

Today's Christian

Woman

September/October 1993

CHILDREN'S
ADVOCATE

Donna Rice Hughes

It took a national
scandal to turn her
faith around.

page 42

**Max Lucado, Steven
Curtis Chapman,
Tony Evans and Others
Celebrate
Women!**

**Tips for
Talking With
Your Spouse**

**A Start-Up Guide
to Home
Business**

**One Woman's Story:
What They Didn't
Tell Me about
Abortion**

\$3.95



0 74470 80971 5

TCW
i n t e r v i e w

ENOUGH

After a dramatic life change,

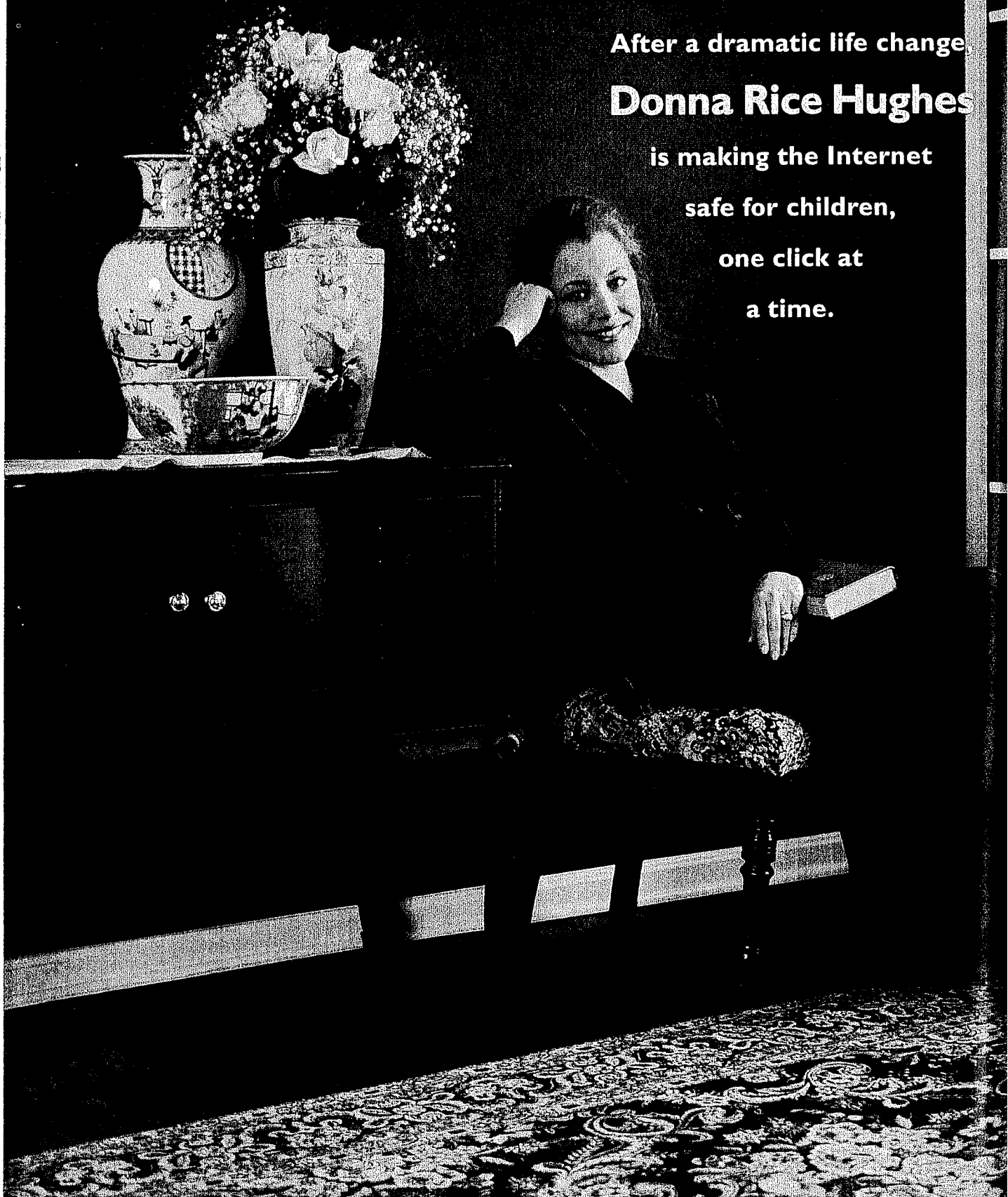
Donna Rice Hughes

is making the Internet

safe for children,

one click at

a time.



