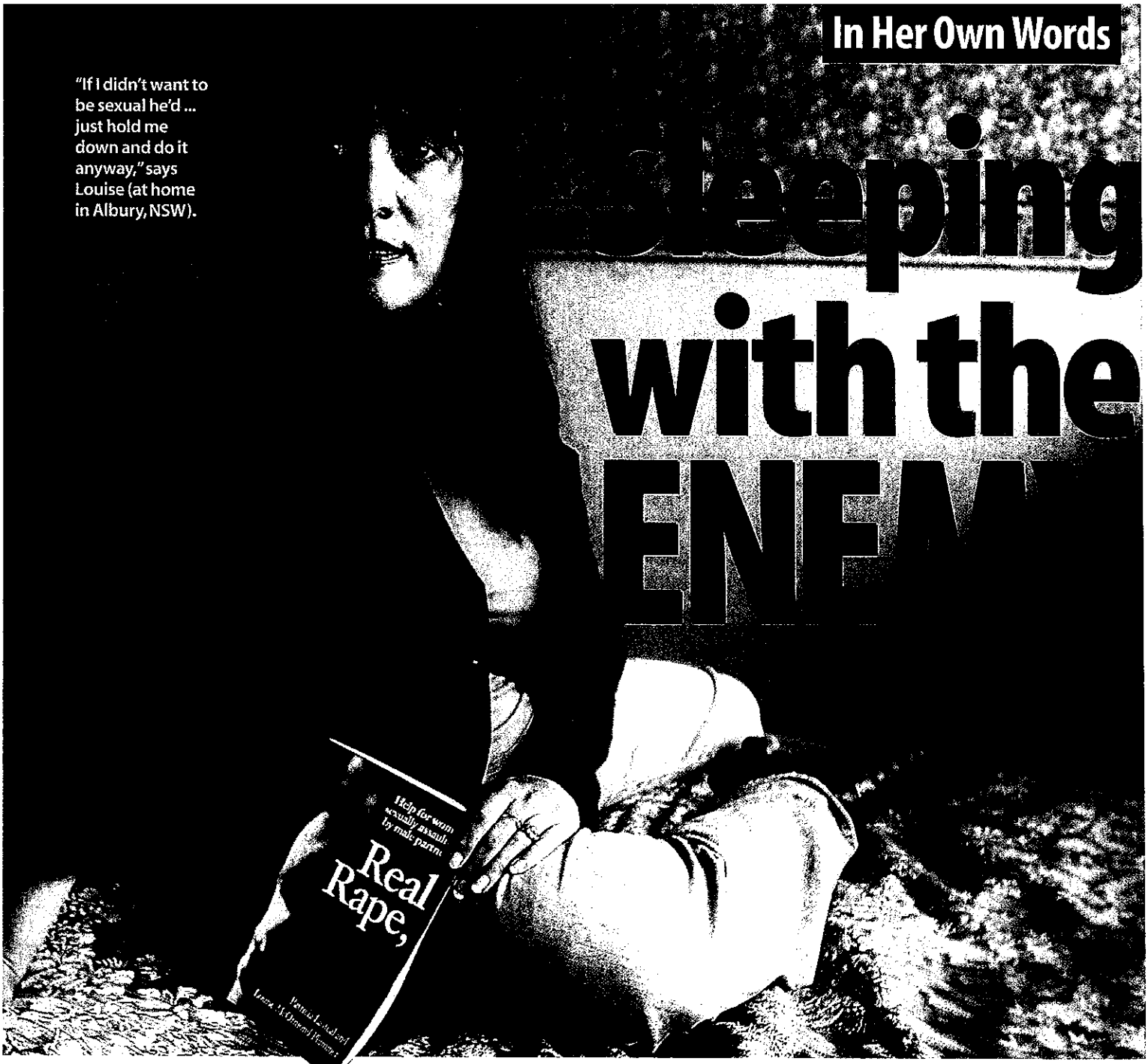
"If I didn't want to be sexual he'd ... just hold me down and do it anyway," says Louise (at home in Albury, NSW).

