have never, and will never say a bad thing about their father to their face. I feel it is not right to decry a parent to a child. I figured they would find out on their own. People tend to reveal themselves with little help from anyone else.

I went through a lot of different emotions during that time, but the one driving force was my children. I love them so much it hurts. I never want them to have to go through what I did as a child. I will do anything, be anything, in order for them to be spared that.

After my second divorce, I looked for a man who had children, a good job, and a good heart. All I found were my old classmates, spoiled, rich and forever looking for the 20-year-old perfect body to play with. I am nowhere near that image. I have dark hair, dark skin, freckles, green eyes, 5’10”, and sagging from two children. I am sterile because of birthing problems after my second child (emergency hysterectomy), so even if I could find someone, I couldn’t give him any other children. My life looked very bleak.

Then I met Robert. My love. I knew about him the minute I saw him. I thought, finally, my life would be good. We moved in together, got married, and tried to just exist. As with everything else in my life, nothing comes easy. During the time Robert and I were living together, he thought that by taking some money and gambling it, he could win enough to cover some old debts I had with my ex. As with all good intentions, this went to hell. He went through \$6,000, panicked, and told me that the credit cards were stolen. I made a report, talked to some big wigs here in town, and got the ball rolling rather quickly.

We found out that Robert had lied, that he spent the money, and he had made a false report. Needless to say, he got into a whole lot of trouble. I did what I could to get him out of it, but it still is costing us untold amounts of money to set it straight. I still love him, but it is hard to trust him. It makes me sad that we lost that part of our relationship.

Now, the final blow. I have just been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. I have the rest of my life to look forward to. Never knowing if the symptoms will hit, and if they do, how hard? I guess, like everything else in my life, I’ll just have to take it one day at a time, but now every day will be harder, although much more precious.

I guess, if there is anything to learn from my story, its not to take the good things in life for granted. There are just not that many of them. Cherish everything in your life, the good, the bad, and the mundane. Because, it’s life and that’s what’s important. Nothing comes easy, and anything worth having requires a little struggle to get it.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story. I hope you learned something from it, or were even mildly entertained by it. It is important to me, because it is my life story, I just hope it helped you in one small way or another.