SHENOUGH!

IN 1987, Donna Rice rose to notoriety in the scandal with presidential hopeful Gary Hart. Today she's back in the spotlight with a new last name—and startling news that impacts you, your family, and community.

Little did marketing representative and part-time actress Donna Rice know when she accompanied former Colorado senator Gary Hart on a pleasure cruise to the Bahamas nine years ago that he was planning to run for president or that she would be thrust into the limelight as a sex symbol. After the media broke the story about their brief liaison, Rice's name and old modeling swimsuit photos were splashed across newspapers and magazine covers worldwide against her will. The scandal forced Hart to drop his bid for the 1988 Democratic nomination. During the years of unrelenting hounding by the press, Donna chose to retreat from public view.

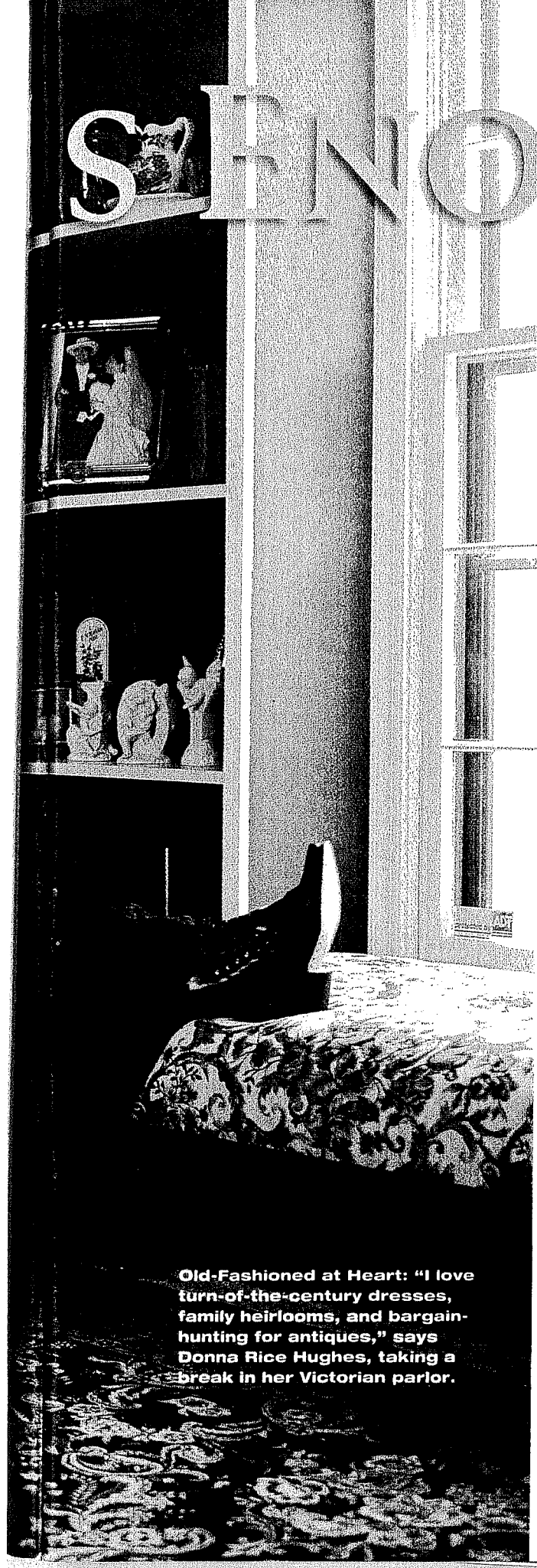
That is, until two years ago, when Donna broke her self-imposed silence and emerged as a leading national spokesperson for the fight against illegal pornography, specifically protecting children. Today, thirty-eight-year-old Donna, who's been married to technology executive Jack Hughes for two-and-a-half years, is Director of Marketing and Communications at "Enough Is Enough!", a nonprofit campaign dedicated to stopping illegal pornography, assisting victims, and making the Internet safe for children.

It's clear Donna's passionate about her work, her family, and the Lord. Her life today, though busy and multifaceted, particularly because she's working on a book (publisher not yet chosen), is balanced. Her hard-won inner strength has come, she admits, "only as a result of drawing closer to God and following his will for my life, rather than my own."


