

CRIME PREVENTION FOR SENIOR CITIZENS



CITY OF NEW YORK
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CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON

Most criminals are OPPORTUNISTS. This means that they take advantage of promising situations which are presented to them. The key to crime prevention, therefore, is to remove the OPPORTUNITIES for crime from our everyday activities.

We must develop an attitude of constant AWARENESS of crime prevention methods, and we must Be Prepared to react in the correct manner if we become the victim of a crime.

STANDARD TIPS FOR PREVENTING CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON

- A. BE ALERT - Don't be afraid, but look around you occasionally to see who is standing near you or walking toward you.
- B. BE DETERMINED - If you are on an unfamiliar or lonely street, quicken your pace and act as if you are going to meet someone who is waiting for you.
- C. WALK CAREFULLY - Walk where it is well-lighted. Stay away from darkened building entrances, doorways, alleyways and high shrubbery. Travel and shop with companions whenever possible during the daytime, and especially at night. There is greater safety in numbers.
- D. PLAN AHEAD - Know where you are walking, know the general day and evening conditions of the streets you use, and know which stores are open late at night. If an emergency situation arises, walk to these stores rather than down your own quieter, residential street.
- E. CALL POLICE - Notify police immediately of suspicious persons who are loitering, going from door to door, trying doors or sitting in parked or slowly cruising cars. Description of person, color and make of car, time and location are all important to the police. If you are in any doubt about a person, call the police and let them settle the doubt.
- F. REPORT - If you become the victim of a crime, report the incident promptly to the police. Remember to dial "911" only when an emergency situation exists and immediate assistance is needed. At all other times, dial the telephone number of your local police precinct.

PURSE-SNATCH

- A. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. In other words, when leaving the house, take along only the money or credit cards that you will need for the day. Divide your valuables among your pockets, pocketbook and wallet. At times, you may find it more convenient to pin some money inside an article of clothing, the idea being that if someone snatches your purse, you will have at least minimized your losses.
- B. If possible, keep your keys in a garment pocket or hidden on your person. Keys found in your pocketbook, combined with your identification, can lead to more problems, such as a burglary of your home.
- C. Don't carry a bag that dangles from your shoulder--it is too easy to grab. Carry a pocketbook with a short loop, and hold it close to your body, tucked in the bend of your elbow. Don't make your bag an easy target.
- D. Never carry handbags or shopping bags with the loop wrapped around your wrist. If someone tries to pull it away from you, the loop will handcuff you, and you may be pulled to the ground and injured.
- E. If you think that a suspicious-looking person is following you, it might be a good idea to carry your purse in an upside-down position, holding the clasp closed with your hand. In this position, if someone snatches the bag, its contents will fall to the ground and the thief will be thwarted.
- F. If you go to the movies or stop for a sandwich, keep your pocketbook on your lap. Do not place it on the floor, on another seat or on the back of a chair. The same advice applies when using public rest rooms.
- G. When shopping in a supermarket or department store, do not put your pocketbook down on a counter or in a shopping cart when you step away to make a selection of merchandise.
- H. A number of people have been seriously injured - and worse - while fighting with purse-snatchers. Do you think it is worth getting injured to protect a few things which can be easily replaced? Since no one can replace you, it is better not to keep valuables in your pocketbook, and to let it go if it is snatched.



PUSH-IN ROBBERY

A push-in robbery can occur in two ways:

