

Opening chapters
from

DOING TIME ON THE OUTSIDE

One Prison Family of 2.5 Million

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by Barbara Allan



Acknowledgments

This book was inside my head and heart for many years and might have stayed there forever if Erika Duncan had not invited me to a Herstory “Writing for Justice” workshop. She asked where I would want a stranger/reader to meet me, and I wrote the first few pages of this book.

Suzanne Jones read, edited, reread, typed and retyped my words, always encouraging me. Without Sue’s support, there would be no book.

Thank you Tina and Brenda for putting up with a mother who had an alternate (prison) family and might not always have been there for you.

Thanks to my mother and father, who kept us all sane and safe.

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Thank you, Shirley C. Anytime I needed to be anywhere, you were always willing to accompany me, drive me, and offer me a hand.

ONE Not Me (1968)

I took out the double stroller and put Tina in the back and Brenda in the front. It was forty minutes after leaving the Nassau County Jail, forty-five minutes after my visit with their father, my husband, Gene.

I hoped the guard would allow him to look out onto Carman Avenue and get a glimpse of his girls. This was our once-a-week ritual since Gene had been arrested a year earlier. We knew that he would soon be transferred to an upstate prison, where our routine would have to change.

How strange what eventually seems familiar. Going to the county jail twice a week was now pro forma. I knew the route; it was twenty minutes from the home we had shared and where the girls and I still lived.

I knew the guards, and they knew and trusted me. They might have even liked me. I had gotten used to seeing Gene behind a Plexiglas window and speaking through a phone, discussing intimate details with someone to my left, someone to my right, and the knowledge that someone else might be listening to those calls. It wasn't okay, but it was accepted.

Tina and Brenda had not had any contact with their father for more than year, not since a week before he was charged with murder.

No one under the age of sixteen could visit at the Nassau County Jail. The girls were two-and-a-half and three-and-a-half. They could not speak to him or hear his voice; phone calls home were not permitted. They could not read his letters. The words were squiggly designs on a legal pad that meant nothing to them. It was up to me to keep him alive in their minds. But did I want to? Should I?

As we left the jail to head home, I felt exhausted. On that day it was just my girls and me. Marjorie was usually with me. Dear Marjorie, a coworker, was barely an acquaintance. After hearing about the terrible event, she packed a suitcase and told me that she would be staying with me for a while.

“You will need help with the girls and here I am,” she said.

And there she was indeed. I leaned on her both physically and emotionally. Sometimes my knees shook, and I didn't think I could make it from the parking lot to the street.

These outings with Marjorie occurred after my visits with Gene, visits that were draining, frustrating, and just plain sad. There was a routine. I would walk into the processing room, where Walter greeted the visitors. Of all the guards and correction officers I would run into over the years, Walter was the least intimidating and the kindest. How grateful I am that my first experience at a jail had Walter as the visiting room “receptionist.” I was so frightened the first time I walked into that room that I went through the initial processing like a robot. As I recall, Walter looked at my driver's license, told me to leave my belongings, including all jewelry, in an assigned locker. I think they allowed me to wear my wedding band. I don't remember if they

wanted me or if they had a metal detector, as they do now. Much of those days are still a blur. I am more aware of the feelings than I am of the actual events.

I do remember that one of the officers called up to the tier and told them that the inmate, Herman Gene Allan, had a visitor, and then I was finally allowed to go through the first set of gates. When those gates clanged shut behind me, I jumped and felt my heart beating so hard I thought it was going to explode. My body was shaking, and I could barely catch my breath. After the first gates closed I was left—for what must have been seconds, though it seemed much longer—trapped inside a cage. Finally, they opened the second set of gates, and I could see into a large room with stools facing a wall, Plexiglas, and a telephone receiver. I sat on the assigned small stool, waiting for Gene to come in through the inmates' door. After waiting what seemed an eternity, Gene appeared. He was strip-searched before and after each time we met, the humiliating price he would pay to be allowed a visit.