During her growing-up years as the daughter of William Rice, a federal highway engineer, and Miriam, a secretary, Donna moved from Florida to Atlanta to South Carolina, where she spent her sixth grade through college years. Her mother took her and her sister to Sunday school and church, and Donna chose to be baptized in fifth grade. But it wasn't until ninth grade, when a friend took her to a

BY RAMONA CRAMER TUCKER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL AHEARN



Old-Fashioned at Heart: "I love turn-of-the-century dresses, family heirlooms, and bargain-hunting for antiques," says Donna Rice Hughes, taking a break in her Victorian parlor.



Taking a Stand: "When I'm asked questions about my past, I say, 'Yes, I'm *that* Donna Rice, but let me tell you how God has changed me from then to now,'" says Donna.

Cliff Barrows crusade, that Donna knew she wanted more than "church"—she wanted a personal relationship with Jesus. After that decision, her life in high school revolved around singing in choir, going to youth group, taking mission trips, and bringing friends to church so they, too, could experience the love of Christ.

What happened to plunge this "good Christian girl" into a national scandal? In this interview, Donna Rice Hughes talks candidly about the subtle compromises she began to make as a Christian, the things she's learned over the past nine years, and the surprising work God's given her now.

Donna, what made you susceptible to the scandal?

I was always an overachiever. At an awkward time in junior high, when I got braces, my mom encouraged me to take a modeling class so I'd learn to walk properly and wear makeup. At thirteen I began modeling, doing my first television commercial in ninth grade for Pizza Hut. In high school I tried hard to prove myself by getting straight As, going to church, and working in clothing stores.

While at the University of South Carolina, I continued as an honors student and was elected into Phi Beta Kappa my junior year. By senior year, I was elected outstanding senior for my academic performance, as well as being head cheerleader.

But during that same year, the two Christian guys I'd dated since high school youth group graduated from college and drifted out of my life. I began to compromise my Christian values—partying and dating guys who weren't Christians. I told myself, *We won't get serious, so it won't hurt anybody.* Those decisions edged me toward a lifestyle that wasn't God-honoring.

After graduating in the summer of 1980, I knew I wanted my life to count. But instead of asking God, "How do you want to use my life?" I plunged ahead, acting on what I wanted to do. I had gained so much confidence through my college achievements that I wanted to tackle the world. But I wasn't

sure whether I wanted to go to medical school, law school, or enter the corporate world, so I delayed making the choice by taking a summer job traveling across country, organizing cheerleading camps. Eventually, I, like many of my Christian friends who had backslidden from their faith early in college, stopped attending church and reading my Bible. That summer I also began to date an older guy. One night, after a few drinks, he forced me to have sex. I was so ashamed that I didn't tell anyone.

Shortly thereafter, some friends encouraged me to try out for the Miss South Carolina World beauty pageant. To my surprise, I won—and was sent to New York City to compete nationally. Going to New York gave me an opportunity to run away from my pain.

How did the rape affect you?

It was the turning point in my life, the catalyst that propelled me further into an unhealthy lifestyle, away from the Lord. I was devastated. I'd wanted to give my virginity to my husband on our wedding night, so losing it against my will was horrible. I kept thinking, *It's all my fault. I shouldn't have been alone with him. I shouldn't have allowed things to go as far as they did.* I felt robbed and vulnerable.

Afterwards, he phoned one last time to say he hadn't realized I was a virgin or that I didn't want to have sex with him. When I asked him, "How could you not understand when I said no and kept saying no?" he responded, "I thought you really meant yes, and you were just playing a game."

Years later, Dee Jepsen, president of "Enough Is Enough!", told me, "Some pornography promotes the 'rape myth' that when a woman says no, she really means yes—and that she likes sex mixed with violence." When I heard that, my own experience finally made

sense because Dee's words were almost verbatim what he'd said to me. I'd believed for years I was completely to blame for what had happened. I'd interpreted that guy's excuse as the truth because he was older and obviously sexually experienced. I hadn't realized that what he'd done to me against my will was date rape.

Because I felt like used goods and I didn't understand that even though I'd lost my virginity I could still guard my virtue, I gradually and reluctantly became sexually active. After the pageant, I decided to stay in New York, thinking acting and modeling would be my "ticket" to success. Along with a college friend of mine, who also lived in New York, I began to move in glitzy circles and strayed far from

my Christian faith.

How faithful and compassionate God is to bring ministry out of our brokenness.

Did your family, or anyone else, try to caution you?

