

## A Gouverneur Daughter Defies Familial Misogyny

Good Friday, April 15, 1949, is the blessed day I started my journey in life with all the limitless hopes and dreams every young girl should have with eager anticipation and joy. Around the age of 5, my journey revealed a different outlook in which the women of my birth family would have to accept and endure the servitude and inequities demanded by the family patriarch and his two youngest of three sons yet to be born. This is no surprise given the prevailing farm culture where fathers and, even, mothers desired sons over daughters to work their dairy farm. At this particular period in my life, I was blessed with my sister, Mary Louise, who was born deaf and with Cerebral Palsy due to the administration of Demerol during my mother's difficult pregnancy with her. I enjoyed and relished the love and companionship my younger sister and I shared until her passing around the age of 2. Reflection on this brief period is my earliest memory where it seems Mary Louise may actually have been the luckiest of us girls having been spared the struggles and abuses my mother and I would suffer.

Barely out of my toddler years, I contracted strep throat possibly due to the unsanitary conditions somewhat common on a 1950's dairy farm with many cows and only outdoor plumbing. My condition may have also been exacerbated by the lack of adequate heating in the family house where I recall often awakening to a glass of water on my nightstand frozen solid during the winter nights. This strep throat, even in the 1950's, was a treatable, but as a girl, my welfare was secondary to that of the family livestock. As a result, my infection went untreated for such a long time that I consequently went into rheumatic fever. For those unfamiliar with this condition, this illness caused permanent damage to my heart that later affected the rest of my life's health. If it were not for the love and care given by my grandparents Dorothy (Culbertson) Scott, Clara (Stowell) Crawford, Floyd J. Crawford, my dear aunts and uncles, my close cousin Linda, and personal childhood friends, I believe I would have joined my baby sister soon thereafter.

Having known mostly discouragement and neglect from my own parents, I believed that despair and abuse would be my norm in life if something did not change. Not surprisingly, I wasted no time leaving home on the day of my graduation from Carthage High School with a New York State high school Regents diploma. My father had stated repeatedly that a college education is a waste of money on women because they should be at home caring for husbands and their

sons; this low expectation and prospect foretold by my father did not provide any incentive for me to continue in his house as the family maid for him and his sons.

One may reasonably ask where my mother stood in this whole situation and may reasonably deduce that she, too, was enduring her own servitude under this misogyny of the family patriarch with less hope of escape. I have personally observed numerous occasions where my father would verbally abuse and scold my poor mother for such inane and mundane things as: putting the car registration sticker on crooked in the front window; missing a turn in the road and having to back track; failing to have dinner done in time for the boys to watch a ballgame on television. In every one of these examples, his complaints should have been recognized as his own failure to help his wife or do them himself. Obviously, there is a severe hypocrisy inherent in misogyny. In my mother's last years after my father's passing, her Alzheimer condition worsened, and she often commented that she wasted much of her life caring for some "grumpy old man" who made her life miserable as described to me by my second youngest brother. No doubt my mother has regretted her last years with her late husband.

My next younger brother by 4 years, Peter, has been the only exception to this familial misogyny. We shared many of the same hardships and experiences on the family farm in our childhood which included: working backbreaking chores in the fields and the barn, even before my feet could reach the peddles on the tractor; milking the cows; feeding the livestock; and any other chores around the house and farm, which occasionally took precedence over attending school when it was in session. Even as the eldest daughter and son in this family, we donned second-hand clothes and enjoyed used toys. This was not the case in the favors my parents gave their two youngest sons whom they showered with the best their money could buy.

Because of my skewed perspective from being treated as a second-class person, if not lesser, my initial expectation for any relationships was also compromised. My marriage to my first husband was nothing less than a disaster during which I feared for my life on numerous occasions when he held a handgun to my head threatening to kill me and when he took the family sedan and ran over my knees to ensure I would never enjoy dancing again. I strongly believe this person was a major factor in the mental disorders with which both of my sons were born due to the physical beatings he committed on me during my pregnancies. Of course, I divorced this violent misogynist out of fear for the lives of my sons and myself with great difficulty and without any support from my parents. My eldest son eventually succumbed to his mental illness at the young age of 15 while