He took his seat on the opposite side of the Plexiglas. We each picked up a phone receiver and tried to have a natural conversation, aware that every word we said was possibly being listened to or recorded. The scattered bits of conversations from others were background noises as we tried to speak. I had so many questions. There was so much that I did not understand. Also, there were practical concerns. I was left with a house we had purchased only six months before. There were unpaid and unanticipated bills, insurance papers to deal with, leaks and creaks in the house. I was overwhelmed. I didn't believe that I could survive all this on my own.

TWO

Why Me? (1968)

Immediately after his arrest, Gene was brought to the Nassau County Medical Center jail ward, known at that time as Meadowbrook Hospital. It all felt surreal. Carol Weinstein, a friend from elementary school, had recently graduated from law school. She, my mother, and I braved the reporters parked outside the hospital and tried to get in to see him. My mother threw her coat over my head so that the photographers would not get a head shot, and we ran the gauntlet, raw emotion permeating. The press was relentless. The news coverage was all over the place, with so many inaccuracies. One headline said that Gene had killed his father, a colonel in the National Guard. This added to the indignity. *My* father was the colonel. Gene's father had never seen service, unless you include community service that had been imposed by the courts.

All day long people called to express sympathy for the death of *my* father.

My father was a well-respected member of the Hempstead community. He had a small TV-repair business in town; he was active in veteran affairs and town politics. Archie Pugatz had an impeccable reputation as a gregarious person. Both he and my mother were active in the local synagogue. My mother played Mah Jong every Friday night. They were known and liked by everyone who knew them. Nothing in their lives had prepared them for this.

We made it into the hospital and were escorted into a room, where I saw a shackled stranger with two black eyes, head bandaged, lying in a hospital bed, unable to raise his head to look at me. His guards would not allow me to remain for more than a few minutes. For that I felt a rush of gratitude. I ran out of there blinded by tears, only wanting to go home to my children to get away from the nightmare.

The hospital stay was a short one, and I never went back.

And so, on to the jail.

I went alone that first time.

I remember the cigarette machine in the lobby. I could purchase packs of cigarettes for Gene, only if I had the exact change. (Years later, Prison Families Anonymous was invited to be in that area of the visiting room. They let us in, as an agency, to comfort and help visitors navigate the system. We kept a cigar box filled with change for the cigarette machine.)

At the time, we were allowed to bring a package of food. Fruit was seldom served to the inmates, so I would stop on the way to the visit and pick up some fresh fruit for him. That practice was continued until someone supposedly injected alcohol, or some such contraband, into a plum. At that point, probably forty years ago, no outside food items **were** allowed, though money was acceptable so that our inmates could buy items in the commissary.

That first time, I wanted to scream an unending shriek. I wanted to cry hysterically and run from there. I did not want to be there! I could not possibly be in a jail visiting room.

Instead, I quietly asked him, “How was your day?”

I was fighting back tears. I gave in to a flood of questions and news bits.

“What did they give you for breakfast? Was it edible?”

“Dr. Triola, (my principal) called a last minute faculty meeting.”

“Brenda has a cough.”

And yes, “Why did you do it, Gene? How could you do this to us? Oh, and by the way, I need to pay Mr. Schatz (our lawyer) before our next court date.”

“I love you. Help me! Please help me.” I mustn’t cry because if I did, I might never stop.

We were two scared people, clinging to a boat, looking for life preservers.

Of course I held on. How could I not? The hysteria settled down to a familiar emotion.

As soon as the shock wore off and reality hit, my father called a colleague of his. Both men were active in the National Guard and knew each other socially and through their service. George Schatz was the only practicing attorney any of us knew. His specialty was real-estate transactions.

George might never have handled a criminal case, but he cared about me. He was aware of the domestic violence and was concerned about the safety of my family. He called upon a friend and colleague who did have experience in practicing criminal law. The two attorneys agreed to defend Gene.