No, because they really didn't know what was going on. I kept saying, "I'm okay." My family didn't like my being in New York without a steady job and encouraged me to come home, but that was the last thing I wanted to do. Returning to South Carolina meant getting a normal job in a normal town with normal people and marrying a normal person. I wanted the glamour and opportunity of the world.

Since it was too difficult to get into the Screen Actor's Guild in New York, I moved to Miami in 1982 and started a successful career as a television commercial actress, obtaining my SAG card there. While in Miami I met a gorgeous, funny, intelligent guy who lived in the same apartment complex. During our three years of dating, I discovered he'd been a drug dealer and that he was cheating on me. I left him many times, but kept coming back. A

continued on page 128

Interview

continued from page 45

caretaker at heart, I wanted to "fix" him and his problems. I even gave him a Bible and took him to church (incidentally, to God's glory, many years later, he became a Christian!). In 1985, he was reindicted for his earlier drug crimes and sent to jail for three years.

Although I'd felt God calling me back to my Christian roots throughout my twenties, I had a hard time letting go of that illicit relationship. I knew my lifestyle would have to change and I wasn't sure I was ready for that.

Instead I kept busy, working at a well-respected pharmaceutical company, as well as juggling my commercial acting career and a small marketing business. I didn't realize it then, but I was running from my past pain through workaholic and relationships with men. After my boyfriend had been imprisoned two years, four of my closest girlfriends moved away from Miami. That's when I met Senator Hart.

How did you meet Senator Hart?

Although I'd first seen him in Aspen, Colorado, at a New Year's Day party in 1987, we hadn't talked. On March 27, 1987, I went to a fundraiser at a Miami resort. The event was crowded, so a group of us went outside to a yacht owned by the resort's owner. Upon boarding, we were surprised to discover it had been chartered by Gary Hart and Bill Broadhurst, a Washington lawyer and lobbyist. Apologizing, we turned to leave, but they invited us to stay on board. Before the group left, Gary asked for my phone number, and the next day he called to ask me to dinner that night. I had no idea he was married, but I found out that night.

The next day, Gary and Bill invited me and my new friend, Lynn, to go out into the ocean with them on a yacht called *Monkey Business*. We ended up in Bimini, in the Bahamas, and didn't return until the following day. I'd gone through a lot of guys in the past year, trying to get over my old boyfriend, but Gary was the one who swept me off my feet. Before the boat docked, however, he confessed that because he

was contemplating running for president, he couldn't separate from his wife. I believed him when he told me he faced a difficult choice between pursuing personal happiness and his political destiny.

After he left Miami, he called me regularly. Two weeks later, he announced in a press conference he was running for president. When Gary continued to call, I became more confused about his true feelings for me—and my feelings for him.

One night, I flipped on the television and began watching the movie *Jesus of Nazareth*. Suddenly I was struck with how far off course I'd gotten, and I knew I couldn't continue with my current lifestyle. So on May 1, 1987, at Gary's invitation, I agreed to see him one last time—to confront him face-to-face about his sincerity and with the intention of ending our brief relationship. I didn't know I was walking into a trap—that reporters had been tipped off to stake out his house.

Who sprang the trap?

I still don't have all the answers. It wasn't until months later, through the Barbara Walters' "20/20" investigative team filling me in, that I discovered what apparently happened. My "friend" Lynn had borrowed photos from me of our trip on the *Monkey Business* in order to show her boyfriend, but she never returned them. According to the reporters, the two of them tried to sell the pictures prior to the scandal and were told by the media, "We can't run photos without a story." The reporters concluded that Lynn and her girlfriend, Dana, may have been the ones who tipped off the *Miami Herald*.

When Hart was accused of "womanizing" by the media, he had challenged them to find him with any woman other than his wife (which I didn't know about until after the scandal broke). So when the *Miami Herald* received an anonymous tip that Senator Hart was seeing someone, they were primed to take up the dare. The story broke May 3, 1987, before I returned home to Miami.

What did you do when the media

broke the story?

I spoke with Hart's campaign staff and begged them not to give my name out, since I was still the "unidentified woman." But they did anyway. As bathing suit photos from my modeling days emerged, I became, in the world's eyes, a "bimbo," a party girl who hung out around rich guys, and a calloused homewrecker. They never learned I was an honors university graduate or a young professional.

