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FOR

Winter 1993

FRIENDS

of the Fairfax County Victim Assistance Network

NEW HELP FOR THE HUNTED

If you are repeatedly being followed, watched or harassed by someone trying to make you believe he or she will harm you, new help is available. Virginia has recently become one of an increasing number of states to make stalking a crime. A stalker's target may be a former boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse, or even someone a stalker has never had an actual relationship with. Obsessive interest in a victim's lifestyle and personal habits, following and watching a victim and constant telephoning may all be stalking behaviors.

The police and prosecutors now have a new tool to assist victims of stalkers. Victims who feel hunted, scared and alone can take the first step towards reclaiming their freedom by notifying the police of their situation. Under Virginia's new stalking law, which became effective on April 15, 1992, a convicted stalker is subject to confinement in jail for up to six months and/or a fine of up to \$1,000.00. If a stalker violates a court order directing him or her to keep away from a victim, he or she may be jailed for up to one year and/or fine up to \$2,500.00. A third stalking conviction within five years is a felony, punishable by one to five years imprisonment; or confinement for up to one year and/or a fine of up to \$2,500.00. If you are a victim who feels scared, embarrassed and alone, understand that this new law was enacted for you, and for others like you in the same emotional distress. The judicial system stands ready to aid you if you are in fear of harm. Stalking victims can now seek help before actual harm occurs.

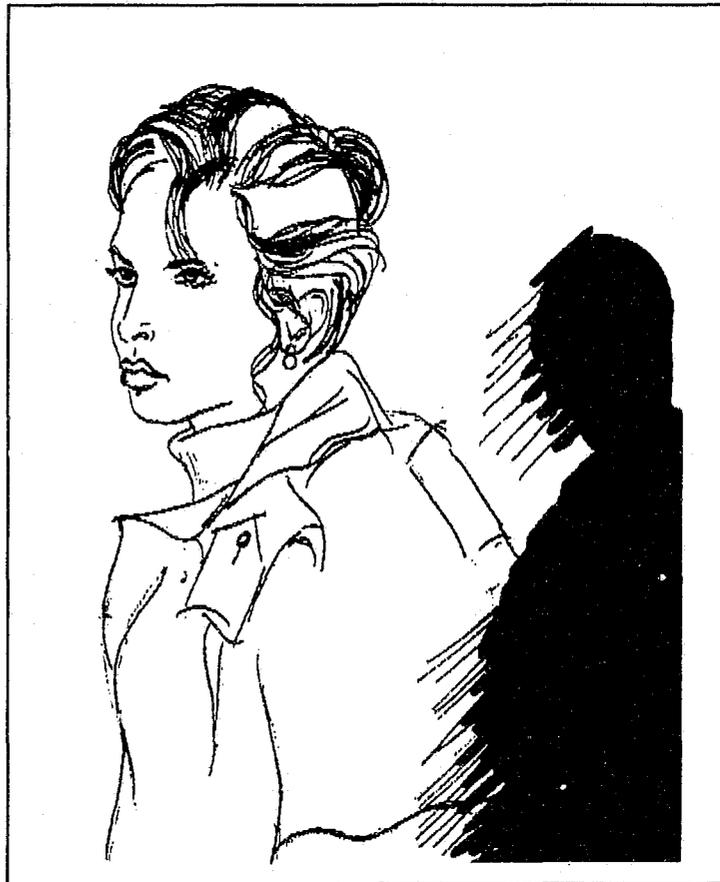


Illustration by Pamela C. Burchard

It is important for a person to call the police even if he/she suspects being stalked. The police need to document a pattern of behavior, and calling and saying it has happened three times before is not sufficient. The police will only be able to document the most recent incident and begin to record a pattern.

**A DISCUSSION ON STALKING BEHAVIOR
WITH PROMINENT CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGIST, STANTON E. SAMENOW, PH.D.**

Q: Dr. Samenow, thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule for this discussion. Would you please relate for our readers your professional background and involvement in the field of criminal psychology?

A: Thank you for the opportunity to bring the problem of stalking behavior to the public's attention. Briefly, I received by Bachelor's degree (Cum Laude) from Yale in 1963, and my Doctorate in Psychology in 1968 from the University of Michigan. I worked with adolescents as a clinical psychologist in Michigan before undertaking clinical research on criminal behavior at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C., from 1970 until 1978. From work at St. Elizabeth's, the three volume publication The Criminal Personality, which I co-authored, contains the findings of the longest in-depth clinical research and treatment study of offenders conducted in North America.

In 1978 I entered private practice in Alexandria, Virginia, specializing in the evaluation and treatment of criminal offenders. I deliver lectures, give training seminars and workshops and I have served as consultant and expert witness for a variety of courts and agencies including the FBI, Dade County (Florida) Public Schools, the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the U.S. Office of Probation. I have been appointed to two Presidential Task Forces and was appointed as a conferee to a White House Conference.