Our lawyers were our life preservers. They were the most important people in the universe because their ability, or lack thereof, would determine our future. When George asked for a retainer, without a second thought, I endorsed my paycheck over to him. I would just have to manage to get by until the next payday.

I paid Gene’s legal fees in dribs and drabs, going into the few resources I had, with the help of my parents, who stood by me no matter what the consequences. I knew that we would always have food on the table, but it was scary. Not only was I in debt to the attorneys, I had lost Gene’s income. Me, who always paid my bills the day they were due.

THREE

The New Normal (1967)

The seasons changed. I bundled the children up for their walks or dressed them in tee shirts. He could barely see them anyway. From his vantage point in the jail, he saw some movement down below, but he could not discern their little faces. The walks became less frequent. We had birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, a wedding anniversary. Life moved on. But our time was measured by court dates, visiting days, and the never ending fear of not knowing how this would end. I lived one day at a time without being aware that was how I was surviving.

I still had no answers. I knew the facts, but there were too many missing pieces.

The attorneys were trying to work out a viable defense for Gene. He had been charged with first-degree murder. The attorneys initially considered an insanity defense. The insanity defense was tough to prove; the trial would be expensive and lead to even more publicity. If found guilty, Gene would be sent to Mattawan, an upstate facility for the criminally insane. Not a particularly desirable option. Also, there would be no end date. It was a gamble.

We did not ask for bail. Our concern was that if he were released on bail, he might continue to be a threat—this time to us.

The only psychiatrists he saw in the county jail were court-appointed, intended to judge his mental state, or defense-appointed, intended to rebut any diagnosis that might prove harmful to our case. No one ever offered him therapy or counseling or even asked him how he felt about what he did. And so he sat in a jail cell, reading novels, obsessing about his fate, not dealing with the demons or the reality of what he had done. He just never spoke of it.

I was living in the shadow of those demons. I frantically called our psychiatrist and begged him to assure me that my daughters would not suffer the same affliction as their father and grandfather. There were no guarantees. I cried myself to sleep night after night, but I had no idea for whom I was crying.

Tina and Brenda were aware that something was wrong. Where had their daddy disappeared? Did they do something to chase him away? I tried to allay their fears and answer their questions honestly. "Daddy did something wrong. He needs to be punished for what he did. When you do something you should not do, you know that Mommy or Grandma might give you a time out. It does not mean that we do not love you. Daddy is so sorry that he cannot be here with you for now. Grown-up time-outs just last a little longer."

We would lie on the bed, Tina holding tightly to Rory, her stuffed lion. She would look up at me with those big questioning brown eyes, making my heart melt. Tina was the thoughtful

one, retreating to her “thinking tree” if she needed space. She was always the big sister and the protector.

Brenda, holding her pacifier in her mouth with strong determination, was seeking security in the only way she knew. She sensed that everything was *not* all right, and if she needed to hold onto something, so be it. Gene was always upset that Brenda still needed a pacifier, but now he had no vote.

Brenda was the strong-willed child, the girl who as a toddler climbed to the top of the monkey bars and looked down at her sister and me with defiance, her demeanor saying, “See, I can do anything. I am not afraid.”

Tina would grab my arm and say, “Mommy, I’m afraid. Make her come down. She’s going to fall.”

Brenda did not fall, and Tina never did stop worrying about her sister.

How I wished that I had the appropriate words or the magic pill to make this all go away for us. I would have been grateful to just have the energy to hug them a little longer. I told them it was okay to cry if they really felt sad, and I let them see me cry—but only for a little while. Eventually we would all fall asleep.

This did not happen all in one night but gradually as situations dictated and questions were asked.

We were not going to fall into an abyss of sorrow.

And so the year went by, with all the ups and downs of a Coney Island roller coaster.