I stared at the television in shock, watching as my private life was revealed to the world. For a long time I refused to talk to the media, hoping the story would die down. But even after the first week, when Hart got out of the presidential race because of the *Washington Post's* threat to reveal a long-term relationship Hart had apparently been having with a prominent Washington woman, the media continued to embellish my past. That's when Lynn sold my pictures to the *National Enquirer*.

How did you deal with all the media pressure?

My life was falling apart. A month after the scandal broke, I tried to go back to work at the pharmaceutical company after a leave of absence. But because of all the publicity and resulting pressure and stress, I finally resigned. For the

Secrets to Safe Dating

1. Date in groups first. Don't go out "just the two of you" until you trust your date.
2. Remember that drinking alcohol lowers your inhibitions.
3. Agree upfront with your boyfriend on sexual boundaries, before you're tempted.
4. Don't assume that because someone says he's a Christian he's "safe."
5. Choose Christian friends who share your values and hold each other accountable.

Adapted from "Enough Is Enough!" materials

first few months, I couldn't stay anywhere more than a week because the media would find out where I was and swarm the place. At times I wondered if I was doing the right thing by not telling the "real" story. Maybe if people understood what really happened, they would see me as a person genuinely sorry for her mistakes instead of the Donna Rice caricature created by the press. I felt trapped and hopeless, a prisoner of public perception.

How did your family handle the scandal?

I called them the day the story broke. Shocked by the scandal, they felt helpless, frustrated, and angry because none of us could do anything about the ongoing media invasion. I couldn't go to South Carolina because the media had staked out my parents' house, so they encouraged me through long-distance phone calls.

In the tumultuous months after the scandal, I was offered millions of dollars to talk. It was hard to turn down the money since I didn't have a job, but I didn't want to exploit my notoriety because I knew the way I'd been living was wrong. Also, I wanted my career opportunities to be based on my own merit and talent, and not the notoriety. As I debated whether to answer the media's inquiries, my mom and grandmother urged me, "Donna, before you make any decisions, get your life straight with God." I was stunned because I hadn't yet realized I could put the entire mess in his hands.

When I didn't think I could handle any more pressure, my mom gave me a cassette from an old youth group friend who told me on the tape, "Donna, I imagine you're in a lot of pain right now. I just want you to know that God loves you and I love you." When she began to share songs we used to sing together, I collapsed on the floor in my apartment and sobbed. I knew I—and no one else—was responsible for my choices. I cried out, *God, it took falling on my rear in front of the whole world to get my attention. Help me to live my life your way!* God answered my plea by flooding me with his presence and for-

giveness and by surrounding me with

Christian fellowship.

In what ways did Christians assist you?

They invited me to church and didn't mind if I sobbed through the service. They helped me wade through the mass of details that followed the scandal: the networks that called, the movies, book deals, and acting jobs I was offered. Then through other friends I found a Christian roommate.

When she went to Washington, D.C., to work on the national prayer breakfast, she and several leaders, including Mary Doremus, invited me to come and attend. While I was there in February 1988, I met some wonderful Christians who offered me a place to retreat, staffed by loving volunteers. I stayed there, exhausted, for the next few months. I did nothing but rest, read my Bible, and be spiritually fed through Bible studies, prayer, and the counsel of godly Christians.

Afterwards, I moved in with Mary and Ted Doremus and their two teenage boys. At the time, Mary was a medical enigma—she was confined to a wheelchair because of a disease the doctors couldn't diagnose. I was a social enigma. We became close friends and mutual encouragers, and we've continued that relationship to this day.

In the aftermath of the scandal, when I prayed, *God, I wish you were here to talk to me, to put your arms around me, to wipe my tears away*, it dawned on me he was doing that—through the Christians around me. That's when I began to understand church isn't a building; it's the body of Christ. In the middle of my pain, God gave me Christian friends who taught me about love and forgiveness.

Have you been able to forgive others—and yourself—for what happened during the scandal?

Although I'm quick to forgive by nature, the process has been difficult. I've had to recover not only from a single well-publicized incident, but several years of press aftermath. I also had to

continued on page 130

She doesn't need handouts. She needs hope. She needs you.



She needs medical care. She needs an education. She needs decent clothing.

Her name is Maria. Like thousands of children overseas, she lives in desperate poverty hoping that someone will help her. Someone like you.

Use the coupon below to request free information about sponsoring a child like Maria for just \$12 a month through Children International. You'll receive the photo and family history of one child who needs you.

A child is waiting for your help. Please, send in the coupon or call us today. There's no obligation.