Sleeping with the ENEMY



Louise McOrmond-Plummer reveals the hell she endured living with a violent partner

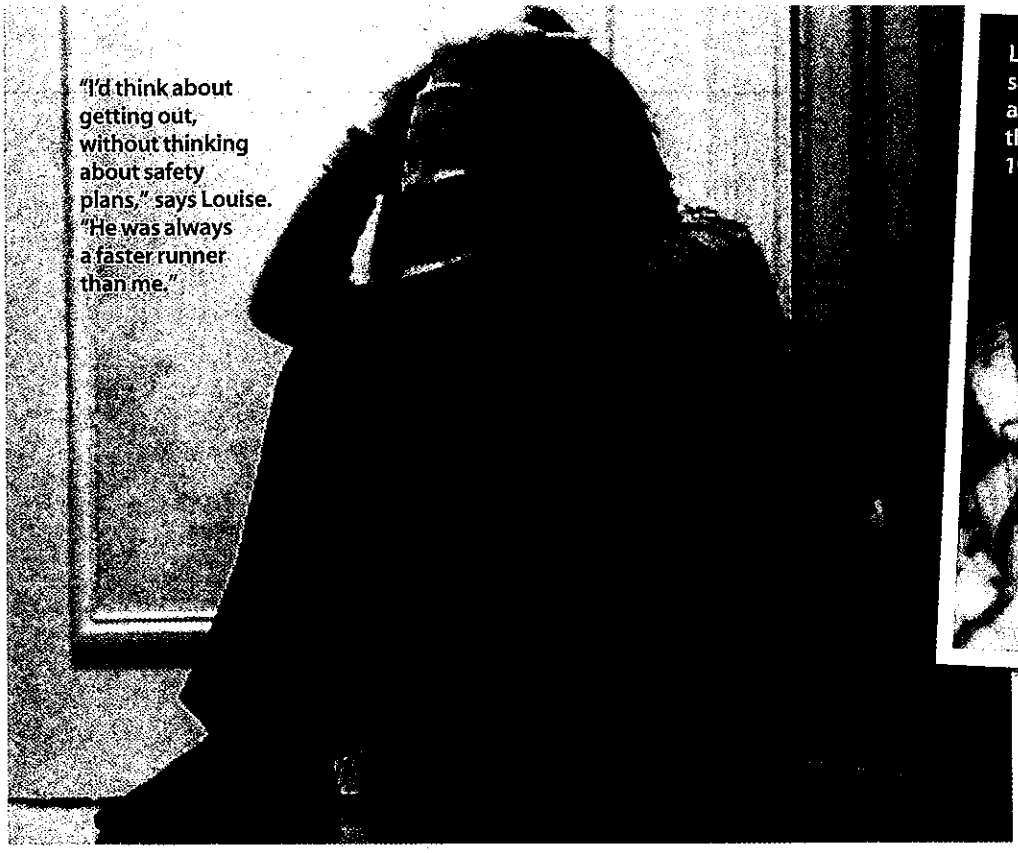
Single mother Louise McOrmond-Plummer was 19 years old when in 1985 she started dating a man she met through a neighbour. Two months later, "Paul" (not his real name) began bashing and raping her. She left him in December 1986, but two years later the psychological trauma of those dark days resurfaced when she discovered Paul had since committed a murder. She sought professional help, but "when I told most people it was my ex-partner who raped me," says Louise, now a married mother of five (one child is Paul's), "they were not classifying it as real rape." With Patricia Easteal, an academic and fellow partner-rape survivor, Louise has co-written Real Rape, Real Pain *(Hybrid Publishers, $35) to help others and spread awareness of the crime. Louise, 40, who with husband Ken runs a freight business in Albury, NSW, spoke to Michael Crooks.*

Louise was living in Albury in 1985.
I had my own flat and I was involved in lots of things like the local drama group and part-time waitressing. I had a dream of going back to university one day.

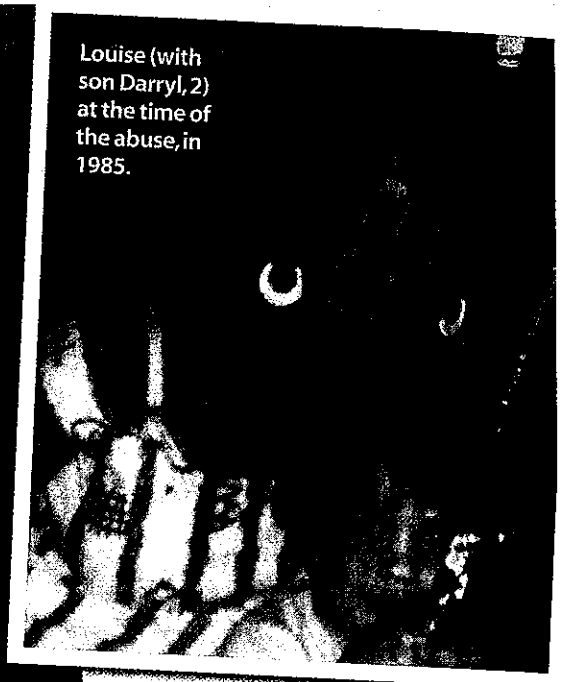
Paul was 18 when she met him.
Initially for me, there was no attraction. But he started calling around for coffee and an attraction developed. He'd had a really bad childhood and I really felt for him.

