



CAROL-ANN HAMILTON

VICTORIOUS WOMAN ESSAY CONTEST

2010 THIRD PRIZE WINNER

It's a blistering blue-sky summer day in 1964. I'm sitting at the threshold of my parents' pristine suburban home where a gorgeous stone pathway leads visitors to a row of manicured red geraniums. All seems in perfect order. Except...it's not.

I'm accompanied by my only friend in the world. Meet my cat, Muschi. My treasured Persian savior who faithfully supported me through thick and thin across the despondent childhood bitterness. More a lifeline than feline.

Flash forward to balmy April 24, 2010. By choice, I'm eulogizing my mother in a sunlit cemetery chapel for a pitifully small gathering. She transitioned the previous Saturday at age 89. It was a merciful release from a tortured battle with escalating suffering until deciding to surrender her iron grip upon a largely tragic lifetime.

I shed no tears. I merely feel peaceful. I embody gracious integrity.

What happened in the intervening 46 years? To locate resolution, we must return to the toxicity.

With metallic courage, please join me for a very few "sanitized" snippets from *The Only Child's Horrific Life* with an alcoholic father and mentally-ill mother. Picture a teenager vainly attempting to endlessly counsel her mother out of paranoia-schizophrenic beliefs like neighborhood garbage cans communicating lethal private messages. This, while bravely sustaining an A average at the "counselor's" homework table. Averted – a suicide attempt using a psychiatrist-prescribed bottle of Valium pills to still the demonic voices.

Then, conjure up father simultaneously vomiting while watching TV. Sorry to be graphic. Rescue – as his withered form is carted from under the bottles straight to the hospital on an ambulance stretcher – squarely at death's doorstep.

Unimaginable! It's a sheer miracle I prevailed.

Yes, it pains me deeply that no family member, friend, neighbor, minister or teacher thought to ask the pivotal question: "We know what you're going through. What do YOU need?" Lacking resources available to disenfranchised children today, I've singularly reframed my early experiences. I'm now genuinely grateful for them.

For, I long ago discovered I'm not alone. Since exiting the dysfunction, I've met so many products of alcoholism I've lost count! (Though, our household's particular combination yet appears rare.)

WHILE IT'S TRUE my parents battled illnesses, they perseveringly wrestled their challenges to the ground. Old pain no longer defines me the only child of a drunk and lunatic.

WHILE IT'S TRUE I felt hugely excluded growing up, I separated myself. I'm no longer unloved or unlovable. I'm a rightful part of the planet's interconnected web.

WHILE IT'S TRUE I dove into academia to escape trauma, my intellectual achievements no longer constitute my sole identity. My real "value" derives from my best qualities and not what I "accomplish".

I'M NO MORE ABOUT struggle or merciless quests for perfection – a flat-liner. I NOW unleash my courageous and exuberant Essence.

While praying your formative years in no way resembled mine, I trust you understand a little something of what I conquered. But it's only half the story. You're probably wondering how I claimed victory from dire circumstances.

Is that before or after spending tens of thousands of dollars plus hundreds of thousands of hours on psychotherapy, coaching, personal growth workshops, conferences, retreats and introspective journaling?

Wow. And guess what? At day's end, my triumphant breakthrough was gifted by an unexpected and untapped source – my Wise Inner Self!

That's it? You're possibly thinking. Yes.

A provocative assertion, I believe we call forth everyone and everything that happens to us for purposes linked to our special reason-for-being. I wholeheartedly chose the two parents most capable of furthering my Earthly journey.

My broader mission places all into context. Each harmful encounter was "necessary". The past has unquestionably shaped who I am today: a healing presence and pioneering catalyst for transformed human consciousness. After all:

- IF NOT for the intense isolation, how would I help those sorrowful folks who've felt equally marginalized?
- IF NOT for the virtual silencing of my voice, how could I champion my circles to speak their truth?
- IF NOT for knowing the depths of despair, how would I inspire people around the globe to absolutely know their lives make a difference?

I will never deny my youth was anything less than a nightmare. Going forward, the ultimate victory will be judged at my passing.

If even one amongst you is aided by my story of hope, my work here is done. My parting wish is that you locate your own unshakable inner conviction so you too thrive and not simply survive.

No matter what!

Great advice, Carol-Ann! Thanks!

If you want to know more about how Carol-Ann has taken the pain of her childhood and turned it around...and how you can too, Carol-Ann has written several books. Her latest is ***Step Out of Your Sandbox!*** In it, Carol-Ann helps readers to step out of your comfort zones into the life of your dreams. And there's more on her websites: spirit-unlimited@rogers.com, www.changingleadership.com or www.CarolAnnHamilton.com