

With support, wife abusers can change behaviour

By JACIE B. PALMER
Herald Special

The following story depicts an abuser who denies his responsibility for assaulting his partner preferring to believe she somehow instigated the abuse.

When asked if he'd been convicted of assaulting a woman, he replied, "Yes. We'd been together for years and she continually pushed my buttons. She knew me so well. Just how to do it. How to get to me. How to hurt me. She'd do it all the time. She wanted it. She deserved to be hit. It took me several years to forgive her for charging me with

assault. She got a restraining order to keep me away from her and out of my own home. She never spoke to me again. Today I realize I loved her very much. It is too bad that we couldn't communicate. The relationship was sick."

Although this statement may have been made many years in the past, today this man still believes women push his buttons and insists they are somehow responsible for his violent behavior. He has taken steps to alter his lifestyle and the violence is now mainly directed towards objects that are important to



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woman in his life. However, he remains convinced she deserves the abuse, whether physical or psychological.

This story is typical of a male abuser. He will refuse to accept responsibility for his own actions. Despite the fact that assault is a criminal offence, he remains convinced and adamant in his beliefs. Despite the increased level of awareness through media coverage, this man can seldom be convinced he is so very wrong.

He blames others for his problem and believes his reactions are quite normal. He has been told over and over again his beliefs are incorrect.

After a violent act in which he breaks the possessions of his partner, he will write the incident off with a flip, "So what, it was just a ...!"

He denies the violence in him. He denies the significance of his act. Eventually he will become violent with her. Will she leave? Who will he blame?

Any act of violence against another human being hurts. The abuser hurts his victim in any way he can because he has not

learned to express his feelings in a positive way. An abuser often expresses hurt, sadness, disappointment, anxiety and other feelings of rage. He knows only anger.

Because abusers have been victims of abuse, they do not know what "normal" is. They can easily convince themselves their behavior is normal because they remember dad abusing mum or were beaten too. Poor role modelling makes it almost impossible for the abuser to see the error of his ways.

He needs to recognize his problem and seek counselling. The loss of a job, his wife or his children or a day in court on assault charges may bring to a climax the destructiveness in his behavior. There must be a trigger.

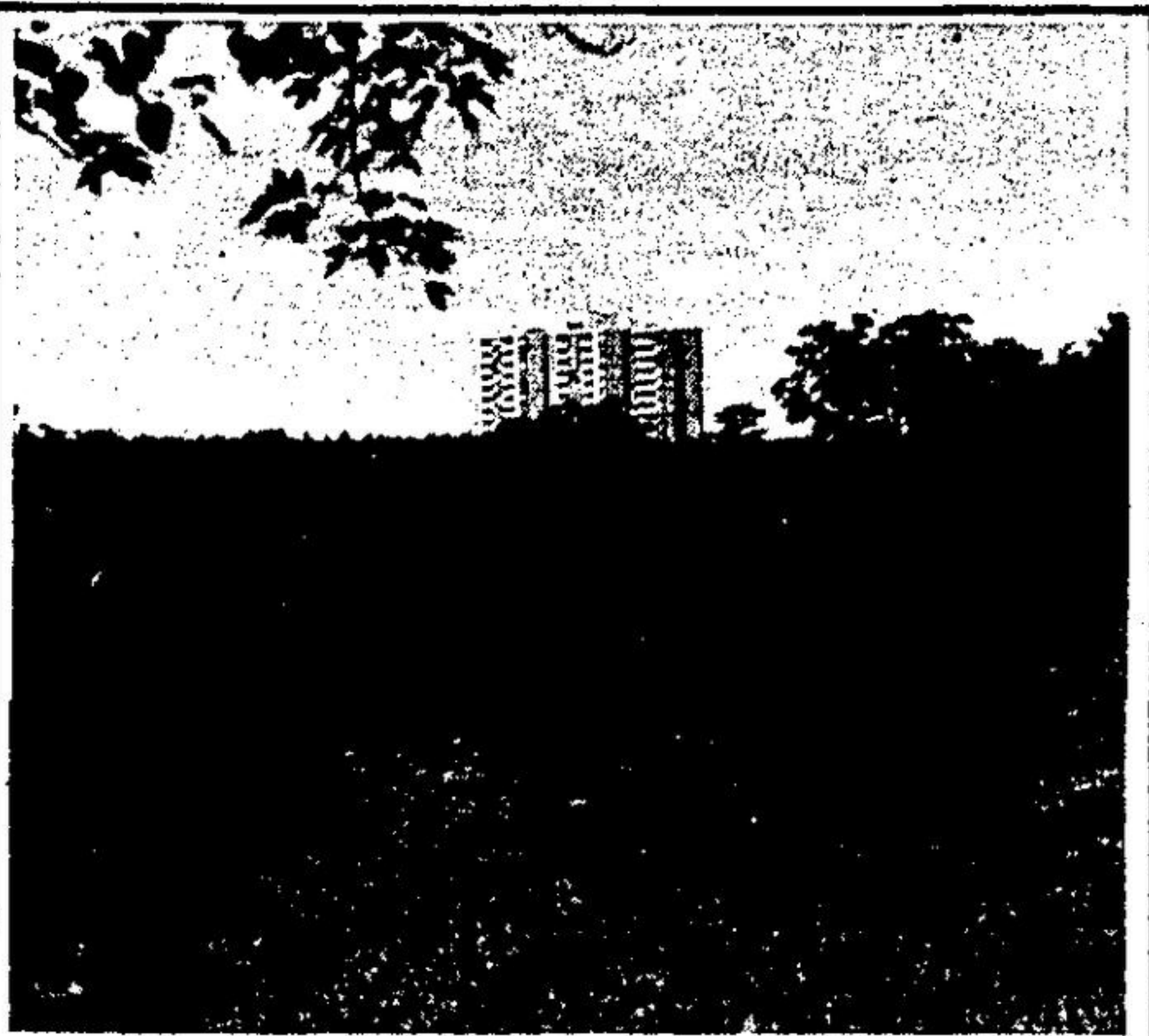
That trigger must make the abuser aware of the seriousness of his violent attacks. Change is a long and slow process because his violent behavior has been reinforced repeatedly throughout his life.

Any abuser wanting to change can and will change his behavior with the support and assistance of his family, friends, professionals and an understanding community.

Endnote: Statistics quoted from the Ontario Women's Directorate.

Feel free to contact Jacie by directing letters to her attention at The Herald. All correspondence will remain confidential. Should you wish to

speaking to Jacie, call the Distress Centre at 877-1211 and your call will be returned. If you are a woman or child in crisis or an abusive male wanting help, call the Distress Centre or dial 911. You are not alone! There is help available.



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From the tree-lined stretch of Winston Churchill Boulevard outside Norval, Georgetown is marked by one lone, solitary condominium building. (Herald photo)

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