



Graphic by Jeff Paslay

Phone harassment on the rise

□ Obscene calls can be terrifying, but few report the incidents

By Tammy Batey
Emerald Reporter

Marie was asleep the morning the first phone call jolted her out of bed. For 10 minutes on her answering machine, the caller detailed how he was going to rape her and how much she was going to love it.

For Marie (not her real name), the nightmare had just begun.

The man began calling Marie almost daily. The scariest thing about the calls was what he knew about her. He knew her weight to the exact pound. When she bought a Nike "Just Do It" poster, he called and said, "Love your poster: 'Just Do It' just do me, baby." He knew she rode horses when she was younger, something Marie says no one at the University knew.

The calls were traced back to pay phones in Indianapolis. Marie says she has never lived in Indianapolis and doesn't know anyone there. The calls, which got so bad that Marie dropped out of school, stopped after about three months, and Marie is now back at the Uni-

'It can be a very frightening invasion of personal space. The person is coming into your living room and verbally assaulting you.'

— Erin Collier,
Sexual Assault Services

versity. But she said the calls have changed her forever. She said she will never have her phone number listed, and when she turns 21 she's buying a gun.

"They say in 99 percent of cases nothing happens," she said. "I don't want to be that 1 percent."

Marie's story is an extreme case of phone harassment. However, incidents of phone harassment are on the rise in Oregon.

Tim Birr, Eugene police department spokesman, said he suspects phone harassment is a very underreported crime. Phone harassment is a Class B misdemeanor, carrying a maximum \$1,000 fine or six months

in jail.

"The tragedy is it's an easy crime to commit, and it's hard to catch someone," Birr said.

Oregon's Law Enforcement Data System, the state's crime record keeping agency, doesn't lump harassing phone calls together in its crime records, said Elaine DeVore, LEDS crime reporting specialist. Some calls are recorded as threats, and others are recorded as obscene phone calls. This makes it difficult for LEDS to know the exact number of reported cases of phone harassment.

The number of reported obscene phone calls rose 56 percent, from 422 calls in the first nine months of 1989 to 659 calls during the same period in 1990. The calls totaled 658 in the first nine months of 1991.

University students reported 12 incidents of phone harassment to the Office of Public Safety from July 1, 1991 to the present, said T.K. McDonald, OPS administrative assistant. Three cases of phone harassment were reported in October, four in November and five in January.

People commit the crime of telephone harassment when they either call someone with no "communicative purpose,"

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Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Alliance gets threats, jeers on office phone

By Tammy Batey
Emerald Reporter

The messages on the answering machine are disturbing and full of hate.

"I'd just like you people to know you're sick and I hope you all freekin' get AIDS."

"You're going to be put in a meat grinder. Come on, you fags and queers."

"If you were standing in my kitchen right now I'd blow a hole through your ... head."

Individuals aren't the only victims of phone harassment. While harassing phone calls among individuals has been on the rise in Oregon, the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Alliance on campus has received a steady stream of hate-filled phone calls during its years on campus.

LGBA receives such hate messages on its answering machine on a daily basis, and it's a sad fact that office volunteers become desensitized to the messages, said LGBA Co-director Sue Dockstader.

"Not a day goes by that we don't get a prank call," Dockstader said. "It's just part of the routine of staffing the office."

LGBA receives from one to two hate messages on weekdays, and from four to five over the weekend, probably because callers know no one will be there then, she said.

"We get some pretty nasty ones," Dockstader said. "One person said we should all be shot with AK-47s and pushed into cliffs with knives at the bottom."

Men targeting gay men makes up the majority of hate-filled messages LGBA receives, she said.

Dockstader said the messages often contain jokes about people of color and the handicapped. People also tell AIDS jokes.

Since the Oregon Citizen Alliance came into the public eye, the LGBA has received many calls from people who

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Crank calls can be halted

By Tammy Batey
Emerald Reporter

When University student Bryce Ingman picked up the phone a man asked if he had reached the suicide hot line.

Ingman began telling the man he had dialed the wrong number, but the man began crying. Ingman then heard the sound of a gun being cocked and the man dropped the phone.

After a few seconds another man laughed into the phone and said, "Got you."

Phone harassment can be a terrifying experience and threaten a person's sense of security. However, crime specialists say there are ways to prevent prank calls from recurring.

The most effective way to discourage a prank caller from calling again is by hanging up. Phone harassers will seldom call back if a person says, "Never call here again" and then

hangs up, said Bev Collins, Eugene police department crime-prevention specialist.

"It's rare if they don't get what they want," she said. "There are plenty of people who will listen to these jerks."

American society has a taboo against hanging up on people, Collins said.

"We don't give people in this society the right to hang up," she said. "It's seen as impolite, but (phone harassers) are getting their rocks off right there."

If a phone harasser calls twice, Collins recommended reporting the incident to the police, as it's possible the caller was casing your house to find out certain details about you.

Blowing a whistle into the phone is an effective way of deterring phone harassers from calling again, University Public Safety Director Carey Dray-

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