

Crime hits home in a terrifying way

By Sonya Sparks Murdock
Staff Writer

If you think you're immune to crime, think again. That mentality can allow crime to sneak up on you literally "like a thief in the night." Crime can happen to anyone, anywhere, anytime. I know, because it happened to me...twice.

My first encounter with crime occurred hundreds of miles south of Fayetteville in Atlanta. I wasn't terribly surprised, given that city's reputation for crime.

It was past 2 a.m. when a noise in my apartment jarred me out of a deep sleep on Jan. 4, 1994. Three hours earlier, I had shut my bedroom door before turning in for the night. Now that door was open. I shuffled out of bed to close the door, still half asleep, and then I saw him: a dark, shadowy figure lurking in the doorway. I knew I must be dreaming. When he pressed his index finger against his mustached upper lip, signaling me to "shhh," an electric chill snapped me awake.

A primitive, guttural scream erupted from deep within me as I slammed the door in the intruder's face before he could react. I lunged for the phone and heard my roommate already whispering to a 911 operator. She thought I was being raped or stabbed based on the sound of me wailing like a terrified animal. In my haste to grab the phone and call for help, I didn't even lock the door. But he never attempted to open it again, either.

My scream had awakened the neighbors in three nearby apartments and transformed the prowler into an Olympic sprinter. The police never found him, not did he take any belongings from my apartment. But the memory of that shadowy figure still preys on my subconscious fears, and he did steal my feelings of security.

When I moved to Fayetteville, I assumed I was safe

from the crimes typical of big cities. I found myself sinking back into a comfortable sense of safety, letting my guard down inch by inch. That's when crime found me again.

My guard was completely down on Feb. 12, 1996. Two teens wearing pantyhose over their faces burst through the doors of the bank where I was working as a part-time teller. It took more than a second for their distorted facial features to register in my brain and less than a second for one of the robbers to leap onto the counter brandishing a shining silver revolver. He towered over me as if he were ten feet tall.

My knees buckled and I collapsed to the floor as I heard a "pop!" that sounded like a child's cap gun. When I saw one of the tellers lying on the floor with terror in her face crying, "Help me! It hurts!" I realized she had been shot. My body went numb. That's when I began to believe that we were all going to die.

Everything seemed to be in slow motion as the giant bounded down from the counter in front of me and ransacked the teller area looking for money. Frustrated when he attempted to open locked cash drawers, he rammied the revolver in my face, cursed, and demanded money. I limply pointed to an open teller window and begged him not to shoot me.

An eerie silence suddenly replaced the commotion. The phone didn't ring and no one moved for what seemed like minutes. The bandits were gone and we were still alive.

This time, the police made arrests, thanks to a tip from one of the robber's friends. He collected more reward money than the criminals took from the bank. Both teens, as well as a third teen who drove a getaway car, pleaded

guilty and waived their rights to a trial. The wounded teller was working at the bank again within a month.

Once again, my sense of security had been damaged. But I look at crime differently now. Not from a distance, like I used to, but more personally. Crime is no longer something that happens to other people. It doesn't just happen to careless people taking stupid chances. It happens to anyone. It is random and opportunistic. It happens not only in sprawling metropolitan cities and their surrounding suburbs, but also in small towns and rural areas.

Recently, another Methodist student encountered crime in Fayetteville. It was a random crime, and it was violent. On Aug. 23, John Lynch had just completed his pizza delivery shift for the night and stopped to fill up the truck at The Pantry on Ramsey Street about 11:30 p.m. The former Marine's gut instincts told him something didn't feel right.

When he went inside to pay, he found a soldier on the floor with blood gushing from his head. Two teens, a white and a black male, had attacked the soldier as he stepped out of his car parked on the dark side of the building. They had bludgeoned him with a board, grabbed his wallet and car keys, and left him to crawl inside the store for help.

Lynch attempted to care for the man's wounds, which included a crushed jaw, gashes in his forehead, and teeth broken into fragments. In a helpless attempt to defend himself, the soldier had also sustained scraped knuckles and cuts on his hands. His assailants ran away with only \$11, leaving the car behind.

The brutal nature of this random act appalled Lynch. He said he felt the attackers intended to inflict "a heinous amount of damage" just to steal money from

"a completely harmless guy."

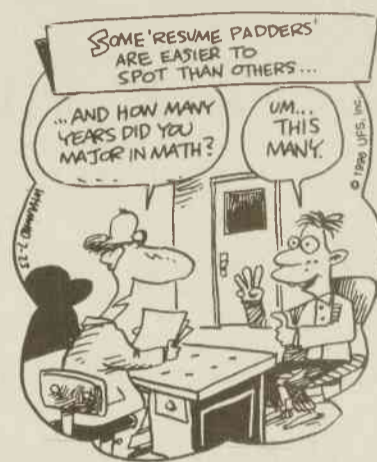
Lynch noticed that many people coming into the store casually glanced at the wounded man as if it were an everyday occurrence. Others stood frozen and gazed at the soldier as he lay bleeding on the floor. Only one woman, dressed in a formal gown, stopped to offer first aid assistance, stating that she was CPR certified.

