

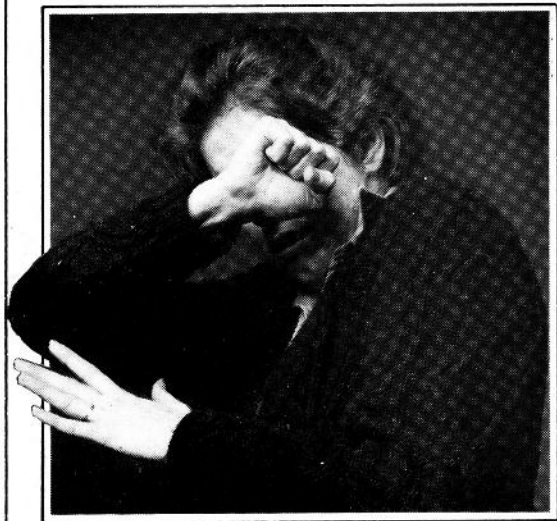
# **LOVED, HONoured AND BRUISED**



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## About the Film

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Jeannie was married 16 years to a man who physically and mentally abused her.

The first two years of her married life were normal. It was only after the birth of their first child that the violence started. When the baby was six months old, Jeannie's husband threw a teapot of freshly brewed tea at them. Four children and 13 years later, she left him. This film tells her story. It is not an uncommon one.

Feeling angry and unwanted, Jeannie sought the help of the police who took them to a shelter for battered women and their children. It was here that she was able to take stock of her life. She also discovered that many other women found themselves in similar circumstances.

In the film, she speaks with two voices: a dispassionate one when she addresses the camera head-on, and an emotional one when she discusses her situation with a social worker. In a very moving scene, she resolves to exorcise the pain caused by certain abusive terms which her husband directed to her. She summons up the courage to repeat the words, and reject their power to hurt her.

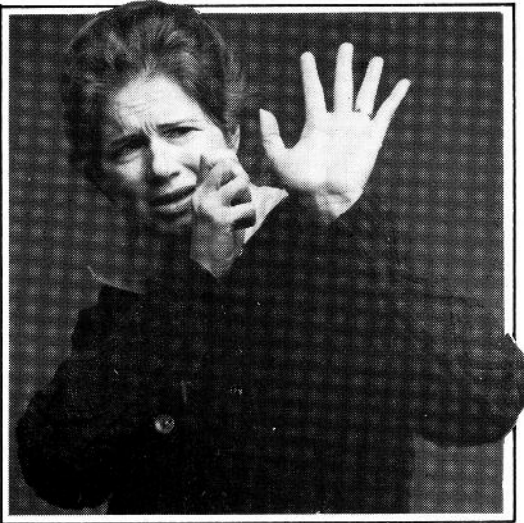
Her husband, who agreed to be interviewed for the film, acknowledges the unfairness of venting his frustrations on his wife, but he fails to recognize his violence. "I am a timid sort," he says. He seems incapable of appreciating the full impact of his behaviour towards his family despite the fact that they had to flee for their personal safety.

With the help of social workers and the welfare and legal systems, Jeannie was able to obtain a separation and to start a new life with her children. There are many women like her who, despite the abuse they undergo, remain with or return to their husbands, through fear of retaliation, lack of money or lack of information as to the resources available to them. *Loved, Honoured and Bruised* throws light on a difficult problem and shows that there are ways of overcoming this painful situation.

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# Wife-battering

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## Popular Misconceptions

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Here are some commonly held beliefs about why wives are beaten:

- The husband beats his wife when he's been drinking. Alcohol is the main culprit.

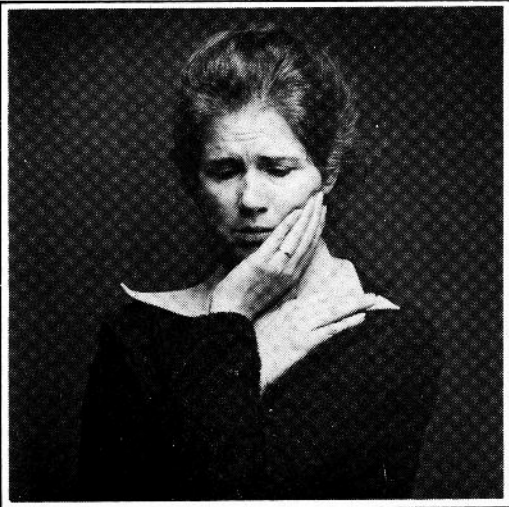
- Male hormones and sex drives are strong. Men are easily frustrated if deprived of sexual contact and this frustration leads them to beat their wives.
- Some physical violence is normal in every family. Parents hit children and husbands hit their wives. It's necessary to maintain discipline.
- The wife is to blame because she nags him about drinking, gambling, his inability to provide for the family or because he's a poor lover. The wife is to blame because she doesn't keep the house up to standard.
- Men beat women to keep them in their place, especially when the wife is too demanding, or when she feels superior because she has a better job or more education.
- Wife-battering occurs mainly among lower-class people who are having a hard time making ends meet. In these cases, wife-battering is a result of economic stress which the husband feels more acutely because he is the bread-winner.
- The husband and wife don't love each other.

