

Victim reveals recent sexual assault COVER STORY

By Jennifer Ryan
The Lumberjack

Although police reports state there have been no reported sexual assaults on campus for the past three years, students now are coming forward with stories of such

'I grabbed the comforter off my bed, ran out of the room and I remember crying and crying and yelling to his friends to get him out of my room.'

— student sexual assault victim

She did not know every person in the group and when they left to find another room she found herself alone in a room with an Arizona State University student she had never

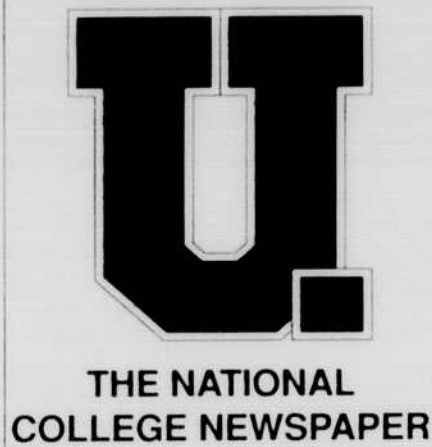
Tuesday, December 5, 1989 Daily Trojan

partment is relatively low, sexual assaults do occur on campus.

of 'date-rape' past cases were couples were

Rape: Many victims know their attackers on the rise on U.S. college campuses

Vet student Maria was rich



SPECIAL REPORT

Report by
Charles A. Hahn
U. Editor

Design by
Jacki Hampton
U. Editor

As a St. Francis freshman in 1983, Desiderati gave little, if any, thought to threats of campus violence. Like most students, she did not consider college a dangerous place.

"In college you're thrown into a situation with people you don't know in an often very isolated situation," Desiderati says. "That's something I didn't consider then. I was very young, very naive."

There is really no way of knowing how safe America's campuses are, since very few colleges and universities show their crime statistics to the public or any external agency. Only 10 percent of America's colleges and universities provide statistics for the FBI's annual crime report, and many schools severely limit student press access to campus police logs.

Stories like Desiderati's have convinced many students, parents, advocacy groups and legislators that the mystery surrounding violent crime on campus must be dispelled. And many feel that crime is a growing danger that not all universities and colleges are adequately addressing.

Critics argue that universities, to compete for a limited pool of students, have downplayed the danger and thus encouraged student naivete. "Schools are afraid it's going to hurt their ability to attract prospective students. It can show police aren't doing their job, that campuses aren't safe, and a lot of potential things," says Mark Goodman, executive director of the Student Press Law Center in Washington, D.C., which has helped several student newspapers fight for access to police records. "Campus crime is increasing, and schools are doing an effective job of covering it up."

In the absence of school-provided statistics, researchers have performed studies to illuminate the problem. The following are often cited:

- 31 students were murdered between January 1987 and September 1988, according to a *USA Today* study.
- An estimated 1 in 4 college women is the victim of rape or attempted rape every six months, according to a study performed by U. of Arizona Professor Mary Koss.
- 80 percent of violent crimes against students are committed by another student, according to a Towson State U., Md. study.
- 80 percent of campus violence is alcohol-related, according to another study at Towson.

Yet both researchers and victims believe many students are unaware of the problem.

"Students want to think that when they walk through the gates of schools, they're walking into a sanctuary," says Jan Sherrill, director for the Center for the Study and Prevention of Campus Violence at Towson State U., Md. "There's less violent crime on campuses than typically across the country, but we on campuses seem less able to deal with it and protect ourselves from it, because we view everybody as safe."

On Dec. 17, 1983, an intruder armed with a .22 caliber rifle entered Erin's dormitory unchallenged. He proceeded to take six students including Erin and her roommate Young Hee Su hostage. After releasing four of the students, he shot Erin and her roommate. It is our firm belief that a lack of security at Cornell U. was a major factor that contributed to this tragedy.

—Pat and George Nieswand, describing in a letter to California Sen. Art Torres how their daughter and her roommate were killed at Cornell.