I was sleeping on the couch every night, when I could finally fall asleep with the help of Prozac.

FOUR

Not Me, Gene (1966)

On the night of the murder Gene had called me at my parents' house.

"Barbara, I did it. I did it. I shot my father. He's dead, Barbara." And then he broke down, and his words became inaudible.

"Where are you? Tell me where you are."

"I'm home. I'm home. I'm in the kitchen. He's dead on the floor. Barbara, I shot him."

I visualized my kitchen. I saw the phone on the wall. I knew how the cord would dangle as he paced while speaking to me. I pictured blood on my linoleum, the brown corner bench, the color-coordinated refrigerator, avocado—very sixties but now saturated with the clashing color, the bright red of blood. I quickly shook my head, forcing myself back to reality. Unbelieving, I returned to the surreal conversation.

I said that I did not believe him. He was certainly not above lying to manipulate me into returning to him. "Listen," he said as he placed the phone to the mouth of his dying father. I heard the gurgling sound of death.

Gene and his father, Herman, had gone out bar cruising. In some gin mill in town, Gene got into a fight with another drunk. The reason doesn't matter. A word or a gesture, ill perceived, could unleash the beast. It was not the first time his aggression had been let loose on someone besides me. But this opponent had a knife, and he used it to slash Gene between his thumb and forefinger, causing a fountain of blood to spurt out and Gene to be distracted. In that moment of distraction, he gave his opponent the opportunity to smash him in the face, causing him to fall and hit his head, knocking him out. We later found out that this caused a concussion.

When he came to, still not subdued, he looked for his father and couldn't find him. He staggered out into the street, still blind with rage and bleeding from various cuts. He saw that Herman had retreated and was outside the bar, casually leaning against the car. Once again his father did not have his back. The rage intensified. The assailant who conquered him was no longer his focus. Instead he centered his fury on the father who had sadistically mistreated him throughout his childhood and once again disappointed him.

The pain he was feeling now was indistinguishable from the old pains, the pain of having his hands held over a lit stove as punishment for a childhood transgression. The humiliation of being beaten in a barroom brawl was equated with the humiliation he felt at being made to wear a dress to his first-grade class, because he had displeased his father.

Head throbbing, bleeding profusely, but with an adrenaline surge, Gene got into the car and, by the grace of the powers-that-be, they were able to maneuver the short distance home.

As they walked into the empty house, Herman suggested that Gene go to the hospital. But, first things first! They found their way to the liquor in the kitchen cabinet, and continued arguing about Herman deserting Gene. Words got louder and gestures became more threatening. Gene blamed his father for interfering in his marriage and accused him of being the catalyst that caused me to leave him.

A glass shattered on the kitchen floor. Herman bent to pick up the pieces. For some reason this seemed ludicrous to Gene. The broken glass, the bleeding, the pounding in his head, the desertion were all coming together into a crescendo.

Gene was blacking out, reality flashing on and off, sometimes like a blinking neon light and other times as if someone was playing with a light switch.

He left the kitchen, walked through the dining room, turned into the living room, and made one more turn into the den. He opened the closet door, retrieved a rifle, followed the same path back to the kitchen, leaving the den, going into the living room, turning into the dining room and returning to the kitchen where his father was picking up slivers of glass, between sips of whiskey. He pointed the rifle at his father, who looked stunned when he realized what Gene had in his hand. Herman's final words were "Not me, Gene."

Gene pulled the trigger and watched the man who had molded him fall to the floor and die amidst the remaining broken glass.

As he revealed this on the phone, my knees buckled. I think I might have blacked out for a second. I could barely breathe. Instinctively, I screamed for my own father, who was lying peacefully in bed next to my mother,

If I knew nothing else, I knew that our world would never be the same again.

I must have muttered something to Gene about calling the police because he told me they were on the way. And then I heard the faint sound of sirens seeping through the phone receiver. I sat paralyzed until my father called my name.

