

“A Rough Childhood”

Why didn't she protect me? Why didn't she tell me about dirty old men and cunning predatory little boys who played tricks on you? We had been in Florida three years. I don't know how easy I was to potty train or wean from the breast and bottle. No one ever discussed that. In 1950 I was one years old. Senator Joseph McCarthy was gaining power by investigating almost everyone he could think of as communists. Many lives were ruined. That year there was a failed assassination attempt on President Harry S. Truman. In 1951 President Truman fired General Douglas McArthur for making comments about using nuclear weapons against China. 1952 the Immigration and Nationality Act was passed and in 1954 Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected President and Richard Nixon, Vice. My earliest childhood memories started about 1953 when I was four years old. It was the beginning of the sexual abuse that would repeat itself throughout my young adult life until I vowed NO MORE! Prior to the recent “Me Too” movement, I always thought I was the only person this had happened too. Why was I always the target? How did I get involved in so

many compromising situations? I had to do better.

It was during the summer. The little boy James Edward from next door had pinned me against the back of the house and was attempting to have sex. He couldn't have been any more than five years old himself. I was a child and had no idea of what was going on. All I know is he had my dress up and panties down and was doing things to me. His Uncle caught us. My Mother gave his Mother, permission to spank me along with him. I was hurt physically and mentally. What had just happened! My four year old mind was racing trying to figure it out. Then there was the time I went across the street to play with the preacher's daughter. I also knew her Mom baked a cake every Sunday and I was assured to get a piece Monday morning. When I entered the house and asked for the girl, her brother who was much older than me, said she was in the room. When I walked into the room, he tripped me, pushed me to the floor, tore into my underwear and penetrated my private. I had never felt so much pain!!! He terrorized me! His voice changed as he talked through clenched teeth telling me to shut up. In a few seconds, his sister appeared in the doorway, and they started arguing. She said she was

gonna tell her Mama, and he was yelling back he didn't do anything to me. She comforted me as best she could. I remember the sweet smell of her body powder. I was inconsolable. I could hardly catch my breath as I limped across the street home cupping my private. My Mom heard me crying as I approached. She repeatedly screamed, grabbing me by my shoulders asking " what's wrong with you girl?" Finally, through the sobs I blurted out the boy across the street had bothered me. That was all I knew to say. No one had ever talked to me about sex. I didn't know the correct terminology. I did know that what he did to me was wrong! Instead of trying to sooth my wounded spirit or offer a few words of consolation, my Mother said, "you ain't had no business over there!" Another low blow.....first a sexual assault and then no support, no explanation of what and why it happened.... No kind words... I was being blamed..... I was just a child.... It happened one more time, his sister came to my rescue once again too late. This time I decided to keep it to myself, no sense sharing to be victimized again..... Then there is the time my cousin happened to catch me at home alone and ask for a glass of water. He attacked me in the kitchen picking me up around my legs throwing me over his shoulder. He was a little guy,

someone you would never think had the strength to pick up hefty me.... He carried me to the bedroom where we wrestled and fought. He won..... I lost....end of story! I beat myself up over this because I should have known better! I hated him for doing this to me! Then many years later, his Dad confessed that when I was little girl he used to “ feel all over me!” The nerve of that bastard! I was speechless... It took a few minutes for me digest what he said. Who left me alone with this MONSTER! Who gave them the right to my body? As a child I sucked my thumb and picked my hair loose. I now realize that these were signs of childhood sexual abuse. My Mom said I was nervous.

When you talk about good sense, it's a wonder I ended up with any sense at all, after what I went through. Then there was the time a male friend of my Mom tried propositioning me with a pickled pigfeet for sex. . When I told her, he denied it and she believed him. I was done! Through with seeking support I would never get. I immediately took control of my own life for whatever it was to be. My fate was in my hands.

Then there were the beatings! It seems like someone was always BEATING me! No one tried to

reason or get an explanation. No one gave me a second chance or tried to understand me. I got whipped because they said I was the oldest and should have known better. I got whipped by my Aunt Effie when I accidentally hit my sister in the head with a garden hoe. It wasn't serious. I swung the hoe over my head, and she was standing behind me. I remember it like yesterday. We had no toys or anything to idle the time away and was usually told to go outside and play. This particular morning, we had just stepped outside. I picked up the first interesting item I saw which was the hoe. First of all, whoever had it last should have put it away after use. I was going to dig a hole, but it never happened. I remember getting whipped by both my Dad and Mom. Not spanked or even getting the switch, I mean beat with a leather belt very badly until welts appeared. When I would see my Dad reach in front to unbuckle his belt, he would pull it straight through all of the belt loops with a quickness that whistled. You knew what was coming next. This confused me and I questioned whether these people were my real biological parents. It was my belief that parents were supposed to be loving, caring and nurturing. Genuinely interested in the general welfare of the child. I felt like I was more of a burden. I NEVER heard