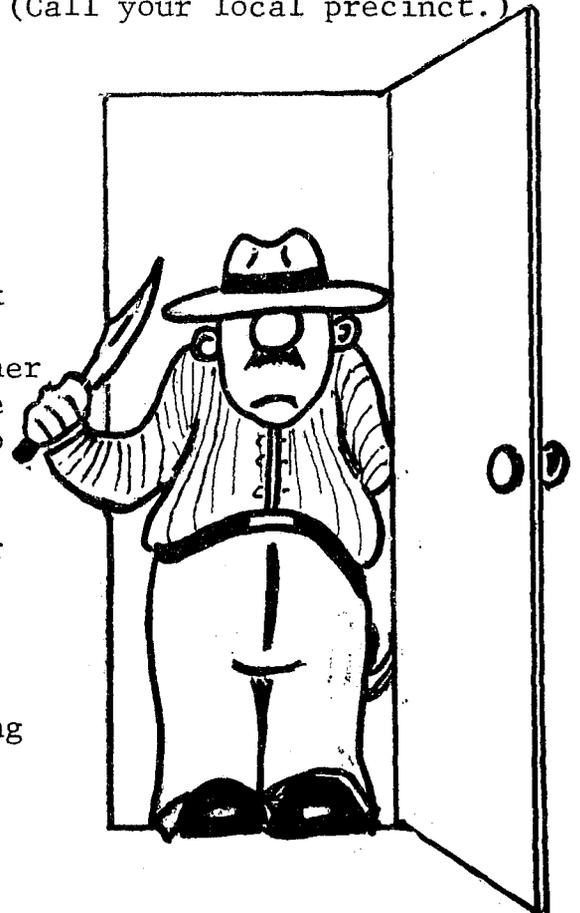
1. You are opening your door to enter your apartment when someone who has been waiting for you to turn the key suddenly shoves you inside.
2. You are in your home and respond to a knock on the door by opening it or by relying on the chain guard.

SOME CRIME PREVENTION TIPS TO CONSIDER WHEN YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY HOME:

- A. Plan Ahead: Before leaving your home to go shopping, etc., tell your neighbors where you are going and when you expect to return home. Ask them if they are going to be home, and encourage them to follow the same procedure when they go out.
- B. When returning to your building, take a good look around you before going near the front entrance. If you see something or someone who makes you uneasy, don't go inside. Go to a neighborhood store, etc., and call the police.
- C. If you are already in your building and see a suspicious person as you are walking toward your apartment door, DON'T ENTER! Go to a neighbor's apartment on the same floor and ring the bell. Act as if you are a visitor to the building, and stay away from your apartment until the stranger has gone, or until you are satisfied that his or her intentions are good. Notify police of all suspicious persons in your building. (Call your local precinct.)

SOME TIPS TO CONSIDER WHEN YOU ARE HOME:

- A. Never rely on the chain guard. Use the peephole, and speak through the door.
- B. If someone claims to have an unexpected package for you, don't open the door. Ask for the name of the person's company, and call to check. If you can't hear each other because the door is closed, relax and have a cup of coffee, but don't be tricked into opening that door!
- C. If strangers knock on your door asking for help - their car broke down, they had an accident, they need a doctor, etc., DON'T OPEN THE DOOR! Offer to make a telephone call for them. If they are not satisfied, inform them that you are calling the police - to help them out!

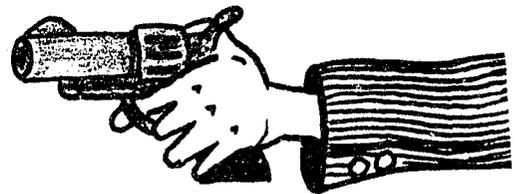
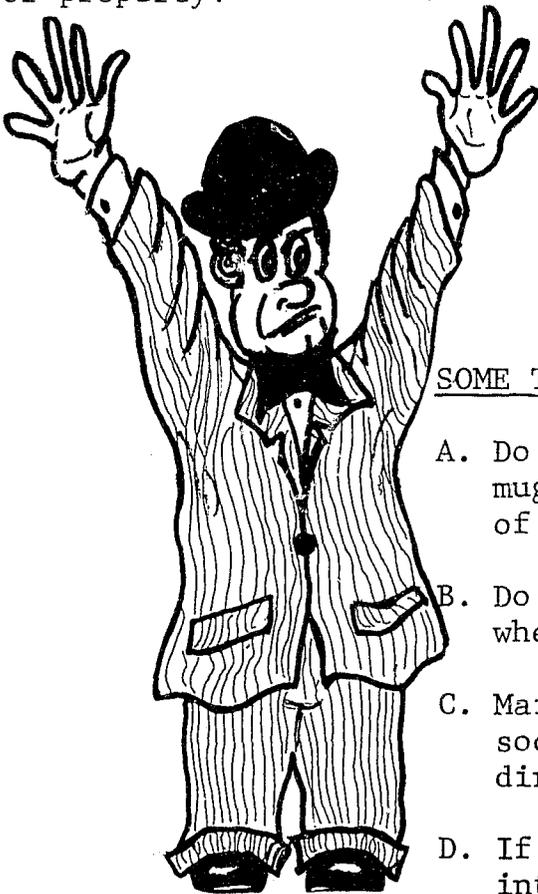