Immediately after the murder the police came to my parents' home to interview us. It was probably four or five in the morning by then. They respectfully questioned me. I was still in shock; the adrenaline was surging through me, and I felt that I had nothing to hide. The officers seemed friendly and sympathetic; I answered honestly and was very forthright. It never entered my mind that I should stop babbling and ask for a lawyer.

I called Terry, our babysitter, and asked her to take the children home with her.

FIVE

It's the Guns (1966)

Terry knew about the insanity in the Allan household. She had experienced the wrath of Gene three days before the murder. Terry, as usual, had arrived to care for the children so that I could leave for work. In his still drunken stupor, hungover from the night before, Gene had decided that I should not go to work and that was supposed to be that. I ignored his command. He insisted that Terry leave. She refused. She had a responsibility toward the children, and it was apparent to her that something was wrong.

Something was indeed wrong. I felt as though I had just awakened from a nightmare. I was still stunned from the goings on of the night before. I was not as lucid as I should have been; I was still not thinking rationally. I had not slept all night and was in a state of disbelief. The only thing I knew for sure was that my children needed a safe haven and that I had to go to work. There were thirty second-graders waiting for me, and it was too late to call for a substitute. I wanted to go on with my day. I needed to feel normal.

Feeling normal would be a stretch, after what happened the night before.

Gene and Herman were in the den, peacefully playing cards. After tucking my babies in for the night, I decided to go to a nearby supermarket and do the week's grocery shopping, secure that the two men would listen for the girls. Little Miss Pollyanna did not factor in that there was beer and booze in the house.

When I returned home, I needed help to unload the groceries. That was Gene's job. He would usually be listening for the car and come right out to help me. Carrying the lighter packages, I opened the front door to call for Gene. I heard a screaming baby. Leaving my groceries on the kitchen counter, I started up the stairs to Brenda's bedroom. Gene called after me to stop.

"Leave her alone! You spoil her rotten! For God's sake, woman, let her cry."

Uh oh! My knees buckled. I recognized the slurring voice. My heart beat faster, and I went into panic mode. I had been gone for maybe two hours, and Dr. Jekyll had turned into Mr. Hyde.

He followed me up the stairs, commanding me to let my baby cry. Of course, I would not stop, and he could not allow me to disobey his drunken commands. He would lose face in front of his equally intoxicated father. The yelling got louder, the crying continued, and I tried to soothe my baby by holding her against my loudly thumping heart. With all the commotion Tina woke up, and both girls were now crying in unison.

I had defied Gene, and he got angrier and angrier. He lost his self-control and was blind with rage. When I refused to back down, he returned to the den where Herman waited. In retrospect, I realize that he needed to go back to the bottle that was waiting down there.

I still needed to put the groceries away, make sure that both girls had calmed down, and get my clothes and briefcase ready for school. I proceeded out of habit, not feeling, not thinking, and stuffing all that had transpired down into my soul. I had a sense that my responses were irrational, but everything was out of focus.

Sometime amidst all the ranting and raving, Gene must have gone out to the car for the groceries, because I found them sitting on the counter next to the ones I had brought in. That is the craziness I lived with. Everything quieted down. I put the groceries in the proper places, stopped shaking, and went to our bedroom.

Craving rest and knowing that the next day I needed to be refreshed and able to deal with my second-graders, I lay down in bed, closed my eyes, and appreciated the silence. Had they both, perhaps—please, God—passed out downstairs?

But no, the respite did not last long. I smelled him before I heard or saw him. The door opened and the odor of whiskey and tobacco nauseated me. He lay down, touching me, trying to arouse me. This was not the man I had deeply loved, the man whose caresses had, at one time, caused my whole body to respond with fierce desire. This was a drunken bully who did not belong in my bed.

