

Family Violence The terror of abuse is always present

By JACIE B. PALMER
Herald Special

And all she wanted for Christmas was to have a great few days with her kids... You know, some skating, some skiing and lots of time to make angels in the snow - favorite things!

But this year was no different from the ones before... with one exception, that is. This year friends gave me some gizmos to help protect me. The first was a time/wall socket - to give my home that "occupied" look. The second was a sound activated switch which turns on lights when it hears a noise. If anyone had told me I'd ever be afraid to enter my own home, afraid to walk up the stairs to my bedroom, afraid to open the front door and afraid each time I hear dogs barking I'd never have believed it.

Now, however, I'm frightened often. I just never know when paranoia is going to strike or how long the fear will last. Well, I'm not really paranoid. It's just that I've come into my home and found things amiss enough to

know someone is trying to scare me... and it does scare me. Now, I almost have a sixth sense and know when someone has been here. I've come to the conclusion that anyone will enter your home if they want to and that there is little point in changing locks and increasing security. The facts are, if an abuser wants to scare you, harass you, beat you or kill you he will find the way to do it. So, living with the fear has become almost normal for me. I usually don't let it get to me.

I try to hide it from my kids but sometimes they are scared, too, especially when we have another phone hang-up. We all wonder if it's just a wrong number or "him". Sometimes we can hear someone breathing or hear sighs and background music. I always feel helpless because I allowed this man into their lives and we can't seem to get him out. None of us will ever forget him and the horror he has made us live with. I will never forgive myself for the pain it is putting them through. I wonder what the long term im-



lications are for them because they live with a mother who is irrational, emotional and upset some of the time. And that's how it came to be that I'm getting security gizmos for Christmas. What a parody on

life in Halton Hills! Five years ago I never considered locking my doors and I never locked my vehicle. Now I ensure everything is locked up, I watch where I park my car when I'm out and I always look all around as I'm walking the streets or meandering through the parks. I walk a lot less now! I'm careful where I go and it would be unusual for me to be seen out on a weekend evening. I'm terrified of running into him as I almost did a week or two ago. Thank God he did not see me!

Just the other day I was up for an early walk and then went back to bed. Sometime between the time I arrived home and when I got up someone had climbed my fence and tried to enter my home through the laundry room. No footprints at any other doors. Did I call the police? No! Oh, eventually I will contact them. It's just one more minor irritation to deal with. They will ask me if I suspect anyone and I will go through my usual song and dance routine with yet another cop.

So that is the story of how I came to be the proud possessor of security gizmos... what a Christmas story. Yes, I need them. I need something to make me feel more secure. However, they bring to mind even more the atrocity that has come into our lives and will forever leave its footprints on our memories. Sometimes life is strange!

Feel free to contact Jacie by directing letters to her attention at the Herald. All correspondence will remain confidential. Should you wish to speak to Jacie, call the Distress Centre at 877-1211 and your call will be returned. If you are a woman or child in crisis or an abusive male wanting help call the Distress Centre or dial 911.

A networking group is available for abused women seeking help and advice. The group meets every Wednesday evening, 7:30 p.m. at Georgetown Hospital.

For further information on the group please contact Pam Johnston at 877-5877.



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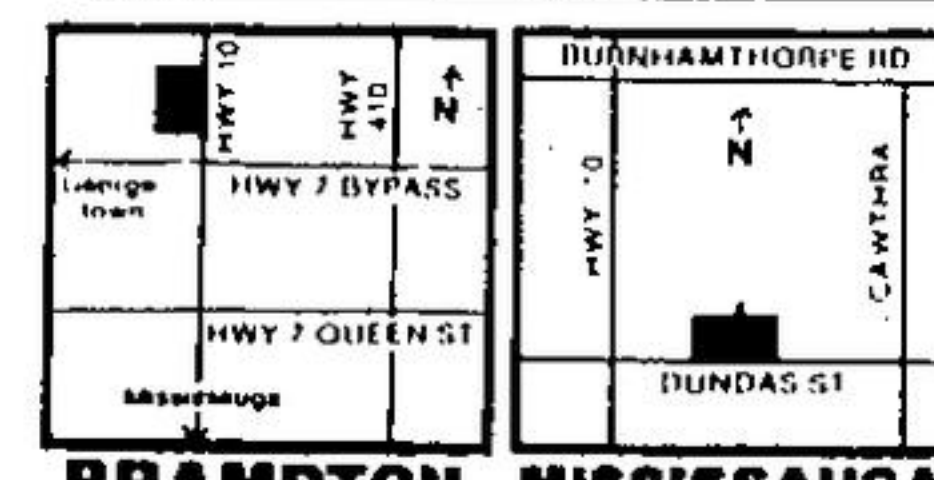



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