

## **It's Never Too Late to Break The Silence; A Story of Hope and Restoration**

I recently lost my mother. She was ninety-two years old, although she only admitted to being thirty-nine. She was one of the most courageous women I have ever known. She was an immigrant, born in Mandal, Norway. She came to this country at age seventeen, to visit her aunt, a seamstress in New York City. While she was here, the Nazis invaded Norway and she was not able to return home. She got a job as a nanny and began to learn English. She met and married my father and had three daughters.

On her eighty-fifth birthday, my mother gathered her three daughters and shared with us that the reason that she had married my father was because he had raped her and she became pregnant with my sister. After eighty-five years, she broke the silence and finally named the violence that she had lived with for her entire marriage.

My father was an abusive man, to her and to us. Domestic violence was that dirty secret that she could not hide from us because we lived with it, although we rarely spoke of it. But the shame of the rape stayed hidden and buried all those years, even for twenty years after my father's death.

Why, at eighty-five? Why, on her birthday? Could it be because she had watched one of her daughters walk away from an abusive marriage, to find healing and restoration? Could it be that she finally decided that she deserved a birthday present for herself? She never told us why.

When my mother finally verbalized her terrible secret, you could visibly see the weight fall from her shoulders. Her tiny frame, sitting in her wheelchair, suddenly appeared much taller. Her face showed a resilience and an even stronger determination than we were used to seeing.

The final seven years of my mother's life were filled with happiness and joy, despite her many health issues and her paralysis of over thirty years. People would look at her and say, "You poor lady!" My mother would respond, "I am the luckiest woman in the world!" And, amazingly, she truly believed that!

Breaking the silence, for my mother, brought hope and restoration.

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