Lynch admitted that it was only later that he stopped to consider the risks he had exposed himself to by caring for the man who was "leaking thick globs of blood all over the floor, himself, and me." He said that the risk of HIV or some other communicable disease were just afterthoughts. He said that he thinks for most people, it's just a natural instinct to render assistance when someone is in danger.

Do we have a responsibility to get involved? That wasn't as easy for Lynch to respond to. What bothered him was that "people will realize too late" the importance of being concerned and that "they will already be victims of crime by the time they decide to get involved."

So if you think crime can't happen to you, maybe it's time to get concerned. Or at least pray that someone like John Lynch is around if it does happen to you.

STAMPEDE



Generation X: We're not out-of-control slackers

By Whitney Larrimore
Assistant Editor

In the 1970's, a new generation very different from its predecessors was born. At the time, it was unknown just how different this generation would be. Naturally, to the parents, they were mere children, their little bundles of joy, and no one could tell how the generation as a whole would develop. Now, however, it has been made clear that the generation born roughly twenty years ago is one which takes pride in setting itself apart from all the rest.

Taking pride in setting ourselves apart from everyone else is probably one of our greatest attributes, but it is also probably one of our greatest misfortunes. Because this generation is so different from others and prides itself in its difference, our predecessors have frowned on us. We as a group have been labeled unjustly due to the actions of a few. We have been deemed "generation X," the generation without hope. We, they say, are the slackers, hoodlums, and good-for-nothings of America. Even worse, they blame much of the nation's crime problem on us, not to mention the general malfunctioning of society.

The accusers of my generation have forgotten a few vital elements key to the validity of their accusations. These key elements are enough to embarrass even the most stringent supporters of the "anti-generation X coalition" formed by the elders of our society. Had our elders been the omniscient individuals they feel they are, they probably would have realized their fallacies and saved themselves the trouble of destroying the respect and trust society holds toward our generation. These fallacies have been noticed by myself and by many of my peers as well. Simply the ability to see the mistakes that our parents have made in their argument against us exemplifies our intelligence and capabilities to function logically; abilities that otherwise lazy slackers should not be able to exhibit.

The fact that many of us have not been alive long enough

to actually have a lasting effect on the functioning of society is one fallacy. The laws and regulations governing our nation were put into effect long before many of us were born, and those of us who were alive when they were passed were children. Children cannot influence the law, so we can't be blamed for the legal malfunctioning of society.

It's also been said before that we are slackers because we don't have the material possessions that people twice our age have. This, to me, is an especially weak argument for the classification of my generation as slackers. How can a person compare someone who is just starting out in life to someone who has been established for twenty years and has credit out their ears? It makes me wonder just what kind of house our elders lived in when they first left home.

Besides this, they say we have no respect for anything and that we're out of control. I've always been told that a child grows up the way they've been raised. If our generation is a sociological loss, than it must be due to the inability of our parents to teach us properly.

I feel that our predecessors do realize their mistakes in running the government efficiently and raising our generation. They simply don't want to take responsibility for their shortcomings during the prime of their societal influence. It also seems that perhaps they are a little intimidated by our competitive nature and "in your face" expression. We have been able to accomplish many things they were never able to accomplish, like getting college degrees and becoming vivacious entrepreneurs early in life. Furthermore, more people than ever at least try to attend some form of educational institution beyond the high school level. This was a seldom seen phenomenon with past generations.

Our generation, it seems, has been looked upon as the only generation to ever bring about change of any sort, whether it be for the better or worse. However, not too long ago there was a time

called the seventies when our parents were growing up and at the stage in life many of us are at now. During this time, John Travolta was very "in" and disco was the swingin' thing. The sixties, too, was a time when "hippies" and "flower children" ruled, Woodstock, free love, and acid was a way of life, and speaking out against the injustices of the government was a unique pastime. The style seemed as odd as the era, polyester everything and great big 'fros abounded, bell bottoms dangled around ankles and giant butterfly collars in the wind could drift up to your nose. Platform shoes could always give you a lift, and prom suits came in a wide spectrum of flashy colors.

To our parents the sixties and seventies was a wonderful era, part of the best time of their lives. Even as strange as they were then, they still cannot accept us for who we are now. To them, our music is loud and violent, our concept of fashion unsightly, and general way of life corrupt. They can hardly remember their lives a few years back. They also have little knowledge, it seems, that they too were once ridiculed by their parents for the same reasons we are today. Also, they don't seem to know that their parents before them were ridiculed the same way they were, and so were their parents, our great-grandparents. They were called "flappers" in the twenties because they dressed in big fancy outfits, different for that time, and loved to dance. Their music too was loud and disrespectful, according to their elders, yet they persisted and helped bring the nation a little closer to the future. Their commitment to change affected us long after their influence in society ended.

Our generation, X, will probably be seen in history the same way as our great-grandparents were. Yet for our predecessors to look down on us for our differences is wrong. We, one day, will take our rightful places in society just as our parents did. We however, should take care not to judge our children the way we were judged.



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