After two months of living together, Paul's behaviour changed.
The physical violence started with banging doors and throwing things—perhaps jerking my arm a bit roughly. But the first actual hit came one night when I told him

SIMON GROVES



"I'd think about getting out, without thinking about safety plans," says Louise. "He was always a faster runner than me."



Louise (with son Darryl, 2) at the time of the abuse, in 1985.

he reminded me of a stupid little boy. He jumped up and cracked me across the cheekbone. He was very apologetic and at the time I believed his apologies.

I remember the first really bad beating. We both knew this person—this guy that no girl in her right mind would go out with. And I made a joke about fancying him. He bounced me off a few walls that night. After two months of that, I lashed out and told him he could pack his things and get out. He basically said, "I can f--k you any time I want." I told him to tell his story walking and he advanced and I tried to fight back and he slapped me back very hard and raped me on my lounge room floor.

"He slapped me back very hard and raped me on my lounge room floor"

He raped her every few weeks, while her 2-year-old son, Darryl—from a previous relationship—was in the house.

I did my best to hide the violence from my little boy. If I knew that a beating was imminent, I'd move to another room so that it would happen there. And I learned not to scream or cry if it hurt, just to bite down and be silent. One night I wanted to go out and he didn't want me going out. When my girlfriend came to pick me up, he shut me in my room. He bashed his fist into a mirror and held me at bay with this piece of mirror glass. He forced me to strip and ran it all over me.

Everyone was saying, "You should leave." But I was trying to survive threats to my life. Statistically, the threat of rape, further beatings and death is doubled for abused women at the time they are leaving the relationship. I'd make these bids for freedom and sometimes be lucky enough to reach a neighbour's place. But if he caught me he'd drag me back and beat me harder for trying to run away.

After several attempts, Louise finally left Paul and started dating Ken, now her husband. But Paul paid her a final visit.

He burst in the door and just grabbed me by the throat and pulled a knife. He said that he would slit me from my vagina to my breasts. He was really desperate and had decided that if he couldn't have me, no-one else would. He forced me to say I loved him and he had this knife at my throat. He marched me up to my room and said that if I loved him, I was going to prove it. And I was pretty sure what was coming next. But he didn't rape me. He just threw the knife and burst into tears and said, "I came here tonight to kill you."

In 1988, Louise, 21, was watching TV when she saw that Paul had been arrested for a drug-related murder.

I was really trying to leave the girl that those things happened to behind. And when he was charged with that crime, I started to think of the violence and, most disturbingly, the rapes. It really brought home to me how dangerous he had been.

During counselling, she discovered there was little understanding of partner rape.

When I said it was my ex-partner who raped me, it was like, "OK, it's rape but it's not as bad as if it was a stranger." And I got angry at a society that expects women to carry the burden of partner rape.

So Louise wrote *Real Rape, Real Pain* as a source of help for others.

It was absolutely one of the most therapeutic things I've ever done. Looking back on his behaviour, it feels so absurd. I can view it with grim humour. Now I have the ability to laugh and love; I have a wonderful family and achieved so much with this book. I still feel strong bursts of agitation and fear. And if the trigger is severe enough, I might have flashbacks and a couple of nightmares. But apart from that, I feel really strong. ■

Where to get help

If you're a victim of domestic violence, contact:

ACT: DV Crisis Service 02 6280 0900
NSW: DV Crisis Line 1800 656 463
NT: Women's Crisis Centre 08 8972133
QLD: DVconnect Crisis Line 1800 811 81
SA: DV Crisis Service 1300 782 200
TAS: DV Crisis Service 1800 608 122
VIC: Women's DV Crisis Service 1800 015 188
WA: DV Helpline 1800 007 339