



By Donalee Moulton
for the Dalhousie Gazette,
Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia

Rape is the fastest growing violent crime in North America and in response to the problem Rape Relief Centers are opening up across the country. According to members of the Halifax Center the problem is just as serious here as elsewhere; within the last two months our local center has handled 4 rape calls, others concerning sexual assault and rape attempts, as well as numerous calls requesting information. Halifax Rape Relief is now in the process of compiling statistics on the situation but they feel these should be multiplied by 3-10 due to the large number of rapes that go unreported. Halifax police see the situation differently

however, they feel there is no problem, as Detective Kinsman blatantly stated, "We don't have any incidence of rape." But the police and hospitals have acquired such bad reputations in dealing with rape cases that victims are leery of taking their case to either the police or the hospitals. Incidence of reported rape has increased and Rape Relief credits this to an increased public awareness and the presence of the women's movement.

Rape is a much talked about, but little studied subject. The purpose of the rapist is not solely to relieve sexual frustrations; it is more than that, it is the desire to degrade the woman. "It's a power trip of a man over a woman," say Rape Relief workers.

Dr. Johnson, of Dal Student Health, agrees in part with Rape Relief. He feels very strongly that any rape case handled through

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A few weeks ago a young woman, whom we will call Jane (not her real name) was returning from school. She got off the bus around midnight to walk the two short blocks to her home. She had always been slightly apprehensive walking this distance late at night and this night was no exception.

Near the bus stop was a car, with two occupants, its lights off and engine running. She noticed the car and then dismissed it because it had two occupants, and probably was someone ending a conversation before dropping off a friend.

Jane hurried on and felt she was being followed, but being only a block from home felt pretty safe. When she turned up her driveway, the man continued along the sidewalk past her; but then she slipped on the ice and fell. The man came back and asked her if she needed help, she responded affirmatively, and he promptly fell on top of her. Placing his hand over her mouth, the man told Jane, "Don't make a sound."

Jane bit his thumb and reached to claw for his eyes, breaking his glasses in the process. Jane had bitten his thumb to the bone, so hard that her jaw remained sore long afterwards, and so effectively that later she had to pick skin from his thumb

from between her teeth.

The would be assailant, obviously very much in pain at this point, tried to stand up and get away telling Jane, "It's okay. It's okay. Let go." He could not escape yet because Jane still had a firm bite on his thumb.

Jane let him go and gave out a shout. Three young men nearby heard the shout and came to see what had happened. The assailant and his accomplice were trying to drive away on very icy streets. The three men pursued the car on foot and then by car, but they were not able to catch the car, or get close enough to get a license number.

Jane was shaken up by the experience, but also slightly exhilarated because of the way she handled her assailant. She called the Help Line, to contact Rape Relief, to see if she should even notify the police about the experience. The lawyer Jane called, felt the police would do nothing.

Rape Relief outlined the action the police would take on her complaint. Rape Relief provided Jane with the information, but did not attempt to substitute their judgement for hers. They provided advice and counsel, but any decision for follow up was hers.

Jane decided to go down to the police station, but first the area was scoured for clues, and a glasses lens was found. The reception at the police station was polite but firmly bureaucratic. The desk officer suggested that Jane and her friends should

the courts is a very traumatic experience and Dal Student Health is prepared to aid the victim in any way, insuring that there is no need for the police to be informed, unless the person involved wishes them to be called in. Rape Relief sees their role as similar, "Our job is not to advise but to tell them what will happen at the police station."

Both Dr. Johnson and Rape Relief feel that the old image of the woman who "asked for it", or "deserved it" is no longer prevalent. Although Dr. Johnson does believe that women can bring it on themselves. In fact he believes, "It's really pretty difficult for the average man to rape a woman." "If it happens it's usually done under threat."

To members of Rape Relief however, "Rape is not just sexual intercourse, it involves threat, it involves coercion."

Where rape occurs and the situations in which it happens are many and varied: Purcell's Cove Rd., Gottingen St., the park, campus, and hospital grounds were all cited as prime areas for rapists. But any situation that allows you no protection is a dangerous spot. Rape Relief feels it imperative that if you are raped, go immediately to the hospital for a thorough check-up, save any evidence, and tell somebody - somebody who is sympathetic and understanding.

Recently a Federal government bill prohibiting bringing a woman's past character into the courtroom has passed the first reading. To members of Rape Relief this is only a token effort given by the government because of the pressure exerted by the women's movement. Lawyers have the ability to indirectly defame a victim's character by asking her such things as the color of her undergarments.

Rape and sexual assaults are on the increase in Halifax and the best cure is prevention. Don't walk alone at night, be escorted to your car and lock the doors. There are no certainties about where rape occurs, why, or by what type of person; the only protection you have is your awareness of the problem and your caution. You may feel foolish asking a friend to walk you home or paying for a taxi but the consequences of not doing this could be disastrous. "Every rapist has his own way of doing things - there is no thread binding them."

have called the police immediately and given the description of the car and its occupants to them for an APB. This advice completely missed the point that the first few minutes were spent in active pursuit of the assailants. Although they had a description of the car by color, years (give or take a year), type, and engine size (on that model only a certain engine size had that tail light shape), the police officer later suggested that because they did not have a license number the police felt the description was practically useless.

Jane was able to describe one of the men and outline the nature of his thumb injury. The police officer on duty said they would contact the hospitals, but not any doctors or optometrists to describe the young man and his injury. As well the police did not intend to attempt to trace the glasses lens.

Jane left the police station with the assurance that detectives would get in touch with her in the next few days to follow up on her case. Rape Relief called the next day to ask how her contact with the police had been and to offer any further help.

Two detectives contacted Jane a week later to remind her that if she saw either of the two men to contact them immediately and to be careful when she went out at night. The detectives visited her again a week later to report that they had no results. For all intents and purposes the case was closed.

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