MUGGING

Muggings are usually street robberies, although they may take place in locations like subways, building lobbies or buses. This type of robbery will occur in one of three ways:

1. The mugger will show you a weapon and demand your money.
2. The mugger will indicate that he or she has a weapon and will use it if you don't turn over your money.
3. He or she will physically overpower you and indicate that if you don't give up your money, you will be beaten.

In most cases it doesn't pay to resist the mugger. This advice does not advocate surrender to the criminal element of society, but only that you act intelligently in each individual situation. We know that, in too many cases, the wrong response on the part of the crime victim has resulted in serious injury and even death. If you become a mugging victim and think that the mugger might have a weapon, or you feel you are no match for him or her, then why not give the money up? Do you think it is worth being injured for the sake of your cash or property?



SOME TIPS TO HELP YOU AVOID MUGGINGS

- A. Do not present an OPPORTUNITY for the mugger to strike by exhibiting large sums of money in stores or in banks.
- B. Do not wear expensive jewelry or wristwatches when shopping.
- C. Maintain an account in a bank, and have your social security or pension check mailed there directly.
- D. If you think someone is following you, go into a neighborhood store or other place of business and call the police. If no place is open nearby, shout, scream and call for

help. Noise will bring assistance and scare off the would-be attacker. **REMEMBER!** Plan Ahead and Be Prepared to react intelligently if you become the victim of a mugger.

RAPE

Although most women have a very great fear of being raped, the fact is that the incidence of rape among older women is extremely low. Nevertheless, although older women need not experience undue, crippling fear of being raped, serious precautions must always be taken.

SOME TIPS TO AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM OF RAPE

When Walking:

- A. Follow the general rules of safety when you are on the street. Be Alert, be Determined and Plan Ahead.
- B. Have your key ready in hand, so your house door can be opened immediately.
- C. If you feel that someone is following you, scream and run toward the nearest open store or lighted window.

On the Elevator:

- A. When the elevator arrives on the ground floor (or is already at that floor), don't enter it, but reach inside and press the "B" button first, and then the button for your floor. When the empty elevator is on the way to the basement, press the wall button on the ground floor (where you are standing). If the elevator is empty when it returns to the ground floor, you can enter it and travel to your floor without the chance of being taken to the basement.
- B. Don't get on the elevator with a stranger! Instead, wait for the elevator to return empty. If you are on the elevator already, and a suspicious-looking stranger gets on, get off at the next floor.

At Home:

- A. Women who live alone should list only their last names and first initial in telephone directories and on mailboxes. It might also be helpful to "invent" a roommate's or husband's name for display on the mailbox in order to create the impression that you do not live alone.
- B. Open your door only when you are certain of the caller's identity.

Unfortunately, it is still remotely possible that you will be attacked by a rapist. Just as in a robbery situation, you have to make a personal decision whether or not to resist your attacker. Although rape is a serious crime, involving great psychological harm, there are usually no permanent physical injuries suffered by the victim. Those victims who are seriously injured are usually those who resist most strenuously. In making the decision to resist or not, a lot depends on the individual situation, especially if a weapon is involved.

FINDING AN INTRUDER IN YOUR HOME

If you come home and find that your front door is ajar, what should you do?

1. Go in the opposite direction very quickly.
2. Call the police from a store or neighbor's phone.
3. DO NOT GO INSIDE!!

The same rule applies if there is any damage to your door which was not there when you left home earlier in the day. DO NOT GO INSIDE!!

What should you do if you arrive home and interrupt a burglar?



1. Remain as calm as possible.
2. Do not shout or antagonize the intruder in any way.
3. Follow all instructions.
4. When the burglar leaves, discreetly try to see which way he or she goes, and the color, make and license plate of the car, if any.
5. Call police immediately.

If you arrive home and think that there is someone inside your house or apartment, should you call a neighbor so that both of you can check your home? NO! Don't add another victim to the crime. Instead, CALL POLICE.