I pushed him away. This infuriated him. The last straw! He staggered to the door, locked it, and went to his dresser. He opened a drawer and took out a gun. I was shocked. I had no idea that he had hidden a gun in the house we shared with two toddlers. He aimed it at me, but when it went off, the barrel was facing downwards, and it exploded into the floorboards. I screamed for Herman to help me. He did not respond, but the sound of the gunshot must have cleared Gene's head. He came out of his drunken haze a little and passed out on our bed, allowing me the opportunity to escape into the children's room. I held them tightly, praying for morning and waiting until I felt it was safe to go into our room again. If he did wake up, I did not want him looking for me in their room. I heard movement from Herman and knew that the bullet did not hit him.

I did not gather the girls and run out of the house. I was paralyzed with fear. I did not call the police. I knew that I needed to call someone, to reach out for help. I was so immobilized that I did nothing. I have no excuse—except that I thought if I left, or if he woke while I was dialing the phone, he just might shoot me. As long as he was in that drunken passed-out sleep, I was a little less afraid. The night passed without another sound from him, and morning finally came.

I prepared for work as though nothing was amiss.

SIX

Family Court (1966)

But by golly, Gene, always the pragmatic one, did do something.

That was the morning Gene called the police to evict Terry. He did not want her to take the children. He did not want me to go to work.

Terry refused to leave me alone with him; she was there when the Hempstead police responded to Gene's call.

Gene's demeanor flipped 360 degrees. It was, "Yes, Officer. Of course, Officer. I am sure that you understand how emotional women get. My wife is always so dramatic. We were just having a little disagreement. Terry was butting in. Since she does not live here, I don't want her in my house."

Gene's eyes were red, and he was still slurring and smelled of alcohol. I am sure that I looked terrified. I was on the brink of hysteria

With everything going on around me, my biggest concern at that moment was who would take care of my second-grade class. I had not called in for a substitute

I don't care what the common theory is but, in my experience, insanity is a contagious disease. And I caught it from my husband!

The officers rightly appraised the situation.

One officer escorted Gene out of the room while another stayed with me. He suggested that Terry leave with the children and that I go right to Family Court to obtain an order of protection.

This was 1966. Oprah and Dr. Phil must have still been in elementary school. It was years before OJ Simpson went on trial for the murder of Nicole Simpson. No one talked about domestic violence. It was kept locked away behind closed doors, just like the funny uncle who talked to himself and was locked in the attic.

The mentality back then was that if anyone in the neighborhood was beaten by her spouse, she probably had it coming anyway. Call the cops and they would usually take the abuser for a walk around the block and tell him to go easy on the little woman. Meanwhile, the victim was urged to forgive and forget. It was, after all, just a marital spat.

It must have looked really serious to our first responders for them to suggest taking a more drastic step. The police waited while I phoned my parents, who came right over. They did not leave until the children left with Terry and I was safely out of the house.

My mother, father, and I went into to the menacing-looking courthouse. We were clinging to each other, each of us with shaking knees.

Near the entrance, there was an intake desk where I spoke to a clerk. It was difficult to hold my hand steady enough to fill out the required forms. Then we had to sit in a waiting area

until we were called into an office to be interviewed by an intake officer. I had no idea who these people were, what their authority was, if they were peace officers or social workers. I just did as I was told.

After listening to my rambling story of what happened the night before, I was told that a subpoena was going to be issued for Gene to appear in Family Court and that I would be given an emergency order of protection. I chuckled. I will now have a piece of paper to protect me. I supposed it was better than nothing. It did give me a sense of control, if not a feeling of security, but it was not a shield or a bulletproof vest.

A subpoena to get Gene into court wasn't necessary. Before I had a chance to complete all the paperwork, there he was, disheveled and manic, looking for his wife. First yelling and cursing and then crying, "Where is Barbara? Please. I love her. Please let me talk to my wife. I love you, Barbara. Come home with me. I am sorry if I did anything to scare you. Just come home." And then he started sobbing and begging some more. You know there was the part of me that wanted to put my arms around him and console him. Of course, I instantly shook that feeling.

