

Unsafe in your own backyard

Anyone can become a victim — even in 'Blue Heaven'

By ANNA TURNAGE
Staff Writer
and MYRNA MILLER
Assistant Features Editor

At 10:45 p.m. Lisa left her friend's room in Aycock Residence Hall after studying for three exams she had the next day. She never took the exams. Instead, Lisa, who asked that her real name not be used, dropped out of UNC three days later.

In the past she had always been careful. "I walked with someone else, but I never walked by myself that late," she said.

She had not intended to walk alone that night either. She waited for the bus until about 11:30, but it never showed. So she began making her way to Ehringhaus Residence Hall through the woods near Kenan Stadium.

What happened next is something that most people don't ever imagine happening to them.

A tall white man with dark, curly hair jumped out and grabbed her. "He balled up his fist and shoved it in my mouth and dragged me further into the woods. I couldn't scream because he was hurting me. I fought at first, but he was beating me up and I was scared. I thought he was going to kill me."

The man then threw her to the ground and raped her.

"When it was over I was just lying there shaking, and he just stood up and started laughing. I couldn't believe he was laughing at me."

"After he left I just lay there. It started raining but I couldn't move because I was just shocked. I never went to sleep; I never shut my eyes once. I just lay there until the sun came up."

She walked to her car at Ehringhaus parking lot and sat there with the doors locked until 3 p.m. Then the first-semester freshman called her father.

"I called my dad that day and told him to come pick me up. I told him I hated it here and I didn't want to go to school here anymore. Three days later I was out of here."

No one knew the real reason she wanted to leave.

"I was just too scared to tell anybody. I thought it was my fault because I had shorts on. I didn't want anybody to think I was a slut. I can't believe I felt that way now."

It has been almost five years since Lisa left UNC. "I had wanted to go to Carolina since I was a little girl," she said. "Now the place just scares me."

Secret crimes

Not telling someone sooner is Lisa's biggest regret. She finally told her boyfriend and her parents about the incident four months later. By then it was too late to catch her attacker. "I just felt morally in the dirt. I went through so much hell for however many months I held it in."

"Looking back on it now, I wish to God I had told someone. I am begging anybody that this happens to you to tell someone."

Lisa's rape is only one of an estimated 80 percent that go unreported each year nationwide, according to FBI predictions. Of those unreported rapes, 85 percent are date or acquaintance rapes.

In North Carolina rape has shown an increase of 12 percent over last year, and it is the fastest growing violent crime in the United States, according to Orange County Rape Crisis Center records.

From 1982 to 1988, an average of 91 rapes, attempted rapes and other sexual assaults were reported to the Orange County Rape Crisis Center per year.

These numbers prove that rape not only occurs, but occurs frequently in Chapel Hill. But this is not apparent from looking at reports filed with area police departments.

The University police, who have jurisdiction over any crime occurring on the campus, have only three incidents of reported rape this year, and all of those were blind (anonymous) reports, Sgt. Ned Comar said.

In 1987, five rapes and four attempted rapes were reported to the Chapel Hill Police Department, which handles all incidents within city limits but excluding the campus. In 1988 seven rapes and three attempted rapes were reported, according to Chapel Hill Police Planner Jane Cousins.

Silent victims

"I think we live in a very victim-blaming society as far as rape is concerned," said Tina Groover, community education and outreach coordinator of the Orange County Rape Crisis Center. "That's why so many are afraid to come forward. They think it's their fault when it really isn't."

Many victims feel as if they were personally chosen by their assailant, she said. "A common question following rape is 'why did they pick

me' or 'what did I do to make them hurt me?' They need to realize that rapists single their victims out as being vulnerable; they don't pick them because they're sexy or beautiful."

Victims are also afraid of being embarrassed, Comar said. "They don't want their friends and family to know."

According to Groover, the consequences of not telling anyone are worse than most victims think.

"Most rapists are repeat offenders — that's why it is most important to get these people out of circulation," she said.

"It is entirely possible for a rape victim to fully recover with the right help. I think it's important for people to realize that."

Most female students said they would report it if something happened to them. However, Karen Radford, a senior from Asheville, admits it would depend on the situation.

they have to make their own decision."

Living dangerously

Even with the high incidence of reported and unreported rapes many UNC students continue to walk alone at night. Twenty-seven out of 30 UNC female students said they had walked alone at night at least once during the last week.

"Sometimes I walk home alone when I'm running late from a meeting or at the library," Radford said. "I don't want to wait on the bus or SAFE escort because it takes too long."

"I don't always wait on the bus because I always thought moving targets were safer than still targets," said Janet Stepp, a senior from Hendersonville.

But some do heed the warnings of friends and officials. "I always find somebody to walk with me if it is after 9 o'clock," said Renee Couch, a freshman from Smithfield. "I've

"I think we live in a very victim-blaming society as far as rape is concerned."

— Tina Groover,
Orange County Rape Crisis Center

heard some bad stories, and I don't want to become another statistic."

Just in case

If someone is attacked, it is not her fault just because she tried to walk home alone, Comar said. "A woman has a right to be safe and secure in her person and anyone who violates that right is at fault."

After an attack occurs there are several things a victim can do to help herself and the police. "Call the police immediately and we will contact the Rape Crisis Center and get someone to help her," Comar said. Groover said victims should not wait more than 72 hours to report a rape because bodily evidence is crucial. "The sooner they do that, the better."

