

## **Interview with Sharon Wallace, author of *Surviving a House Full of Whispers***

Today, Tyler R. Tichelaar of Reader Views is pleased to interview Sharon Wallace, who is here to talk about her new book "Surviving A House Full of Whispers."

*"Surviving A House Full of Whispers" is a true account from Sharon Wallace's own perception of what happened while growing up. She tells the story of being abused, how she finally left her abusive family, and how she entered into a happy marriage and became a mother. Today, she resides in England with her husband, Michael, of thirty years. She has five sons and eight grandchildren and has been blessed with the wisdom and courage to stop the dysfunctional lineage. She learned through her husband and sons how to love and be loved. Her grandchildren are happy, content and have a childhood all children deserve. Sharon has been writing for thirty-five years and has numerous poems in the media and online. She is planning on compiling a book of poetry in the future.*

**Tyler:** Welcome, Sharon. I'm happy to talk to you today about your new book. To start out, will you tell us about who your abuser was and what kind of abuse you endured?

**Sharon:** My abuser was a member of my own family (my stepfather) who systematically sexually, physically and emotionally abused me for seven years.

**Tyler:** Sharon, when did the abuse end for you?

**Sharon:** I found the courage to flee when I had come to the crossroads of flight or fight. I chose flight very wisely; it ended the sexual and physical abuse, but the emotional abuse is still apparent.

**Tyler:** When the abuse ended, you didn't have much luck finding help. Why was that? What do you think made people unwilling to listen to your story or believe you?

**Sharon:** I believe because my mother helped to conceal my stepfather's physical attacks on me, and publicly called me a liar, this sealed my fate. Most of society cannot comprehend a family member abusing his or her child. How can we expect them to believe a child when their own mother is calling her a liar? Pedophiles are very good at manipulation and deception.

**Tyler:** Why do you think your mother herself refused to believe you, or at least to admit the abuse was occurring?

**Sharon:** I believe she was afraid of being left alone to raise four children and she also believed I encouraged it. I also strongly believe she was afraid neighbors would question her parenting skills if she stood by me.

**Tyler:** Sharon, do you have any understanding of why your stepfather abused you?

**Sharon:** I cannot possibly understand the mind of a pedophile; to understand something, you need a good knowledge of the subject. I do know he was a bully and control was one major factor.

**Tyler:** Sharon, will you explain why you chose the title "Surviving a House Full of Whispers"?

**Sharon:** "Surviving A House Full Of Whispers" is the second book in a trilogy of my life. The first book is entitled "A House Full Of Whispers." I passed my old house one day and found it had been boarded up to stop vandals as it was standing empty in a rough part of town. I imagined echoes of yesterdays and wrote a poem called "Boarded Up" that is on the first page of my first book. It was a house filled with secrets and lies—whispers in every corner.

**Tyler:** Will you tell us where your first book ended and this second book picks up in your story?

**Sharon:** The first books ends with my escape from my abuser in our local woods; he had chased me in there to finish, what he had started seven years before. The second book picks up from that evening and my eventual exit from Devon.

**Tyler:** Do you think it's necessary for readers to read "A House Full of Whispers" first before reading "Surviving a House Full of Whispers"?

**Sharon:** Yes. To be able to understand how I arrived at situations in "Surviving A House Full Of Whispers," one has to be able to read the beginning.

**Tyler:** What will the third book be called and can you tell us a little of what it will contain? When do you expect it to be published?

**Sharon:** "A House Full of Whispers: Sharon's Legacy" will be the title of the third book. It will tell the journey I have taken over the last several years, heroin addiction of one of my sons, ill health, my fight for justice, and my fears for my son fighting a war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Also, fighting for my two granddaughters who were born addicts because of their mother's addiction, and much more relating to my abuse. I hope to have the third in the trilogy published 2010-11.

**Tyler:** Sharon, you are quite a poet, as well as the author of your trilogy. Will you tell us a little about your poetry? Did you find it a release or means for coping with the emotional scars of your abuse, or is it an escape?

**Sharon:** My poetry is an expression of my feelings towards certain emotional experiences through my life. I wrote many pieces when I started to write the first book. It evoked feelings deep within me.

**Tyler:** Sharon, when did you really start to heal, and what was the process that led to that healing?

**Sharon:** I can truly say I did not start to come to terms with my childhood (I think heal is the wrong word for me) until I wrote the first book. As I did so, I felt like I was reliving every minute detail of the abuse I suffered. It was like that movie "Groundhog Day" where Bill Murray is condemned to relive the same day over and over. But each time I re-read and edited the manuscript,

it did become easier. Although even now, it still upsets me to read it because I go back to that dark place I have fought so long to escape. I don't think we can ever heal completely from a childhood torn. But we can learn to deal with the emotional effects. I still find it hard to come to terms with the realization that I was never loved by any of my parents. If your own mother who gave you life can't love you...then who can? As a child you cannot possibly understand that the problem is *hers!*

**Tyler:** It sounds like you understand now, however, that the problem was hers. Do you have any insight into why she failed to love you?

