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Author Doris Bibbs Shares Chilling Story of Her And Siblings Growing Up with a Schizophrenic Mother in Moving Autobiographical Novel "Breaking the Glass Cage"

Sylvia Dickerson has been a devoted military wife to her husband, Frank Dickerson, for ten years, and has been a caring mother to her seven children. Unbeknownst to herself and her loving family, she struggles silently with paranoia traits. One night, while her husband is away for military training, Sylvia becomes engulfed by her illusions and wakes her children in a hysterical fit. The children find themselves caught in an uninviting world as they try to determine where the illusions end and reality begins.

ATLANTA, GA—Each of us has had an occasion to observe some abnormal behaviors of persons who suffer from a mental disorder known as paranoid schizophrenia. When in their presence, we find ourselves feeling uncomfortable and even frightened. Imagine what it must have been like for eight siblings growing up with a loving and caring mother who frequently exhibited signs of delusions, auditory hallucinations (hearing voices), and other symptoms that her children found confusing and downright scary. Author Doris Bibbs shares those puzzling and terrifying experiences in her brilliantly-written autobiographical novel "**Breaking the Glass Cage**" (iUniverse, Inc., ISBN-10: 0595270603, paperback, 190pp).



Author, Doris Bibbs

"Helena, make sure all the children are here," Sylvia sounded disheartened as she pushed more furniture toward the front door. Helena stood. "No, no Helena," Sylvia snapped waving the knife, "please get down on your hands and knees. We don't want the enemy to know we're here. They will come in and kill us." Helena fell on the floor and crawled gently on her knees, softly tapping each sibling as if they were playing tag. "Everyone's here, Mama," she whispered eagerly looking back at her mother. Her eyes suddenly widen, chills spiraled up her spine as her heart pounded against her chest. ... Reality for Sylvia seemed to have completely vanished; her mind was back in the year of 1943 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Sylvia could hear people screaming for help, machine guns firing, and bombs hitting the islands of Hawaii.

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When Bibbs first expressed her intent to make her family's story public, she encountered resistance from two of her siblings. Eventually they came around to allow their wounded sister to unload the secret burden that weighed so heavily on her heart.

Sylvia Dickerson was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia—a mental disorder characterized by separation between thought and emotions, delusions, and bizarre behavior. Following Frank's early military separation, the family left the Hawaiian island where he was stationed and returned home to South Bend, Indiana. Sylvia was flown on a separate plane to South Bend where she was placed in a mental institution. She would remain there until she was emotionally balanced, or stable and in her right mind, before she was able to go home to her family. It was a little over a year before Sylvia would see her children again.

About every three years, Sylvia would stop taking her medication; and every third year, one of her children would have to step up and take responsibility for admitting their mother into the mental hospital. Frank was no longer able to admit Sylvia. The law had changed when it came to admitting a spouse to the mental hospital. No matter what Frank explained to the proper authorities about Sylvia's behavior, his reason to have his wife committed was refused.

In 1972, after the family relocated to South Carolina and Bibbs' mom had run her dad back to Indiana, the sheriff collected Bibbs' mother from her home, placing her in familiar handcuffs to be taken away, and admitted to the hospital yet again.

On January 31, 1973 Frank Dickerson passed on at the young age of 49. He died of stomach cancer and a broken heart. Sylvia Dickerson still lives at the age of 84. She continues on her medication, and resides in a retirement home in South Carolina.

For all of her life, Doris Bibbs watched her mother deal with her mental illness. She did well when on the anti-psychotic medications. But like clockwork, every three years her mom would suffer an 'episode.' When explaining her book's title, Bibbs commented, "The 'glass cage'—as I see it—is a world of your own; no one really knows where it begins or the dealings that go on in that world unless you decide to share." She continued, "My world was kept a secret just as many families choose to keep silent of their dysfunctions. Living with my mother's mental illness forced me to grow up fast and learn to take life very seriously. This journey prepared me to be a strong woman for when it was time for me to meet life."

What Readers Say About "Breaking the Glass Cage"

"Breaking the Glass Cage" is a masterful step into the darkest realms of the mind and all that it implies. With situations that boggle the intellect, the reader is faced to search for their own personal answer with every turned page. One comes away from the novel breathing hard and filled with awe. -- Judy Candis, author of "Colorblind," "Blood Offering," "Still Rage," and "All Things Hidden"

"Breaking the Glass Cage" is a unique, intriguing story that pulls readers in and refuses to let go. Doris Bibbs Johnson uses poignant dialogue and super descriptions to tell her story. The result is a story full of both sorrow and hope. – Writer's Digest

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"Doris Bibbs Johnson has written a moving, honest account, in novel style, of a family's struggle with their mother's mental illness, and how it impacted on each and every one of them in diverse ways. From child abuse at the hands of their grandmother, to struggling with their mother's growing paranoia and father's heavy drinking, the reader joins the narrator on an often painful journey through childhood." -- Dr. Idelia Phillips

"Kudos to Doris Bibbs Johnson on her debut novel, "Breaking the Glass Cage," a truly mesmerizing tale that's filled with familiar anecdotes and heart wrenching honesty. Mrs. Johnson bares her soul with sadness and joy along a journey you won't soon forget."

-- Betty Bradford Byers, author of "Wired for Murder," "The Big Payback," "Murder Unwired" and "The Whitlow Sanction"

"Breaking the Glass Cage" is a real life story that sadly is shared by millions of families. This captivating book should certainly be considered for holiday gift-giving as it is an intriguing can't-put-it-down tale, as well as an education in an unfortunate reality that is experienced by far too many of us.

There are numerous identified mental disorders. Among the most common are Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Bipolar (Manic-depressive) Disorder, Major Depression, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Schizophrenia. Tens of millions of people suffer from some form of mental disorder. To learn more about mental illness, treatments and resources in your geographic area, visit the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) at www.nami.org or call (800) 950-6264.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Doris Bibbs was born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. She was raised in Columbia, South Carolina, where her father retired from the military. Johnson was inspired to write her first novel, based on childhood life, at the age of 40. Reinventing herself, the self-employed mother of two and grandmother of two, Doris Bibbs has dropped the Johnson and is stepping onto a higher level in a new life. She's telling all of her story, from dealing with the fear of mental illness to breaking the grip of a controlling spirit of fear out of her life. Currently residing near Atlanta, Bibbs is working on the anxiously-awaited sequel to "Breaking the Glass Cage," titled "*Broken Pieces, Shattered Dreams: The Continuation of Breaking the Glass Cage*." Learn more about the author and her book at DorisBibbs.com. Doris may be reached at brd_sng@yahoo.com.

Bibbs is reaching out to persons, helping them to learn that forgiveness is a key to being free, which will enable them to move on into the loving, positive, and joyful life that God has waiting. She is available for motivational speaking engagements to the general population, and particularly within the mental health community.

*To book Doris Bibbs for readings/signings or speaking engagements, contact:
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