either of them say I LOVE YOU, good job or you matter..... Both of my parents together had zero parenting skills. I got whipped by the Principal when I was in sixth grade. Getting on the school bus one afternoon, Lionel Armstrong decided to grab a handful of my breast. I turned around and hit him as hard as I could! Pauline Mayshack, the bus driver turned our names in for fighting. The principal wasn't hearing any explanation and gave me three hard hits with a board. I was devastated!!! I cried so hard and was visibly upset. As far as I was concerned she beat me for nothing .I was trying to protect myself. I sat all day totally out of it. Couldn't concentrate, sniffing, an emotional wreck. As soon as I got home and told my Mom, we jumped into the car and headed back to Rainbow Park Elementary. This was one time my Mom spoke up. She told the Principal that she was raising her children by herself as she was a widow and was doing the best she could. She told her not to beat me again and that if she had a problem with me to tell her .I was so proud of her that day. Later in my adult life I shared this with my Mom (who lived to be 86 now deceased 2017) and told her they never should have even had children. She said they took what the lord gave them.

My Dad died about eight years after coming to Florida. He was killed on his job when a crane he was greasing ignited. I've heard several versions about his death. Someone said a coworker decided to take a smoke and set everything on fire. Another story is Florida Power and Light failed to turn off the electricity on the pole and the boom hit the line. This was 1959, I was nine years old and in the fourth grade. My Mom received a sizable settlement that put her in a new financial bracket and status. She started smoking Salem cigarettes and enrolled in Benny O'Berry's Magic City Driving school. In no time she was driving a brand new Bel Aire Chevrolet and was a totally different person. She was always a pretty, good beautician and always kept our hair groomed. She could hard press with the straightening comb or curling iron. She was a bit heavy on the hair grease, which gave the hair a nice sheen. Coming from Georgia and now in Florida a young widower, she started seeking a profession. She was interviewed at Sunlight School of Beauty to become a licensed cosmetologist. For whatever reason she never pursued it. It could have been the lack of a decent education that was needed to read the books and take the tests to pass the state board exam ,or simply the lack of ambition

when was easier to remain at the status quo. She found work to support us through those years and the social security benefits put me through college. Throughout the years she worked on Sogrens Farms harvesting scallions and other vegetables, did days work in wealthy white people's homes and finally as a maid on Miami Beach. The Castaways, The Arlen House, and The Newport were the main hotels where she worked. She provided transportation for other family members and friends to get back and forth to their jobs.

I wanted a bit more out of life and a better future. I excelled in elementary and high school having good study habits and work ethics. We were bussed to school and therefore could not participate in extra curricular activities due to transportation problems. So, my sister Betty and I would entertain each other. We would play "Name That Tune" and developed our great singing voices. My Dad, prior to his passing would also teach us harmony. As a result of this gift, we formed a singing group as teenagers. The Gospel Swantones, consisting of Flora Hill-Jones, Margaret Miller-Gordon, Betty Morrison-King and myself. As we matured into responsible women, our paths went in separate directions. The group faded away. Then after forty three

years, we got together for a fund raising event at Holy Temple Missionary Baptist Church. This successful program resulted in a CD being cut from the performance. Also born out of this resurgence was the recreation of The Morrison Sisters.(we originally sung together as middle school students at North Dade High School). I had been singing at Lyric Live in Historic Overtown and convinced Betty to join me. The combined results of these two determined, dynamic seniors was amazing! The harmony, pitch and stage presence were on point. Not to mention the beautiful gowns we wore and the gorgeous rhinestone jewelry. We were always very well received by the audience. Then I got the idea of writing and producing my own show. The vision had been with me for years. I carefully and meticulously planned the project. I knew I needed seed money, a band, and a narrator. I solicited my friends and family for start up money and received \$1500. My cousin Vernon Hargray introduced me to The Nu Black Band who was quite reasonable, and I hired Tony Thompson as the narrator. Other family members also helped. BINGO!!!! This proved to be the perfect combination and blend for a very successful show.... The storyline was cute and enjoyable. It was delivered in way

that only Tony Thompson could deliver. The Hampton House and spotlight was rented, and snacks purchased for the guests. Drinks and admission were reasonably priced to make sure everyone had a good time. We always made it a point to meet the audience after the show for photos and conversation. They always made us feel good and confirmed that we are on the right track. In the midst of the pandemic, we are working on the only scheduled performance for 2020. A Christmas Show! We miss the stage and performing for our many fans and friends and look forward to seeing you all in the very near future. Be blessed and be safe.