### Some Facts

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- Historically, wives were often considered to be their husbands' property and were always expected to obey. Men were considered to be the head of the household and their authority in the family was unquestioned.
- Financial reasons often make it difficult for a wife to leave a violent husband. In 1975, the International Women's Year Commission polled 1,522 divorced women and found that only 14 per cent were awarded alimony and that less than half of these collect it regularly. Only 44 per cent of the women surveyed were awarded child support and of these less than half collected it regularly. In 1977, the average wage earned by working women was about 57 per cent of the average wage earned by men. Welfare laws require a woman to leave her matrimonial home and petition for separation or divorce before she can obtain state aid.
- It is estimated that each year, one in ten Canadian women who are married or living common-law are beaten. In 1978, about 50,000 Canadian women suffered enough physical and mental abuse to seek outside help.
- Forty-five per cent of Canadians live in areas where there is no transition house or shelter for battered wives.
- Almost all women who seek help in transition houses have been beaten more than once. One third said they were beaten weekly or daily. Another twenty-six per cent were beaten at least once a month.
- Most wife-battering occurs in the evening or during the night, in private places where friends, neighbours, or other helpers are least accessible.
- Wife-battering is as common among middle and upper-class families as it is among low-income households. A recent survey in the United States found that twenty-three per cent of middle-class wives charged physical abuse as a reason for seeking divorce.
- More than half the husbands of women interviewed at transition houses had been beaten as children.

## Discussing the Film



- What incidents precipitated the beatings that Jeannie suffered? When did the beatings first start? What was the cause according to Jeannie? According to her husband? What commonly held beliefs are true in Jeannie's case? Why?
- Jeannie's husband says he feels "some reaction was justified" and that sometimes it was a matter of discipline. As with a child, "you didn't want to do it but you have to do something." Do you agree that Jeannie had to be taught not to do careless things? What do these statements tell you about the husband's attitude to Jeannie?
- Jeannie says "he never told me what to tell other people" about her bruises and black eyes. "He almost seemed proud when I had a shiner." What does this suggest about Jeannie's attitude to her husband? Do you think Jeannie saw her husband as the head of the household? Why?
- To what extent are these traditional attitudes about women prevalent today? Do such attitudes contribute to violence against women? Has the position of women improved over the years? Give some examples.
- Do you think Jeannie's neighbours who suspected what was going on were justified in not interfering? Why?

- What options were available to Jeannie once she had decided to leave her husband? What will she do to support herself and her children? Do you think she will be able to manage on her own?
- Why did Jeannie stay with a man who had been beating her for 13 years? Is she likely to be one of the many women who go back to their husbands? Why?
- Does the fact that women are dependent economically on their husbands contribute to wife-battering? Why?

“Wife-battering can only be understood by looking at the family not as a particular group of individuals . . . but as an institution with roles and functions and traditional relationships with other institutions including law, medicine, employment and religion . . . Wife-battering and the network of procedures which helps define it is not a personal dilemma, it is an institutionalized, accepted means of control.” (*Wife-battering in Canada, the Vicious Circle*, The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Ottawa, 1980). In what way is the family an institution? What are the roles expected of wives? husbands? What are the rights and responsibilities of each? How are these rights and responsibilities reinforced by the police? doctors? organized religion? the courts? In what way is the institution of the family supported by the law?



## Additional Activities



- Find out if there is a transition house for women in your area. Invite a speaker from the shelter to discuss problems the house faces, such as security, financial stability, funding and training of staff.

- Family law in many Canadian provinces has undergone significant changes in the past few years. Find out what the law says about wife-battering. Do the changes in the family law help abused wives? How? What changes would you recommend be made in the law? As a follow-up activity, you might investigate the law with respect to child abuse and rape. Information is available from your local library; your provincial bar association; your local police force; the department of the attorney general of the provincial government and the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, P.O. Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa.
- Have a group view three feature films and examine three popular magazines to take a look at how sex roles are portrayed in films, articles and advertising. Make a list of adjectives that describe how women are pictured and a similar list for men. Do these popular portrayals of the roles of men and women contribute to wife-battering?



- To get an idea of the financial resources available to single parents, have your group make up a budget for a parent with two children. Take into account the cost of housing, food and clothing in your area. Then contact municipal and provincial welfare offices to determine the financial assistance available for this parent. Ask about rent and food subsidies, low-income housing, additional medical care, etc. Compare your budget to the welfare allowances.
- Find out the average wages for men and for women a) in 1970 b) for the latest year available. Can your single family make ends meet on the average wage for women? On the average wage for men?
- Contact the National Council on Welfare, The Brooke Claxton Building, Ottawa K1A 0K9, to find out how many single parents live below the poverty line. What is the average income for single-parent households?
- Does this financial situation contribute to wife abuse? What changes in the financial situation of single parents is needed to strengthen their position?

***LOVE, HONOURED, AND BRUISED***  
is available through any NFB library

**British Columbia**

Vancouver  
Prince George  
Victoria

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Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Calgary, Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

**Ontario**

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Hamilton  
Kingston  
Kitchener  
London  
North Bay  
Thunder Bay

**National Capital Region**

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**Quebec**

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Quebec  
Rimouski  
Sherbrooke  
Trois-Rivieres

**Atlantic Region**

Halifax, Nova Scotia  
Sydney, Nova Scotia  
Moncton, New Brunswick  
Saint John, New Brunswick  
Charlottetown, P.E.I.  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
Corner Brook, Newfoundland

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### **Pamphlets**

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*One Step at a Time: Alternatives to Domestic Assault*. Prepared by Women in Transition Research Project, Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Series prepared by the Action Committee on the Status of Women outlining information about women in Canada. Titles include: *Matrimonial Property, Rape and Sexual Assault, Taxation Untangled, The Family in the New Society*. Available from the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. P.O. Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5R5.

# LOVED, HONoured AND BRUISED

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A NATIONAL FILM BOARD  
OF CANADA  
PRAIRIE PRODUCTION 1980

16mm colour  
106C 0180 030

3/4" video cassette colour  
116C 0180 030

Screening Time  
25 minutes 23 seconds

Length  
288 metres



National  
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