



Is Sacramento's East Area rapist stalking quiet Contra Costa streets such as this?

# Rape's aftermath raises issue of suburban safety

**San Ramon** — At about 2:30 in the morning last Oct. 28, a 23-year-old suburban mother awoke to find a masked intruder standing near the foot of her bed.

"The only parts of his body I could see were his eyes, his little eyes, just staring," recalls the woman, who shall be called Kathy.

During the next two hours the intruder bound Kathy and her 24-year-old husband, stole a small amount of cash and some jewelry, drank beer — and raped Kathy on the cold linoleum floor of her kitchen. Her child slept through it all.

"He wasn't really brutal. He didn't smack me around," she says. "But he isn't gentle either."

The rape itself lasted five minutes.

Sheriff's investigators won't say whether they think the intruder was a notorious East Area rapist, who is believed to have raped more than 30 women in the Sacramento area and so, they concede, may have struck twice in Concord earlier in October.

"There are similarities but there are also some subtle differences," says Sgt. Warren Rupf, chief of the sheriff's investigative division.

But whether an isolated incident or part of a pattern of similar incidents that has some Northern California cities gripped by fear, the San Ramon case tells a great deal about how individual lives are affected when a dramatic crime abruptly tears the reputation of a peaceful fabric of suburban existence.

The response of law enforcement authorities also is worth examining. Their apparent successes and possible failures in connection with the San Ramon rape show how well they may or may not be equipped to try to prevent the rapes of other suburban women.

If the East Area rapist is in fact operating in Contra Costa, has the sheriff's office shown it can cope with this situation? Some say no.

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For about two weeks after Kathy's rape, a wave of anxious couples — many of them young — inundated gun stores and hardware stores in the San Ramon Valley. They were seeking firearms, locks and burglar alarms.

Gun sales rose as much as 30 percent. Revolvers costing up to \$250 are the most popular purchases, according to salesmen, because they're easier for women to handle than automatic weapons.

Sales at some hardware stores have more than doubled. Deadbolts, window locks, peep holes and garage door locks were grabbed from the shelves and aspirin from a medicine cabinet.

their 30s with young children — were discussing security defects in her home on Montclair Place, a quiet cul-de-sac off Springdale Avenue.

Susan Hall, a composed woman who says she's always alert to the possibility of being raped, noted that Kathy's home was "more private than the others. You couldn't really see it from elsewhere on the street."

Karen Dibble also studied Kathy's home and immediately noted that it bordered on a large Christmas tree lot — a perfect cover for prowlers, she pointed out.

"I figured you can get hysterical or get locks," she said. "I got locks. I wasn't going to let the rape take over my life."

Since it happened, Dibble has been writing down the license plate numbers of unfamiliar cars entering the cul-de-sac. She also leaves on outdoor lights after dark and makes certain her husband stands guard whenever she ventures out to her car at night.

Neither Dibble nor Hall feel the suburban ideal of peace, quiet and safety has gone bad on them as a result of the rape. They said they'd never believed in it, anyway. Both women plan to remain in San Ramon.

But Mona Stenovich, who lives on Springdale Avenue and was one of the first to move into the subdivision, thinks the rape symbolizes the overall deterioration of life in San Ramon.

"This was just a town," she complained. "Now it's as big as a city. The rape was like a death in the family."

Homes in the area where Kathy was raped are small, seven-year-old ranch style structures said to be worth about \$70,000. They're well-cared for and immaculately landscaped. Recreational vehicles and children's toys fill their driveways.

Some bear decals on their front windows indicating the occupants belong to a local crime-prevention group. From time to time, a dog barks — but it usually turns out to be a pint-sized animal and no apparent physical threat to a prowler (although possibly a good warm-blooded early-warning system).

"It was the kind of neighborhood

## About 80 percent of our bedrooms have guns now

where you felt you didn't have to lock your doors," Kathy recalls.

In fact, Maureen Orlando of Springdale Avenue — who has two teen-aged daughters — admitted with some embarrassment that she didn't lock her doors before Oct. 28.

company meter readers. Also, before the rape, she'd considered her husband the ultimate deterrent. But now she finds herself looking at him a little doubtfully.

"What upsets everybody," Orlando explained, "is that the rape disproved that if your husband's home, you're safe."

A male neighbor of Kathy's defended husbands.

"There's not much you can do," he said. "I would try not to do anything stupid. My wife's safety would be the most important thing. Rape would be unfortunate, but life would go on."

The man, who refused to give his name, added, "If he was a killer or if he mutilated people, I'd consider getting a gun."

His wife said:

"We're from New York City and we've been raised differently. We were taught to look behind us. Here, you're in a nice place and you have a nice home, but you're no safer than a person in a city."

"So your defenses actually have to be up more. New York has 8 million

people on the streets. Here, something can happen during the day and no one would know."

Possibly not even the sheriff, the rape victim herself claims.

"Even if they had the whole force in front of our house, they couldn't have prevented it," Kathy says. "There was no way they'd have known what was going on."

Investigators arrived five minutes after she managed to call them (which was five minutes after Kathy began to believe the rapist had departed). She thinks they did a good job — "couldn't have been better."

There are three new villains in Kathy's world today, however.

• The rapist, of course.

"I just really hate that guy, although I feel sorry for anybody who has to stoop that low to get sex."

• Howard Jarvis.

"They turned off the street lights because of Prop. 13 and I think that had a lot to do with it."

• The phone company.

"I dialed 911, the emergency number, after he'd gone — but it's not in service in San Ramon even though we pay 28 cents a month for it, which I deduct now."