**Sharon:** I was put into a children's home after being taken from her and my stepfather for serious neglect and never saw mother for seven more years. At this time she was already pregnant with her fourth child by my stepfather. My biological father had left us (myself and two siblings) with no intentions of returning. They were wholly unsuited and the marriage doomed to fail. I believe mother married him to better her self. Dad was an officer in the army whose parents were well-respected middleclass people. Mother's family was working class from a poor area. When dad left, she no longer needed us and we were in the way of her new relationship with her new partner; at this time she was already displaying signs of mental illness.

**Tyler:** Lots of people have come forward in recent years to tell their stories about abuse. What made you decide to tell your story?

**Sharon:** Being constantly called a liar and told to forget it were two statements that still make my blood boil. People will fight others through the courts if they are involved in a car crash for compensation—well, my life was a huge pile-up on the motorway of life—I deserve the same compassion. Just because my injuries are unseen by the human eye does not make them less painful or damaging.

**Tyler:** You talk a lot in the book about the importance of learning to love yourself. What many people might not understand is that abused people have to deal with a lot of self-hate and loathing, to the point where they behave destructively toward themselves, as you describe was the case for you. Will you tell us a little about your more self-destructive behavior, and why you punished yourself?

**Sharon:** I don't think I was punishing myself; it was more like trying to release the stench and vile loathing of his touch. I believe my eating disorder was my way of controlling me, when I gorged food I wanted to become fat so as to be unattractive to the opposite sex. I was scared of a relationship with any man. I had immense anger toward society because I had lost so much. But the truth is, I had nothing left to lose and everything to gain by leaving my house of whispers.

**Tyler:** Sharon, finally you found a man who believed your stories of abuse and was able to love you. Can you tell us about that love? Did it frighten you to trust someone? Did you have to learn to love yourself before you could love another?

**Sharon:** I was afraid to trust anyone because I did not want to be hurt again. I was, and still am, guarded about others. It took me years to relax completely with my husband. I trust him completely now, but it took me many years to get there. My sons are the only ones I have loved absolutely without any agenda. I have the same love for my granddaughters who live with me permanently. I

did have to learn to like myself first—only then could I possibly accept someone else liking me. I always looked for a hidden agenda from any who showed kindness or compassion.

**Tyler:** In the book, you also talk about how the abuse you experienced affected your role as a mother and the way you treated your own children. Will you tell us more about your experiences as a mother, and what you learned?

**Sharon:** I was fiercely protective toward my sons and would have no problem saying or doing whatever I had to for their safety; I still feel the same protective instinct even though my youngest is twenty-seven years old and a sergeant in the armed forces. I learned so much from them and grew emotionally with them. I never wanted them to feel rejected or unloved by me. This was the most important gift I could give them, my unconditional love and unwavering support.

**Tyler:** After all the years of abuse, and the years of trying to recover from it, what would you say was the greatest factor in your ability to survive and persevere?

**Sharon:** My children and husband and eventually my results when I took a lie detection test and passed as non-deceptive. I had for the first time a silent witness who spoke for me who revealed the truth and reiterated what truly happened.

**Tyler:** Sharon, what was so important for you about people knowing you had told the truth? Some people would feel that their knowing the truth is enough, even if no one else believes them, but it sounds like you were adamant that you not be thought a liar. Can you explain why that was so important to you?

**Sharon:** I was continuously made to look a liar, and if others believe you can lie about such heinous accusations, you are not trusted with other simpler things. Your words are sometimes questioned. When I first made the accusation, everyone turned on me. Not one person stood by me. I was alone, dejected, and terribly frustrated. As time went by, I came to the conclusion that he (stepfather) and I know the truth. He can't lie to himself. But it was mother disbelieving me that affected me the most. For years I yearned for her to be told the truth without realizing she already knew.

**Tyler:** Sharon, if someone reading this is being abused right now, what advice would you give them?

**Sharon:** Speak only when you are ready; don't be pushed into anything you know you can't cope with. Accusing or seeking justice is not as important as moving yourself away from the abuse. Don't be guided by someone else's story each situation is unique—just because Martha told the first time she was touched does not make Jennifer any more responsible because she never told at all.

**Tyler:** Thank you for the interview today, Sharon. Before we go, will you tell our readers about your website and what additional information may be found there about "Surviving a House Full of Whispers"?

**Sharon:** My website, <http://sharonwallace.co.uk/> is a place to visit and read poetry; you can find excerpts from both books and links for others who have walked a similar road. If you visit, please

leave a message on my guest book. If you want to email me I always personally reply and if I cannot help or answer your questions, I will always point you in the direction of someone who can.

**Tyler:** Thank you again for the interview, Sharon. I wish you much happiness in life, knowing that your books can help others.

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