I have authored numerous articles along with authoring Inside The Criminal Mind and Before It's Too Late: Why some kids Get Into Trouble And What Parents Can Do About It and I have appeared frequently on a variety of national radio and television broadcasts.

Q: Based on your studies what do you believe motivates a stalker?

A: Stalkers see human relationships as avenues of conquest and triumph. They seek to control others to boost or reaffirm their image of themselves. A stalker's view of the world centers around the control of other people. That control over others goes to the heart of a stalker's self-image. Stalkers have an uncompromising view of life. To a stalker, life is a one-way street. Stalkers don't take no for an answer.

Q: Do you believe stalkers can be motivated to seek help to end their stalking behavior?

A: As with any other destructive behavior, stalkers must reach a low point, where they believe they will suffer negative consequences, before they seek to change that behavior. With some stalkers, that low point is reached with jailing. Once the door clangs shut, the stalker sees the consequence - a loss of freedom. At that time there is a ray of light for a minority of stalkers, who may then be willing to work intensively to change their self-perception and behavior patters.

Q: What actions should the targeted victim of a stalker take to discourage, end or be safe from stalking behavior?

A DISCUSSION ON STALKING BEHAVIOR

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A: Stalkers often view themselves as attractive and irresistible. Their objective is to prove or reaffirm that they are irresistible by dominating and controlling their victim and by getting that person under his/her thumb. Therefore, when a targeted victim is forced to engage a dialogue with the stalker, or agrees to meet with the stalker, the stalker perceives this as encouraging. A victim must keep all contacts to an absolute minimum, or nonexistent. Any sign that the stalker is controlling the life of the victim gives the stalker a feeling of success.

Q: Is there a typical profile or group of general characteristics or goals which all stalkers share?

A: The self image and desire to control others, which stalkers share, can manifest itself in a variety of ways and to varying degrees. The goal of a stalker, or the view of stalker has of human relationships, centers on control. However, while this need to control may be a shared characteristic of most stalkers, the control which a stalker seeks to impose may involve creating fear in the victim, or involving the victim once again in the stalker's life if the victim sought to leave, or may involve assaulting or raping the victim. Stalkers often commit other illegal acts. Of course the ultimate control over a person, which some stalkers may seek, is the taking of the victim's life.

Q: Do you believe Virginia's new law criminalizing stalking will protect victims of stalkers?

A: I think it is essential that people who engage in stalking know that there are laws to protect

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VAN SERVICES

The Victim Assistance Network assists victims of sexual assault and domestic violence in Fairfax County, Fairfax City and the City of Falls Church.

24 hour hotline 360-7273

Hotline on TTD 799-8253

Spanish speaking, signing and male counselors available on request.

Sexual Assault: women and men adult victims; children assaulted by a non-family member.

- * crisis intervention & follow-up support
- * individual counseling
- * counseling for family members
- * support groups for
 - adult and teen women
 - parents of assaulted children
 - men family/friends of a victim

- * assistance with reporting to police
- * accompaniment to hospitals and courts
- * information on safety, health questions, legal opinions, recovery
- * referrals to other agencies and specialized services
- * prevention workshops for all ages
- * professional case consultations

Domestic Violence: women and men adult victims

- * crisis intervention and follow-up service
- * support groups for adult women
- * information on legal options, personal safety
- * referrals to shelters and other service agencies
- * accompaniment to hospitals and courts
- * awareness workshops for teens and adults
- * professional case consultations
- * photographs of injuries for evidence

VAN's service providers are sensitive to issues of age, gender, ethnic background, race disability and sexual orientation. VAN is a program of the Fairfax/Falls Church Community Services Board under the Mt. Vernon Center for Community Mental Health.



SUE WESTENDORF NAMED VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

FRIENDS OF VAN presented VAN volunteer Sue Westendorf the Volunteer of the Year Award on June 9. Sue was selected by her peers to receive this tribute. She has been with VAN since 1988, working the VAN hotline, with victims one-on-one and co-facilitating domestic violence support groups.

About her work with VAN Sue says, "It's a volunteer job with a lot of pluses." She describes the VAN staff as supportive, wonderful, strong and generous saying, "Whatever I've given, I've gotten a lot more back." FRIENDS congratulates Sue and extends sincere thanks to all VAN volunteers for their efforts on the front lines.