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A mile-and-a-half to the south, San Ramon residents are critical of the sheriff. On Northland Avenue and on Ernwood Place, some people believe the East Area rapist — or an equally menacing counterpart — might have

aped.  
Lorraine Appel of Ernwood Place asserts that she actually confronted a prowler whom she thinks could have been the East Area rapist.

At about 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 1 — four days after Kathy was raped — Appel happened to be looking out her dining room window. She says she spotted a prowler about six or seven feet away and observed him about a minute.

This is her account:

"I saw this fellow jumping over a six-foot fence. He was approximately 5' 10" and about 160 pounds. Hazel eyes. Kind of sandy-haired, well-groomed. Very muscular in the arms and shoulders.

"He was wearing very light-colored blue jeans with a dark blue-and-red striped tank top, sleeveless. You could see he definitely worked out.

"After he came over the fence, he walked toward the patio. He didn't see me. I went into the kitchen and my well-trained dog jumped up and hit the screen door. He almost went through it. There was no response from this fellow. He didn't flex a muscle, didn't walk a step faster.

"I yelled through the open window. 'What are you doing here?'"

"He turned his head away and in a very phony deep voice, a disguised voice, he said, 'Just passing through.'"

"Was he nervous? No, absolutely not."

Appel then ran to the front of her house, through the front door and out to Ernwood Place. She didn't see the man, whom she believes was about 30 years old.

"I came in and called the sheriff. He came within three or four minutes. Quite a few cars. I didn't say I thought it was the East Area rapist. I never read a physical description of the East Area rapist.

"An officer said, 'Just make a brief report of what he was wearing, no other details.' Nobody asked me about the way he looked.

"This same officer said to me that the kid down the block had been coming in, that the door at my next neighbor's was open and that he had broken into that house. They felt like they were looking for the kid, and that was why they didn't want me to put down a physical description. They said the kid was older than he is.

"I hadn't seen this kid before, but I had seen him approximately three or four times after on the street. I was watching for him. He was walking toward me then past me. I was about 10 or 12 feet from him and I observed him for about a minute-and-a-half.

There was quite a difference as far as I was concerned. The

## The rape was like a death in family for little town

build, his features, his hair. He wasn't as muscular. He was in a sleeveless shirt, too.

"It wasn't the same person."

Appel's description of the man in her backyard matches police descriptions of the East Area rapist. He's said to be in his mid 20s, blond, extremely muscular, very composed and unafraid of dogs. In short, a cool customer.

When authorities arrived at her home, Appel also pointed out that a screen on her living-room window had been pried open about seven or eight inches. She was asked to remain at home the following day so a sheriff's investigator could fingerprint the screen. He didn't come. She called again the following Saturday and a fingerprint technician was sent out. (No "usable" prints were found, authorities would later report.)

Appel continued:

"A week later, we found a footprint in our backyard in front of the kitchen window. I discovered it when a neighbor called to tell me their trip wire (a detection device installed next to a fence) had been sprung.

"The neighbor called the sheriff who confirmed that somebody had been in their yard. They also covered the footprint in my yard with a shoe box and a board and said somebody would come out in a day or so.

"But nobody ever showed up. I called the next week and asked for the officer who'd taken the fingerprints off the screen. He wasn't there and I left a message. I got no response.

"That was it. I'm baffled. They'd also asked me if I would identify 'pictures.' I said I would, but they never showed them to me. I left the footprint covered, too, but it's rained . . ."

Appel's account was partially confirmed by a neighbor on Ernwood Place and another on Northland Avenue.

"I'll never know why they didn't get a composite from Mrs. Appel," said an Eastbay police officer who lives on Northland Avenue. "You'd think they'd be hot to get the guy."

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# Rape ...

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"We at least deserve an explanation to ease the tension. There are guns in 80 percent of the bedrooms around here. Some poor guy breaking into a house is going to get blown away.

"People are scared to death."

Capt. Warren Rupf, the sheriff's chief investigator, was asked why authorities apparently failed to take note of the possible leads Lorraine Appel wanted to provide.

Rupf checked the official account of the Nov. 1 incident in Appel's backyard. He was unable to reconcile it with what Appel told The Tribune.

"If what she relates in fact happened, I would be concerned," he said. "Any officer that tries to direct a witness in terms of a statement or description is acting in an improper fashion.

"I'm going to have my investigative sergeant go out and talk to everybody."

Rupf declined to say categorically whether he believed the man who raped Kathy was the East Area rapist. He noted, however, "The Concord Police Department has identified the EAR as being in their city."

Was it therefore possible the East Area rapist also was operating in the nearby San Ramon Valley?

"Certainly," Rupf replied.

Is there enough manpower to conduct the best possible investigation?

"The sheriff's office has sufficient manpower to conduct a proper investigation," he said.

But Lt. John Gackowski of the sheriff's patrol division complained about inadequate staffing in his division, which would play a key role in any concerted effort to capture a rape suspect.



Residents hope dogs will deter rapist

"We need more people," Gackowski said.

He noted, however, that the San Ramon Valley is more intensely patrolled today than ever before — because of the area's growing population, which jumped almost 15 percent (to an estimated 49,800) between 1975 and 1978.

As many as seven deputies are in the valley at one time. That's one man in one car for every nine square miles and every 7,100 residents.

Gackowski said Kathy's rape "focused attention on that need."

Increased patrols might not be the answer, however.

"They've done studies in Kansas City and Denver showing that you can throw 5,000 cops into a neighborhood and it doesn't affect the crime rate," said an Oakland Police Department rape investigator.

He noted that increased patrols also had had no effect on the rate of sexual assault in East Oakland, an area with a particularly bad rape problem.

That leaves it up to the investigators — and people like Lorraine Appel, who believe they have information that may help solve a crime problem terrorizing Contra Costans.