A victim should never change clothes or take a bath before the police take her to the hospital, Comar said. "We have to get as much information as possible to protect her and get the evidence to go after the person."

"While all these things are important, we stress something else to the victim — her treatment and feelings. If she doesn't want to report it, then it is not forced upon her."

But victims should definitely tell someone, even if it is just a friend, Groover said.

Lisa agreed. "If it happened to anyone I wish they would go forward. Now I would do anything to see him behind bars. Every dream I had was shot down in one night and that's just not fair."



On-campus groups offer preventive help, support

By LEIGH PRESSLEY
and CHERYL ALLEN
Staff Writers

The phone rang and rang, but no one ever answered. These rings echoed in the office of SAFE Escort, one of two major UNC student groups working to increase campus safety.

When the phone was finally answered, Scott Bricker, a senior from Winston-Salem and a SAFE escort for four years, said somebody should have been working that night.

"I don't know why nobody is here. A lot of escort people haven't showed up for work, which really stinks," he said.

SAFE services are available to anyone needing an escort back to their dormitory room, across town or anywhere on campus. But the service has been plagued by a lack of serious volunteers and is now suffering from transition problems.

The SAFE escort program serves the entire UNC campus Sunday through Thursday from 7 p.m. to midnight. A student who makes a phone call to 962-SAFE will be given a description of the escort who will walk him or her any place on campus, as well as to Granville and apartments near Franklin Street.

Only 30 escorts are now working. The service is not open on the weekends because SAFE escort cannot find students who will volunteer to escort on weekend nights, Bricker said.

Some students have expressed the need for a weekend escort service. However, Bill Craver, a sophomore from Atlanta who began as the director of the service in January, said he felt the response would be low.

"Nobody wants to do it and people probably wouldn't call anyway," Craver said most people were with a date or in a group on the weekend.

Bricker said a weekend escort service was needed. "There are more people in Chapel Hill on the weekends that aren't students. It's the worst time to be walking alone at night."

In addition to problems with lack of volunteers, the SAFE escort program appears to have several wrinkles

to iron out in the organization of the program, according to Robert Freeland, a sophomore from Charlotte and the North Campus supervisor of the program.

"This semester has been a good example of how not to do things," he said. "It's been undependable and I'm aware of that."

Some volunteers did not realize the seriousness of the job, he said. "I don't think the people that were contacted got it into their minds that the job is serious."

Bricker said he was not aware of any screening process of the escort volunteers. His only interview was a phone call to determine when he wanted to work. "I don't think they can judge from a phone call if it's a person volunteering for the wrong reason."

Craver recruited volunteers in January by going to dormitories and classrooms to find interested people willing to work. There was no interview process, and he said he did not believe the lack of screening of escort applicants was a safety threat.

"I think that's unrealistic. They're all students here. We wouldn't turn anybody (who volunteers to escort) away."

Some students feel differently. "Any mad rapist could get into RAPE escort (the former name of SAFE), or pretend to be from RAPE escort. I really am paranoid about those people (SAFE escorts) and afraid of the kind of people they would send me," said Karen Radford, a senior from Asheville. "I'm also afraid someone would hear me on the phone and later come up and tell me he's from RAPE escort — I wouldn't know the difference."

Craver said that more interest was needed in the program. "If there was more demand for the program it would take care of itself." The service currently receives only three to four calls a night.

An increased awareness is one of the goals Craver hopes to achieve for next year. "The fact that we're even here may make someone think twice about walking alone. They might call a friend instead."

Craver said SAFE escort also planned to open a South Campus office next year that would provide

a service from libraries on North Campus to South Campus dormitories. He said some of the most dangerous places on campus, such as Kenan Stadium, made an office on South Campus a necessity.

Students should realize UNC can be dangerous, regardless of whether they decide to use SAFE escort, Bricker said.

"People don't think it can happen to them. It can happen. Our campus, as beautiful as it is, can be a dangerous place at night."

Another group of students helping to promote safety on campus is the Rape Action Project, said Associate Dean of Students Kathleen Benzaquin, who advises the project.

The project is a peer group dealing with the combined issues of rape and sexual assault. According to Benzaquin, it has developed a "student stay fund" for rape and assault victims.

"If they need to spend the night in the infirmary without telling their parents or notifying the insurance company, the fund pays for it," she said.

"I think it is important that students understand that there are resources on campus where they can go to provide whatever they need."

Along with the psychological effects of rape, the medical aspect should not be overlooked, she said. Student Health Service (SHS) is well-equipped to help victims deal with the trauma of rape, said John Reinhold, clinical social worker at SHS. Medical attention should include checking for injury, pregnancy or any sexually transmitted diseases, he said.

Reinhold also mentioned that students need to be aware of a recent revision of the student honor code. Beginning in July, sexual harassment and date rape can be dealt with through the honor court. "Women will have that avenue as well in the future," he said.

"What I recommend is to seek some sort of support, whether it be the rape crisis center or psychological services such as the ones at Student Health," Benzaquin said. "The first thing is being able to talk about it. Students shouldn't have to go through it alone."



DTH/Tom Clark

Warning sign

A sign marks one entrance to the Arboretum, a location notorious for assault and rape incidents.

The American Medical Association estimates that one in 12 women is raped in her lifetime.