temporarily living with his birth father in Alabama where he was not properly given his medication for his mental illness. My youngest son was born with dyslexia which made the simple act of reading a challenge on top of the struggles of trying to survive with me as a single mother without the support of his birth father or my own misogynistic family. As a single mother trying to rear and support 2 boys, I did my best working 2 to 3 jobs at one time to provide for their needs. If not for help of my dear friends, Jody, Pam, Sheryl, and my cousin Linda, we would have had many more days and nights of going without our daily bread and warm clothing for the northern winters. There were numerous instances where my birth parents would deny me any assistance (as little as \$20 for food) and, literally, turn to either of my 2 youngest brothers in the same day to offer to buy them the sporting gear they claimed they needed for their school sports participation. My parents' neglect and apathy towards their only living daughter was very obvious in their absence during my hospital stay in the late 1970's within an hour's drive from Carthage, New York, when I had a ruptured appendix and, for a brief moment, was clinically dead due to the resulting peritonitis.

During the Thanksgiving holiday of 1985, my dear friend, Jody Anderson, arranged for me to accompany a young Army Officer on his trip from Fort Drum, New York, to Fort Benning, Georgia. Although I originally intended to leave New York to live with my brother Peter in Florida and start my college education in defiance of the patriarchal misogyny, I fell in love with this younger gentleman and married him on October 1, 1986, the same month-day date as my birth parents. My life became the just defiance of my familial misogyny. I truly loved and am truly loved by this gentleman: a graduate of our nation's United States Military Academy at West Point, New York; a man with good moral character and religious beliefs; a man who believes absolutely that any man who physically hits women out of anger with their own hand or any weapon is the true epitome of a coward. During my marriage to this person, I further realized that I can achieve all I desire regardless of past discouragements and abuses. In defiance of my misogynist father, I earned my 4-year Bachelors of Science degree with distinction in 1997 with my major in Psychology and my minor in Anthropology from the University of Houston-Clear Lake. I also earned honorable memberships in the Alpha Chi and Psi Chi National Honor Societies. I am irrefutably the only member of this misogynist family to earn any 4-year college degree and earn it with distinction. Once again and not surprisingly, the misogynists in my birth family never acknowledged my notable achievement which they personally knew they could never achieve themselves despite the inequitable favoritisms they consistently enjoyed during their own childhood.

Unfortunately, the aftereffects of the rheumatic fever including my heart damage that I suffered earlier in my life became a major factor in limiting my future educational and professional prospects. I had to have open heart surgery to repair some of my heart damage, and I suffered the onset of rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia. My dear husband and I acquiesced to the reality that I might not be able to engage professionally in my field of study not because I was a woman, but because my parents failed to secure medical treatment for my childhood strep throat. As my health continued to deteriorate and I became more dependent on stronger medications for basic comfort and dependent on the help of others for basic personal tasks, I endeavored to live with a true respect and appreciation for the many blessings God has given my true husband and me: for our life together; for our sole surviving son, Sean-Paul Slaton; for our family of kitties and puppies; for my brother Peter Crawford; for my grandparents, aunts and uncles; and for my close cousins and friends, some of whom have passed away before us.

To summarize my message and prayer for all our Northern New York girls and women who find their experience similar to, if not the same as, mine, keep your faith in God AND yourself, and you will defeat the evils of misogyny and all other forms of bigotry wherever life will take you without lowering yourself to that of the wrongdoers, both family and complete strangers. One may find comfort, as I have, in 2 of my favorite passages in the Holy Bible which include Psalm 27 and Psalm 37 Verse 4. It is very important to know that I have forgiven all who have hurt my sons and me because it is what God asks of us all and because I am the better person God has helped me to be.

As a symbol of my triumph over my familial misogyny, abusive relationships, and loss to my own children, I am providing for display my and my husband's matching Class of 1984 West Point graduation rings to the Gouverneur Museum to help reinforce the real prospect of defying cultural misogyny and other bigotry suffered by the girls and women of Northern New York. I chose a graduation ring matching that of my husband's alma mater in lieu of my own because I love him so and know we shall always be one. I am Jane-Marie (Crawford) Manglona happily married to Efrain Manglona, Jr.