



In Search of Security

Students fail to lock up against crime

By CHERYL ALLEN and MARA LEE
Staff Writers

The calculus midterm, 24 chapters in British literature, parking space shortage, rising tuition, loud roommate and ... campus crime?

Students have so many other concerns that they often forget to protect their personal property, making them easy targets for thieves. From book theft to auto vandalism, crime on campus threatens students more than they realize.

Crimes of opportunity

Statistics show that college students are more frequently victims of property crimes than violent crimes. About 90 percent of approximately 600 crimes reported to University police in 1988 were theft-related crimes such as robbery, breaking and entering, vehicle theft and larceny.

Most thefts occur when a student "leaves a backpack lying on a rock wall, on a table in the library, beside a basketball court in the gym," said Sgt. Ned Comar, crime prevention specialist.

Robbery is even more predominant in residence halls. "In every incident that I've had, the room was unlocked," said Wayne Kuncel, director of the housing department. "The room is usually vacant."

Money, wallets, purses and jewelry are usually the targets, he said.

The situation is similar at the University of Florida at Gainesville (UF), which has a student population of approximately 30,000. Out of roughly 1,400 crimes reported at UF in 1988, 1,200 were robberies.

Angie Tipton, spokesperson for the university police at UF, said "crimes of opportunity" are the norm. A thief apprehended at UF told Tipton it takes only eight seconds to enter a room, steal small valuables and exit.

About 75 percent of the crimes at UF are committed by non-students, Tipton said.

Library theft is another popular campus crime. According to Tipton: "We try to get students to be aware that book bags are a big commodity for thieves. Students today have a tremendous amount of credit cards, and they (thieves) know that."

Student criminals

But theft isn't the only crime on campus. UNC Student Legal Services (SLS), which gives advice to students on legal matters, sees many criminal cases. "We see a lot of DWI (driving while impaired), indecent exposure, larceny, arson, communicating threats and harassing phone calls," said Dorothy Bernholz, attorney and director of SLS.

Fake IDs also have become a big problem since the drinking age was raised to 21 in 1986, Bernholz said. "That's probably the trendiest crime."

Students are arrested for a variety of offenses, including shoplifting, alcohol-related offenses, assaults and fighting, said Jane Cousins, Chapel Hill police planner. A few students have been arrested for rape, she said.

Most of the students are first offenders, she said, but that makes no difference to police officers. "They have committed a crime. We treat them the same whether it was a first offense or not," Cousins said.

Although serving time in jail is rare on a first offense or a misdemeanor, students have gone to jail for more serious drug charges, Bernholz said.

Students often are the culprits in incidents of vandalism and theft of University property. According to Comar, "Vandalism has been done to elevators in high rises ... (Such vandalism) ruins the quality of life — it costs everybody to replace this stuff."

Hitting close to home

But students are frequently more concerned with crimes involving their own property.

John Brock, a sophomore business major from Clyde, had his car window broken and Clarion car stereo stolen last fall. The car was parked in St. Thomas More Catholic Church parking lot overnight. Three months and \$350 later, his car was back to normal, he said.

"They tried to get my speakers and amplifier. That would've cost me another \$500."

Joe Bedell, a sophomore speech communications major from Fayetteville, N.Y., had his stereo stolen in October while his car was parked for three hours at

Townhouse Apartments.

"I walked down to my car and there were two guys in the car behind mine complaining that their stereo had been stolen too," he said.

Melissa Tuttle, a junior recreation administration major from Stoneville, returned from Spring Break last year to learn that her Mazda RX7 had been stolen.

She said she had lent the car to a friend, who left it parked overnight in Ram's Head parking lot. When he returned in the morning, the car was gone.

It turned up three days later in the parking lot by the law school, but the dashboard was ripped and the Alpine stereo was missing.

"I was crushed," Tuttle said. "I felt violated."

Tuttle was the victim of another theft when \$20 was stolen from her room one night while she slept. That same night, her suite mate woke up to see a man rifling through her desk. The man fled when she saw him.

"That's when we started locking our door," Tuttle said.

Students often are slow to take responsibility for the protection of their possessions, Tipton said. "Mom and Dad are taking care of all the security measures at home," she said. "They're on their own for the first time. A lot of our students have not been touched by crime, and they tend to have the feeling that crime can never happen to them."

After the fact

Reporting a crime is the best recourse for victims, Cousins said. "We can't solve it if it's not reported."

Comar advised that students be assertive in protecting their belongings, offered similar advice. "Lock the door while sleeping," he said. "Have a secure place to store small valuable items, and keep it locked with a padlock. Keep your gym locker locked while in the shower. Lock your bike with a big heavy cable. Don't put your stuff down."

Rutledge Tufts, director of UNC Student Stores, suggested that students keep a closer eye on their books.

"Most books get stolen right near exam time. Make sure you have identifying marks in it," Tufts recommended that students mark their books on a certain page, in addition to writing their name or social security number on the book.