As security tried to calm him down, it was very strongly suggested that I take my children and leave our home. I objected, saying that if I left, he could say that I deserted him, and he would be allowed to retain possession of our home. Such were the laws back then.

"Do not go back, and do not worry about your house. That is the least of your worries," I was told emphatically. "Take your children and find a safe place to go. A house is replaceable. Your children's mother is not."

Go someplace safe? And where would that be? Domestic violence shelters were nonexistent back then. There was no social worker to advise me, no one to suggest an alternative living space, and no one to mention Al-Anon. Just go and God bless.

They did hold Gene in a conference room, allowing us a safe exit. We scooted out of there as quickly as we could, not sure how much time we had,

We made it back to my house, quickly packed a few necessities, and went home with my parents. They lived four blocks from 10 Foster Place in Hempstead, the address of our dream house. This was certainly the first place that Gene would look for me, but he was warned to keep away from me, and now I had a piece of paper to protect us. I sure hoped that paper was bulletproof. The thought was not very reassuring.

SEVEN

My Day in Court (1966)

And that is how, two days later, I was able to receive the phone call in the middle of the night telling me that a murder had been committed in my kitchen and how it came to pass that there were three police officers sitting in my parents' living room in the middle of the night.

I had seen signs of a deteriorating mind throughout our marriage. I called Gene my Jekyll and Hyde. At that time I was not privy to all the chaos in Gene's childhood. I knew that my father-in-law had a checkered past, and I knew that their relationship was rocky, but I had no frame of reference to understand the dynamics of a lifetime of dysfunction and abuse.

So there they were. Three police officers waiting for what I would say. Gene had confessed, and I knew there was nothing to hide. I spoke candidly to the responding officers, and answered all their questions as honestly as I could; I just kept right on talking. I told about the domestic violence, about the drinking, and about the relationship Gene had with his father. I didn't know when to shut up.

I admitted that the first thing I did after "the call" was to wake up my parents. As they were trying to calm me down and find out what had happened, I told them that Gene had killed his father. I hysterically repeated the conversation I just had with Gene.

Because I admitted that I had told a third party what was said, I would not be granted the right to invoke the law of privileged communication. If you ever watched any of the old James Cagney law-and-order movies, you heard the offender say to his girlfriend and confidante, "Let's get married." It was not a loving proposal but a then-you-can't- testify- against-me tactic.

My and my big mouth. During the pre-trial proceedings I was subjected to more than two hours on the witness stand—just to determine if I would be required to appear as a witness against my husband. I had to go back and revisit the "night in question." Yes, I broke the bond of privilege by confiding in a third party. However this was an utterance proclaimed while I was in a state of shock.

"What did you say to them?"

"I honestly don't remember. Nothing seemed real. It was like a dream and I was not sure what was happening."

"What did they say to you?"

"They were asking what was wrong and if I was okay. Their concern was for me, and they were trying to calm me down."

I am not sure why, but the judge ruled in my favor. I was spared the agony of having to testify for the prosecution.

Meanwhile, Gene continued to be held without bail.

Sometime after the murder, my mother and Terry went to my house to arrange for the cleanup of the blood and whatever other remnants remained of that night. I was spared the actual sight, but I still see it vividly in my imagination.

From back cover

This is a roadmap of love into violence...it's both a cautionary tale that magnifies the roots of family violence as well as a supportive document for those who've experienced their own version. It's proof positive that domestic violence knows no socio-economic boundaries as we read about how the life of a middle class school teacher descended from being the wife of a computer expert to finally taking her place as the leading national advocate for families serving their time on the 'outside' of prison. It's the triumph of an ordinary woman who continues to impact others on her journey from stigma to survivor. It's a must read!!!

Barbara Hanson Treen, Commissioner, NYS Board of Parole, and author of *Geranium Justice: The Other Side of The Table*