Propped-open doors, parking lots with overgrown shrubbery, inadequate lighting and unguarded campus walkways are cited by many as causes of campus crime. Parents, legislators and campus crime experts agree that institutional security deserves more scrutiny.

"Most colleges and universities are not doing all that well with security," says Bill D'Urso of Campus Security Resources in Washington, D.C. "This concern with campus crime is relatively recent, and institutions are taking time to shift gears."

The deaths of Erin Nieswand and Young Hee Su are a case in point, says Frank Carrington, an attorney for Security on Campus. Their murderer gained access to their Cornell dorm

room through doors that were supposed to be locked for the weekend. "It was a clear violation of security," he says.

The university, although it claimed its security systems were adequate, eventually settled out of court with Nieswand's parents.

Creating awareness of such violent crimes and forcing schools to prevent them through improved security has become a crusade for Howard and Constance Clery of Philadelphia. On April 5, 1986, the Clery's daughter Jeanne was raped, sodomized, tortured and strangled to death by another student at Pennsylvania's Lehigh U. The student was later convicted of murder.



Erin Nieswand
Killed at Cornell U., 1983

Following an out-of-court settlement with the university, the Clerys founded Security on Campus, which serves as both a national political lobby and informational clearinghouse.

"The push for legislation to force colleges to report crime statistics has come about largely due to the Clerys," the Student Press Law Center's Goodman says. "They, like other victims of campus crimes, have said they're not going to take it."

Some universities, responding to the rash of publicity created by Jeanne Clery's murder and other prominent cases, have made visible efforts to improve safety. Like several other schools, Lehigh has placed emergency phones around campus.

Nevertheless, Lehigh Vice President for Student Affairs John Smeaton sees no connection between lax security and the murder of Jeanne Clery. "We reviewed, right after the murder, security provisions that were in place at the time, and determined, through both internal and external audits, that they were certainly adequate."

Administrators at various universities also note that students, who tend to prop open doors for pizza deliveries, friends, etc., bear some responsibility for keeping campuses safe.

On any large campus it is difficult to keep buildings secure, notes New

Mexico State U. Police Chief Jimmy Nelson. Students sometimes access and leave open buildings during off hours. "The students usually know when they're not supposed to be in the buildings, and if they elect to get inside the buildings they bear some responsibility," Nelson says. "It's a difficult situation for the police. We try to make rounds every 30 minutes or so, but during that time a building may be entered by a student or a faculty member. It's an ongoing problem."

According to D'Urso, both universities and students share responsibility for crime prevention. The university must be careful to provide clear information on where students are allowed when, and students should then observe those strictures.

Even critics of institutions' response to campus crime acknowledge that students have a responsibility for keeping themselves safe. "A lot of times things happen because students are not careful, they walk alone at night, etc.," says Boston attorney Jeffrey Newman, who has represented several campus crime victims in successful suits against universities. "It's unfair to hold a school up to too high a standard of care."

At the same time, Newman and others argue that many schools must do more to reach an acceptable standard of ensuring safety and providing information.

What they will do is never tell the girl or encourage her to go to the district attorney and press criminal charges. They will give her psychological counseling and then the dean sells her out....The victim is transferred and the rapist stays on campus....

—Howard Clery, parent of murdered Lehigh student Jeanne Clery, testifying before a California Senate Special Committee, June 8, 1989

In addition to being cited for insufficient security, many universities are criticized for insensitivity to campus crime victims, particularly women who have been raped.

Women's advocates say institutions share responsibility for fostering a social ethos that says rape is tolerable, and may somehow be the woman's fault.

"Rape is the most prevalent violent crime problem on college campuses," says Gail Abarbanel, director of the Rape Treatment Center in Santa Monica, Calif., which treats an estimated 1,000 rape victims per year. "College age is the most vulnerable age for rape. It's an epidemic problem on college campuses, and one of the reasons it happens so often is it's never dealt with by the colleges."

A survey of college women, conducted