

# By any other name it is still assault

by Tina VanRikxoord

Rape is just an ugly four-letter word for most people. And yet, to one in seventeen women it is a frightening reality — a nightmare to be blocked out.

And so, sensitive to the needs of victims, the Rape Crisis Center has changed its name to the "Sexual Assault Center."

"There seems to be a sick humor associated with the word rape, and it's difficult for most victims to accept the word," says Center coordinator Marie Laing.

In 1974 figures showed that Edmonton had the highest incident of rape in Canada and was becoming known as "Rape City." In response to this, a group of concerned professionals banded together and formed the Rape Crisis Center. In February 1976 the Center established a weekend crisis line and enough volunteers were found that by May 1976 the 24 hour line operated seven days a week.

About 50 per cent of the calls received by the Center are from people who don't wish to pursue

their situation; they just want to talk and get their feelings out or they want someone to say "I'm here" and know that someone is there on the other end of the line when they feel that they have the energy to talk.

Most victims of rape or attempted rape feel guilty and the people at the Center try to give the victims a proper perspective without denying these feelings.

"The basic feeling is a loss of power and control, and we try to return that to them," says Laing.

If the victims are stable enough to talk, the volunteers will try to assess their needs and talk about the alternatives open to them. They won't try to force the victims to talk to the police, but the one thing they do stress is the need for medical attention.

Most victims don't realize the danger of venereal disease and the pregnancy rate among sexual assault victims is about eight per cent, says Laing.

The Center will do as much to help the victims as possible, from going to the hospital with

them to telling the family, to going with the victim to court.

About one third of the immediate cases (called within 48 hours) and the current cases (called within two weeks) go to court; there is a 45 per cent convictions rate.

But calls don't just come from adult women.

The Center has received calls from males, most of whom are in their late teens or early twenties, who have been sexually assaulted.

The men seem to have the same basic feeling as the women but they also start to question their own masculinity. Women are brought up to realize their vulnerability, but men don't realize that they too are vulnerable until they are assaulted.

One third of the calls the Center receives are from past victims of sexual assault or "survivors," as Laing calls them.

The number of calls received from past incest victims is growing rapidly. Because of the growing awareness of incest, many

older men and women who were victims as children find that for the first time in their lives they can speak to someone about it. And the Center is starting a child abuse program for children who are presently victims of incest.

Education is necessary, Laing says, to make people more aware that sexual assault is committed by men who feel weak and ineffectual

and have low self-esteem.

"Our belief is that it is a world of men and women living together and we have to learn to live together in equal and non-exploitive relationships," she says.

The Sexual Assault Center is always looking for volunteers, so if you would like to give some of your time, contact Marie Laing at 423-4102.



## Study the enemy

by Patricia Just

Last spring, Dean of Students, Dr. Burton M. Smith, ordered a committee formed to study alleged reports of sexual assault on campus, and the high level of fear related to them.

The committee, (comprised of members from Campus Security, Non-Academic Staff Association (NASA), Health Services, the libraries, the Womens' Centre, Sexual Assault Centre, SORSE, the SU, and Student Help, and WAVAW), was designed to represent the concerns of the entire campus and not just one special interest group.

Ruth Groberman, Chairman of the committee, says the aim of the group is "... to make ... people on campus accept responsibility for their own safety by increasing their awareness."

The main thrusts of the committee are preventative and educational.

The first major project undertaken, soon to appear in familiar places around campus, is a brochure of basic information to combat sexual assaults. It is stressed that this is a small part of the committee function. Lastly,

the brochure lists the phone numbers of places to call if you are attacked. It is hoped that you will never have to use them.

The second project is still in the planning stages. It is scheduled for the first week in November and will be titled "Rape Awareness Week." It will be a massive attempt "to eradicate the social taboo and mystique of sexual assaults" in all their forms.

Through the presentation of films, speakers and the formation of discussion groups, they hope to teach people "not just how to prevent it and how to avoid it but all about it (rape) ..." says SU vp external Lisa Walter.

The group has received \$2,500 from the U of A administration, and \$500 from NASA, and is directing it into these two objectives, and is also translating the brochure into foreign languages for the members of NASA who risk assault but can't read English.

The goal of the committee can be summed up in the words of SORSE rep. Dawn Noyes, who said "sexual assault will never cease to exist unless we know about it and what to do about it."

## Women's caucus acts affirmatively

TORONTO (CUP) — A major push to draw women into student politics was initiated here Friday by the Women's Caucus of the Ontario Federation of Students (OFS).

Representatives of the caucus met with delegates from universities and colleges across Ontario to urge students' associations to encourage more participation of women in student politics.

They also won adoption of an informal affirmative action program, in which OFS would only recognize the voting status of delegations to its conferences with at least 50 per cent women.

The Women's Caucus said the upper echelons of student councils are where women are under-represented in decision-making.

The Caucus' presentation to the delegates listed the barriers which impede women's participation in student politics:

- \*Financial pressures, which women experience at a more extreme level because of the wage gap between men and women;
- \*A lack of political cooperation in some Councils with women members;
- \*Academic pressures on women to remain in university until graduation without missing a year;

\*The socialization of women to be passive consumers rather than active politicians.

The Women's Caucus urged each students' association to run campaigns encouraging women to enter the political arena. They also

recommended the establishment of women's centers where role models and support groups could be promoted. Competent women should be promoted to high-profile positions where possible, they said.

## New group on the block

by Lloyd Takeyasu

Women's Centre is a new group on campus. It is composed mainly of women and concerned mainly with women. The centre was formed last spring amid campus controversy over the issues of feminism and sexism.

The group, however, is as much service-oriented as it is political. Suzanne Bizon, Women Centre member, said that presently the primary goal was to provide a place where women could go to find a friend.

Some of the group's recent activities have included organizing self-defense lessons, fitness groups, socials, and forums where speakers talk on issues important to women, she says.

Women's Centre is also an obviously political group. There is a desire by the members to raise public awareness of the problems facing women. Some members of the Centre participated in the recent WAVAW

march through downtown Edmonton. Some of the issues of concern to the group are campus security, and the proliferation of pornography on campus.

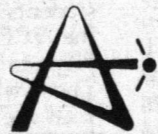
On the matter of Engineering Week, the group is taking a "wait and see" policy. "We're not a negative group," says Bizon. Marie Sorenson, a Centre member, would not exclude the possibility of taking action against the engineers if they continue to display "attitude problems".

The group is composed of volunteers, who take on a task, rather than an office.

To find the Women's Centre can be a problem as they are in the process of moving. Eventually Room 244 SUB should house the group.

On Oct. 4 the group is holding a public meeting. Anyone interested is encouraged to attend.

On Oct. 15 Susan Jackel has been invited to give a talk on women in history.



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