But police were skeptical that most students would take preventive measures and reduce crime. "I know they're going to keep doing it (leaving books unattended)," Comar said. "They've been doing it since time began."

Taking a bite out of crime

The housing department has attempted to make many residence halls safer by installing self-locking deadbolts on the bathroom doors in some dormitories.

Last spring, deadbolts were installed on STOW area's bathroom doors, and the housing department now is considering installing similar locks on all women's bathrooms in the Olde Campus area.

Carrie Turcogorge, area director at Ehringhaus, organized a safety forum to discuss other solutions to the problem of security at Ehringhaus.

Turcogorge said she was concerned about strangers having easy access to South Campus residence halls. "Even if we're doing everything we can, as soon as a student lets in someone who isn't supposed to be here, everything we've done goes to pot," she said.

According to Keith Fowler, South Campus maintenance supervisor, computer-monitored doors are in a trial phase at Craige Residence Hall. The computer reads a card at the main entrance and service doors and opens the door for handicapped students presently living there. The door automatically locks behind them.

One advantage of this system is that it gives a computer readout at the desk of who entered the building at what time, he said. However, the system probably will not be implemented immediately at other residence halls because of the cost.

The big challenge is getting residents to participate in crime prevention and safety, Turcogorge said. She now is posting signs which encourage residents to lock their doors and carry their keys.

While the signs may scare some people, the fear is worth it, said Amy Smith, a senior industrial relations and sociology major from Forest City. "If it takes scaring people so they don't prop the doors open, then scare them," she said.

Mugging prompts night escorts

By VICKI HYMAN
Staff Writer

You don't have to be walking alone, late at night, on secluded and dark Morrison Walk to be a victim of crime.

Last September, two female students were walking to Carmichael Residence Hall around 2 a.m. when — right in front of the dormitory, under the bright glare of the street lights — a man approached them with a gun and stole their pocketbooks.

"We were parked in front of Teague and heading up towards Carmichael," said "Beth," a junior who asked that her real name not be used. "There was a guy who came up to us, and he looked like a football player. We thought he was looking for a dorm or needed directions, and we were like, 'What do you want?' And then he stuck a gun out at us."

"We were pretty close. We didn't even breathe," she said. "He told us to hand him our pocketbooks and to keep walking and don't look back."

Beth said she and her friend broke down once inside the dorm. "We walked into the dorm and then ran upstairs and told the people in the lounge. They thought we were lying, that it was an unbelievable story ... They don't believe it can happen."

Junior Jerry Edwards, a political science major from Chapel Hill, was there when the two women ran in. "I remember they came running down the hallway ... Beth came up and I saw she was crying, so I asked her what was the matter," he said. "When she told me, I thought she was joking. But

I realized she wasn't, and I called the RA (resident assistant) on duty and the police."

Beth and her friend went to the police station, where they stayed until 5:30 a.m., looking at mug shots and trying to identify the mugger. The police ascertained that the mugger was a black male, about 6 feet tall and 200 pounds.

Police officers found the pocketbooks in a dumpster behind a shopping center in Carrboro. A total of \$110 had been stolen.

Beth said the shock of the mugging finally hit her the next day. "I started thinking, 'Oh my God. When we turned around, he could have shot us or something.' I think we were very lucky that he only took our money. You don't know — he could have raped us or something."

Beth now would like to see a SAFE escort program set up for each residence area. "There would be more responsibility for each dorm — make the district more aware of what's happening," she said. "It happened at Carmichael, (where) you don't think it would be dangerous ... It shows you it can happen anywhere. You have to be careful."

Reacting to the mugging, Wing Siew, a junior biology major from Malaysia, decided to set up an escort service for the UNITAS hall in Carmichael. The escort program started last year with 20 student volunteers and has grown to 44 volunteers this year. "It's been working pretty well," Siew said. "We've had

no problems."

"Since this (UNITAS) is a living and learning program, people here are in close contact with one another," he said. "It's a different kind of dorm community. Neighbors know each other. I decided to set up this escort service so that people on this hall would help one another."

The primary purpose of the UNITAS escort service is to provide residents with walking partners, Siew said. "Strength comes in numbers. Five people can't stop a bullet, but five people feel more secure than one."

Siew pointed out that anyone could be the victim of a crime, not just females. "A lot of people — males in particular — late at night, don't feel they want to bother anyone. They think, 'It's not big deal, I'll just walk home.' That's not bravery; it's stupidity," Siew said. "You could be lucky, but it's not safe at night."

Paul Deavers, a sophomore economics major from Charlotte and a member of the UNITAS escort service, said the program was very effective and necessary at UNC. "The biggest danger is robbery. Everyone can get robbed," he said.

Deavers said he felt the program benefited him as well as those he escorted. "It makes you feel good in yourself to know that you can help someone across campus safely and to know that you could have prevented a rape or attack from happening," he said.