Sue is pictured on the right accepting well deserved applause from FRIENDS president Christine Wax.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

If you are looking for rewarding and meaningful volunteer community work to do, and if you are concerned about victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, we invite you to consider Friends of VAN. Our goal is to support and strengthen the Victim Assistance Network. Volunteers are needed to raise funds, do publicity work and help publish our newsletter. Friends monitor pending legislation and other changes in the community affecting victims and services to victims and our members lobby as individuals if they wish. Membership, typing, addressing and mailing are other areas of need. We also would welcome your own new ideas and initiatives to further the Friends' program. If you would like more information, call Nancy James at (703) 360-2989. If interested in serving, send a letter or resume to Friends of Victim Assistance Network; Box 2304; Fairfax, Virginia 22031.

**SENATOR GARTLAN ADVOCATES
FOR VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE**

Thanks to Virginia State Senator Joseph Gartlan (District 38, D) the legal needs of adult victims of child abuse has been brought to the attention of the Virginia General Assembly. Gartlan proposed H.B. 1287, a bill designed to allow victims who recall their childhood abuse in their adult years to file a civil suit against their abusers, which was passed by the General Assembly and become effective on July 1, 1991. Prior to 1991, Virginia state law imposed a two year statute of limitations on victims, stating once a person reached the age of 18, he or she only had two years to seek civil action in any abuse cases. Gartlan was concerned that this law would exclude many victims who, having suppressed memories of abuse, might remember only after they have had adult experiences which trigger the memories. Gartlan's "delayed discovery" law allows the two year period in which victims can seek civil action to begin with the first time they tell somebody about their memories of childhood abuse. Commonly, this takes place in therapy.

Sylvia Klute, a Richmond lawyer who specializes in child abuse cases, filed a civil suit on behalf of a client in her mid-twenties utilizing the "delayed discovery" law. The case was won but overturned when, on June 5, 1992, the Virginia Supreme court declared the new law unconstitutional because it deprived the defendant from using a statute of limitations defense. Because the victim was older than 20, according to the Virginia Supreme Court, the defendant has the right to say it is too late for claims to be made against him or her based on the previous law. In effect then, the only child abuse victims who will be able to benefit from Gartlan's law

will be those who are victimized after July 1, 1991.

Gartlan says, "There is an extensive move afoot to amend the Virginia constitution to show that this [delayed discovery] law enacted by the legislature does not divest other of their due process". Gartlan is the chief patron of this proposal and has 18 co-sponsors. To show your support contact your legislator. Klute's office is organizing the lobbying effort for this amendment, which will take a minimum of two years to come before the voters in referendum. If you need further information, contact Klute's office at 804-355-2155.

You can help VAN meet and expand its important services to the Fairfax County and Falls Church communities. Checks may be payable to FRIENDS OF THE VICTIM ASSISTANCE NETWORK and mailed to P.O. Box 2304, Fairfax, VA 22031. **Another way to help is to contribute to the Friends of the Victim Assistance Network through the United Way of the National Capital Area, the Combined Federal Campaign (#2356), the Virginia State Employee Combined Federal Campaign (#21014) or the Fairfax County Employee Combined Federal Campaign (#22127). Designate by writing in our organization's name and address as above.**

A DISCUSSION ON STALKING BEHAVIOR

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victims, that they may suffer deterrent, negative consequences due to their stalking behavior, and that they can be held accountable legally. Some potential stalkers can be deterred but the law may not be a complete solution. Some stalkers, even as they sit locked up behind bars, will continue to plot against their targeted victim.

The law however, along with sounding a clear note as to the consequences of stalking, may remove the stalker from society, providing the victim with some relief and an opportunity to regroup.

Q: Thank you Dr. Samenow, for your insightful comments.

A: Thank you again for this opportunity.

GROWING UP

At twenty, I was firm,
If a man ever hit me,
I'd leave him forever.

At twenty-two, I was firm,
If he ever hit me again,
I'd leave him forever.

At twenty-four, I was firm,
If he ever hit me in front of
the kids,
I'd leave him forever.

At twenty-six, I was firm,
If I lived,
I'd leave him forever.

Anne Rasmussen
Madison Wisconsin

Friends

I wish to be a Friend. Enclosed is my tax deductible donation of:

of the Fairfax County _____ \$10 (individual membership) (___ New member)
 Victim Assistance Network _____ \$15 (non-profit organization) (___ Renewal)
 P.O. Box 2304 _____ \$25 (business)
 Fairfax, VA 22031 \$_____ (additional donation) Sliding scale membership available
 Name: _____ Wk: () H: ()

Address: _____

Please make checks payable to: **Friends of the Victim Assistance Network**

Contributions are used to print a semiannual newsletter, to offer direct services to victims, and to purchase educational materials for programs dedicated to the prevention of sexual assault and domestic violence.

FRIENDS

of the FAIRFAX COUNTY
VICTIM ASSISTANCE NETWORK
P. O. BOX 2304
FAIRFAX, VA 22031

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