

Local

Half of all victims know attackers

Date rapes not uncommon today

By TERRI COULSON  
Battalion Reporter

Jan had noticed Greg in class. She thought he was good-looking and seemed like a real nice guy. So she was very excited when he asked her out. They went out to eat and to a movie and Jan was having a great time. They stopped at a park on the way home to "talk," so Jan thought. All of a sudden, Greg grabbed her, twisted her arm and pushed her down in the seat of the car. Jan tried to fight back but she was no match for him. He told her it was now her turn to "pay up" for the evening. When he proceeded to rape her. Unusual and far fetched? Things like that just don't happen here? It not only happens here, says District Attorney Travis Ryan, but 10 percent of the rapes in Brazos County are date rapes. According to statistics, the victim knows the man who assaulted her in nearly 50 percent of the estimated half million rapes reported yearly in this country. Not all rapes are reported, and people who work in rape counseling believe that the majority of these unreported assaults are also committed by someone the victim knew. A common mistaken belief is that "If you knew him, you somehow invited it," said Kerry Hope, a counselor for the Personal Counseling Service. "If you do not know the person, you are taking a risk, Hope said. But no one thinks she is going to be raped. What is worse about date rape is that you agreed to be with the person, she explained. "With any rape, you feel a sense of loss," Hope said, "and a terrific amount of grief."

In a date rape situation "you deal with a lot more guilt," Hope said.

All rape victims, she said, encounter four stages of grief reactions: 1) denial that it has happened; 2) depression (feeling helpless and hopeless); 3) anger, and 4) resolution-acceptance of what has happened.

Research has found that when something like this occurs between ages 19 and 29 it affects the young adults' trust in others, independence, motivation, sense of self-worth and the image of their place in society. This trauma is likely to affect their lifestyle and plans for the future. Their bonding and intimacy potential also suffer. Rape trauma is caused because rape is primarily a life-threatening act of violence where sex is used as the weapon.

One of the biggest problems prosecutors have with rape victims is their not reporting it.

"They feel as if they've done something wrong and that it's their fault," said Assistant District Attorney Hank Payne. Nothing is further from the truth. FBI Crime Reports show that unreported rapes outweigh reported rapes 20 to 1.

"Reasons for not reporting rape include fear of retribution from the man (especially if she knew him), horror stories and wanting to forget it," counselor Hope said.

Another reason a woman might not report rape, Hope said, is that its sexual nature puts it in a very sensitive area. By contrast, a physical assault would be easier to report because there is nothing sexual about it.

"Rape is not a sex crime," Payne said. "It is a violent one. The only sexual part about it is the sex act itself. The only crime more serious to me would possibly be capital murder."

Rape, according to the Texas penal code, is when a person

has sexual intercourse with a female not his wife, without the female's consent.

Prosecutors in the Brazos County area have been standardizing procedures that will make prosecution and conviction easier, Payne said.

They are standardizing the procedures used in dealing with rape victims. Now they are given a set series of tests when they arrive at a hospital, Payne said. These tests are not new, but are improvements on the old procedures.

"We are trying to educate the medical personnel as to the importance of the chain of custody," Payne said. In the past, that has been a problem. Chain of custody is a record of where and who collected the evidence. It helps validate the evidence and establish that it has not been tampered with, often a critical question when the case goes to trial.

"We want to use every possible tool to aid in conviction," Payne said. "We are not qualified, but the medical profession is."

More than a dozen men have been tried for rape over the last two years in the county and all have been convicted.

Even though prosecution is vigorous and incidence is low at Texas A&M, the fear of rape can have bad effects. Uncertainty about campus security can scare women out of attending extra-curricular activities scheduled at night or using the library and athletic facilities.

No on-campus rapes have been reported from students this year, said Dr. John Koldus, vice president for student services. Five were reported last year, one occurring on campus.

That incident took place on the jogging track behind the president's home, Koldus said. Since then, lights have been added to deter any further attacks.

Texas company gives 'Chinadillos'

HOUSTON — Four armadillos — a "racing" model from Frederickburg and three captured in West Texas — were shipped to the Peking Zoo Thursday as a gift to the Chinese people from a Texas oil equipment service company.

"One of the problems with armadillos when they're taken into captivity is they stop eating," said Ben Gillespie, a spokesman for Geosource Inc. "These are eating. We made sure."

Gillespie said Geosource employee Don Ball was in China for a trade mission and learned of the zoo's interest in acquiring the bony-plated mammals.

This shipment included two male

and two female armadillos plus a month's supply of food. Zoo officials in Peking have already prepared facilities for the animals after their arrival Sunday by airplane.

Three of the armadillos were caught in Edwards County near Rock Springs and the fourth is a "racing" armadillo from Frederickburg provided by Sam Lewis, president of the World Armadillo Breeding and Racing Association.

"We have done some business with the Chinese and hope to do more. This is really sort of a good will gesture on our part," Gillespie said. "I don't know whether it will improve relations between the two countries or not."

Woman receives criticism for owning boa constrictor

United Press International

BOISE, Idaho — Joyce Kacalek, whose missing boa constrictor was returned last week after its five-month adventure in Boise, says she has received a vicious letter and obscene telephone calls about her exotic pet. The woman says she has received several late-night calls saying she was "crazy" and "a nut" for keeping her pet snake, Abner, as a pet. Abner disappeared in May, but was returned to his owner Nov. 26 after another Boise woman, Joyce Brandt, discovered the animal coiled on top of her clothes dryer. Brandt was described as being "hysterical" when Idaho Humane Society employees arrived to take the snake. Kacalek, who thought the boa had perished, retrieved Abner from the humane society shelter on Thanksgiving Day. Front-page news stories and television accounts about the incident apparently sparked the subsequent abuse against the snake-owner. Kacalek's joy about recovering her snake also sparked several newspaper letters-to-the-editor that referred to

wire service stories about a recent incident in Texas in which a pet python got loose and killed a baby in its crib.

A letter signed by a disgusted "mother and grandmother" arrived in the mail Wednesday. It said, in part, "When I saw you on TV caressing that ugly boa constrictor, it turned my stomach. I don't care if you did raise it from a baby; there is something about men or women who fondle snakes that (makes them) really sick."

The letter also suggested that Kacalek's neighbors should kill the snake and that Kacalek should seek psychiatric help. The snake owner said she believed she received about a half-dozen profane calls, apparently from the same person who wrote the letter.

People who object to snakes as pets don't understand reptiles, she added. "Man's best friend, loveable Rover, can take the front off babies' faces and parrots can take off fingers."

Kacalek said Abner is the "world's greatest coward" and that in the past she had to "stun" live food for the snake before it would eat. But she acknowledged the snake apparently used its natural abilities during its five-month absence.

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