

happen (although psychiatrists and psychologists often hear about them years later when the now-adult victim finds she cannot respond to her husband, or has deep-rooted problems in all areas of her life).

Unfortunately, the law concerning rape makes sure that a lot of other rapes are never reported either. The rape laws are based on several myths, the first one being that more people make false reports about rape than they do about any other crime.

This means that it is the duty of investigating police officers to doubt the word of an alleged rape victim, and if the case ever goes to court the judge must warn the jury that it is unwise (or dangerous) to accept the story on the victim's word alone. The woman must prove herself worthy of belief—that is, she is guilty until proven innocent.

Rape is a unique crime in many ways. It is the only crime, for instance, where the act itself (sexual intercourse) is not a criminal offense, but rather it is the circumstances which make it so.

The law in theory is pretty clear-cut in outlining those circumstances. The law says that it is a criminal offense if the woman did not consent to the act, or did not consent of her own free will.

In practice, however, the law chooses to make judgments about when it is in fact alright to force sexual intercourse on a woman. The law actually says that it is alright if she is under 18 years old and has a 'bad reputation' (is not 'previously chaste character').

It is alright, or most probably will be found to be alright, if she was necking with the man beforehand. And it is usually decided by the jury that rape is alright if she had gone out with the man before, had sexual intercourse with him before, or had been living with him.

It is a popular belief that if a woman has consented to sexual intercourse in the past she has no right to refuse to consent at any time in the future.

During a trial the rapist's lawyer often questions the victim about her past sexual behaviour, or tries to show that she deserved what she got, by dressing 'seductively' (when she may have thought she was dressed 'attractively'), or acting in an 'improper' way, or accepting a ride from a stranger.

Often enough, the jury will agree—"She was asking for it!" They will agree because most people like to think that if people act right nothing bad will happen to them, so if this woman was raped she must have done something wrong, and therefore the rapist was not to blame—she was!

This type of attitude is probably the reason that the charge of rape has the lowest conviction rate of any crime in Canada. Only 54 per cent of accused rapists are actually convicted, compared to an 86 per cent conviction rate for other crimes.

Also, people—including jurors—often feel that unless a woman has been beaten to within an inch of her life as well as raped, there really has been no harm done.

One California jury member remarked unabashedly to the press following a trial which involved a rape accusation: "He (the alleged rapist) was just trying to show her a good time..." Why should a man be put away, possibly for life, for trying to show a woman a good time? (As one newspaper added: "Men try to 'show a woman a good time' on the average of once every ten minutes in the United States.")

To most women, rape is no longer a 'fate worse than death', but many women who have been raped comment afterwards that they would rather be dead than suffer

through the ordeal of rape trial and through the unfeeling jibes of people who consider rape a joke, or merely a variation on normal sexual relations.

The rape victim often has trouble adjusting to the fact that her world is no longer as safe as she once thought it was, and also to the fact that, if her assailant is left off, it may seem to her that society is not willing to protect her from attacks on her person, or to punish her attacker—just because that attack happened to be on her sexual organs rather than on some other part of her body.

A woman who has been raped is usually most troubled by the humiliation and fear she experienced—the feeling of degradation and helplessness at being overpowered by force.

But it often appears that those around her, on the other hand, (including friends, police, lawyers) concentrate most on the sexual aspect of the attack.

Imagine the victim's surprise and confusion when they ask her "Did you enjoy it—even just a little bit?" who would think of asking that of a victim of, say, a mugging or robbery attempt?"

As more research is done about rape, more facts will come to light about why men rape. We already know that it is usually not because of an overwhelming surge of sexual passion—most rapists are married or have readily available sexual outlets.

And most rapes do not happen on the spur of the moment but are planned to some extent beforehand (this is especially true of gang rapes). To our knowledge so far it seems that men who rape are often the same types of men who would beat up other men if they had the confidence—but they see women as easier victims. Men who rape

children must have an even worse inferiority complex.

Another type of rapist sees women as merely 'pleasantly shaped masses of protoplasm' designed for sexual use. He sees nothing wrong with so using a woman, and believes she has no reason to object.

Women themselves however are getting more and more angry at this type of treatment and are objecting more vocally all the time.

Where once they had no one to complain to, nowhere to go for support and help through the trauma of readjustment, there are now specially-formed 'rape crisis centres' springing up all over Canada. In the last three years, there have grown 22 such centres (remarkable when contrasted with the number of large cities in Canada), and more are starting all the time.

They all started as a spontaneous response to the needs of the women in their communities, and they all share the belief that there is never an excuse for rape.

They believe that women, like other people, have the right to live their lives without the threat of violence, and that includes being free to wear what they like, go where they like, and choose or reject their sexual partners, without being accused of 'inviting attack'.

On an immediate level, the rape crisis centres serve to provide non-judgmental help for victims of all types of sexual assault, even if the law does not consider her attack a crime and even if the victim does not report it to the police at all.

The rape crisis centre may refer her for psychological counselling (the counselling may include her family as well) or just give her the chance to talk with other women who have been through the same thing.

The centre can advise her on how she can deal with the medical and legal problems following a rape and may go with her to the hospital and police station if she wants someone with her.

Most rape crisis centres encourage self-defense training so that women will gain confidence and men will someday realize that it can be as dangerous to attack a woman as it is a man.

A more long range goal of the rape crisis centres, though, is to educate the public—women and men—about the realities of rape, help us realize that rape does happen, far too often and in every community, large or small.

Rape is a problem not just for the women who are raped but for all women and for all of society, for it is the society that sets up the conditions that may foster rape, for instance by making the rules about how men and women see their roles and how they react to each other.

There is obviously no simple solution to the problem of rape. Violent crime in general is on the increase, but the fact is that rape is increasing even more.

It is unfortunate but true that every woman will at some time in her life probably be faced with the problem of sexual attack, to a greater or lesser degree, directly or indirectly.

Through open education and communication about the problem it is to be hoped that she will meet with a greater amount of understanding and sympathy than is likely to be the case now. As more people are made aware of sexual offenses in our society and their effect on all aspects of living, we may even see the day when we are free of this problem at least in its present size.

There is no simple solution. But to start thinking about it is a good first step towards finding a solution. The problem itself is definitely a matter of concern to us all.



by Allan Zdunich

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.

Janet 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 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.



by Donalee Moulton

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 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."

