

A Brief History of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The church sanctions the subjection of women. Priests advised abused wives to win their husbands' good will through increased devotion and obedience.

Middle Ages (900-1300)

753 B.C.

Wife beating is accepted under The Laws of Chastisement. Husbands had the right to physically beat their wives with a rod or switch as long as its circumference wasn't greater than the girth of the base of the man's right thumb, hence "The Rule of Thumb."

1500's

Lord Hale, an English Jurist, set the tradition of non-recognition of marital rape. He states that when women married, they "gave themselves to their husbands" in contract, and could not withdraw that consent until they divorced.

Francis Power Cobbe publishes Wife Torture in England. She documents 6,000 of the most brutal assaults on women over a 3 year period. She presents a theory that abuse continues because of the view of a man's wife as his property. Her concerns result in the Matrimonial Causes Act*.

1878

1945

A California statute states, "Any husband who willfully inflicts upon his wife corporal injury resulting in a traumatic condition, and any person who willfully inflicts upon any child any cruel and inhumane corporal punishments or injury resulting in a traumatic condition, is guilty of a felony, and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for not more than 10 years or in the county jail for not more than 1 year.

In 1977 Dr. Virginia Corbett donated the house that was used as WSLB's shelter. Dr. Corbett was a local psychologist and activist who became frustrated when she realized that her clients who were victims of domestic violence had no place to go when they wanted to leave their batterers. The 4-bedroom, 11-bed shelter was one of the first in Southern California.

1977

1996

There are over 1,200 battered women's shelters across the United States sponsored by approximately 1,800 domestic violence agencies.

**Matrimonial Causes Act: It allows victims of violence to obtain a legal separation from the husband, it entitles them to custody of the children, and to retain earnings and property secured during the separation.*