

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.

Photo by Tom Mooney, Dal Gazette