Children International

1-800-847-2400

Send me a FREE Information Kit with the photo and family history of a child who needs my help.

I prefer a Boy Girl Either.

I wish to sponsor a child right now. Enclosed is my first month's payment of \$12.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Please mail to:

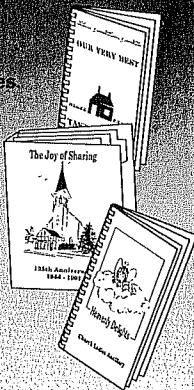
Children International
2000 East Red Bridge Road, Box 419413
Kansas City, MO 64141

A worldwide organization serving children since 1936.
Financial report readily available upon request.
Joseph Gripkey, Chief Executive

PUBLISH YOUR CHURCH COOKBOOK

And Have Fun Raising Funds!

- ◆ Your member's recipes. We do the work!
- ◆ Quality cookbooks as low as \$1.65 per copy!
- ◆ Designed your way. Many free options.
- ◆ Guaranteed to sell. Cookbooks are fast sellers!



CALL FOR FREE

(no obligation) Cookbook Kit.

Toll Free **800-445-6621**, ext. 2810



3212 E. Hwy 30
Kearney, NE 68847

Free Shipping • No Down Payment • 90 Days to Pay

Medical Billing

"One of the Hottest and Most Profitable Businesses of the 90's"
—Entrepreneur Start-up Business Guide



A New High Income, Home-based Business— Processing Health Claims

National Claims Service offers the most complete package available, including a two day training seminar, video training courses, software and a professional start-up package. Previous computer or billing experience are not required. **Electronic Claims Processing** has excellent income potential, working part or full time. Capital required: \$4,495 to \$7,995.

For our Free Information Packet, Call us Toll Free

1-800-207-3711 ext. 365

NATIONAL CLAIMS SERVICE
5000 Windplay Dr., El Dorado Hills, CA 95762

Interview

continued from page 131

in confronting the issue of pornography because we and our children are the ones being violated. Our husbands and sons are the ones who are seduced and exploited by its lies. As Christians, we should be especially concerned because fighting pornography is a spiritual battle against evil. That's why my female coworkers, who are also Christians, and I pray together constantly as a staff. We're also supported in prayer by a group called "Women of Faith," intercessors who regularly pray for us and our work.

"Enough Is Enough!" president Dee Jepsen says, "If the women of this country were unified on any issue, they could change the world." She's right—one woman *can* make a tremendous difference. It's up to us to make the choice to protect our families and our communities. And the best place to start is right at home.

How do you protect your own family from pornography?

I pray for my eighteen-year-old stepdaughter, Mindy, who lives in California—for her safety in a tough world. I frequently remind her to be careful about whom she dates and where she goes.

My fifteen-year-old stepson, Sean, lives with Jack and me and attends church with us. Even with our busy schedules, we work hard to communicate and eat together as a family. Sean knows to call if he wants to go to a buddy's after school (and he gives us the phone number in case we need to get in touch with him).

Since Jack and I both have Internet access at our offices, we've currently elected not to have an online service at home. Knowing what's available on the Internet with a few clicks of a mouse,

we don't feel we'd be able to properly monitor Sean as much as we'd like to because we both work full-time. Blocking software is becoming more and more effective, but it's still possible for a computer-literate child, which Sean is, to break through it. We don't feel comfortable using it as a "babysitter" for when we're not home.

Although Jack and I know the dangers online, we don't look at computer technology itself as evil. Technology is neutral—it's how it's



Family Fare:
"Although having a ready made family presents some challenges, I love being a wife and a parent," says Donna, shown here with husband, Jack, and stepchildren Mindy and Sean.

used that can be good or bad. Because computers are now a fact of life—and can be of tremendous benefit—we want to stay up-to-date with new technology for our own and our kids' sake. And we're looking forward to a time when illegal pornography can't be accessed by children on the Internet and when pedophiles don't have easy access to our children.

Many people, like Jack and me, have decided that enough is enough in the area of Internet pornography. I hope others will, too. TCW

To receive a *What One Woman Can Do: Take Action Manual*, find out how to pray concerning pornography, or become one of the "Women of Faith," supporting the staff and work of "Enough Is Enough!" with prayer, contact:

"Enough Is Enough!"
P.O. Box 888
Fairfax, VA 22030
or call 1-800-649-8543.

Donna Rice Hughes will be interviewed live September 12 on Christianity Online. For more information, see page 92.