If you awaken at night and think that an intruder is in your home:

1. Stay in bed, be quiet and pretend to be asleep.
2. Call police when the burglar leaves.

If you see a prowler on your fire escape, or if someone is trying to break into your apartment or house:

1. Make a lot of noise by shouting or screaming.
2. CALL POLICE IMMEDIATELY!

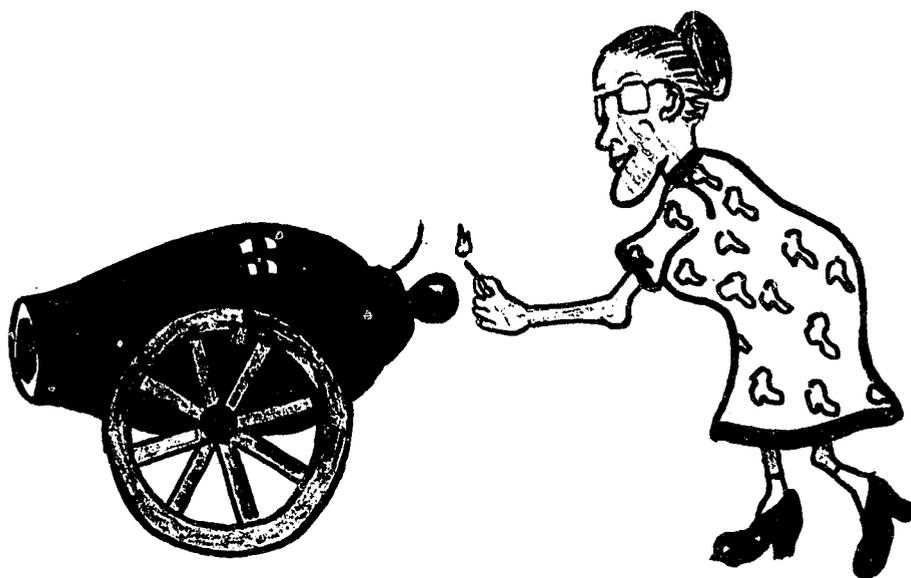
SHOULD YOU CARRY A WEAPON?

It depends on the weapon. Should you carry a gun? NO! Why not? Ask yourself if you are really prepared to kill someone, or if it is more likely that you will come out a loser in a gun battle with a mugger or burglar. It is also possible that the weapon you carry will be taken away and used against you.

Records also indicate that guns which are stolen in burglaries are often used later in holdups and murders.

What kind of weapons should you use? If it is obvious that you are about to be physically harmed, and you are forced to defend yourself, use whatever weapon you have in your hand at the time. An umbrella, cane, rolled newspaper or set of keys are good defensive weapons. If you are not holding anything at the time, use your fingernails, feet, knees and teeth, and aim for vulnerable areas such as the eyes, throat or groin. If you are in such a situation, and it is certain that you are about to be hurt, make a lot of noise -- screaming and shouting will probably then cause the attacker to flee. If you feel that you can't defend yourself, sit down, cover up and continue to scream.

REMEMBER! Try to avoid fighting whenever possible. Most muggers and purse-snatchers only want your money.



COURT PROCESS INFORMATION

On the opposite page of this booklet is a simplified chart outlining the Arrest and Criminal Court process. If you follow the chart while reading the explanations on this page, you will have a pretty good idea of what happens when a case goes to court.

In New York State there are two classifications of crimes -- Misdemeanors (one year or less imprisonment) and Felonies (from one year up to life imprisonment). Incidentally, all of the crimes described in this booklet are felony offenses. The Criminal Court handles cases involving misdemeanors, while felony cases are tried in the Supreme Court. However, almost all felony cases are first reviewed in the Criminal Court, and it is there where some charges may be dismissed or reduced through "plea bargaining." The Criminal Court is also the place where preliminary bail may be set by the judge.

(The following corresponds to chart on opposite page)

Precinct Station House or Central Booking - The accused person is fingerprinted and the charges are entered in the police register ("booking"). The suspect's name and fingerprints are then compared with others in the police files to determine if he or she has been involved in any other crimes.

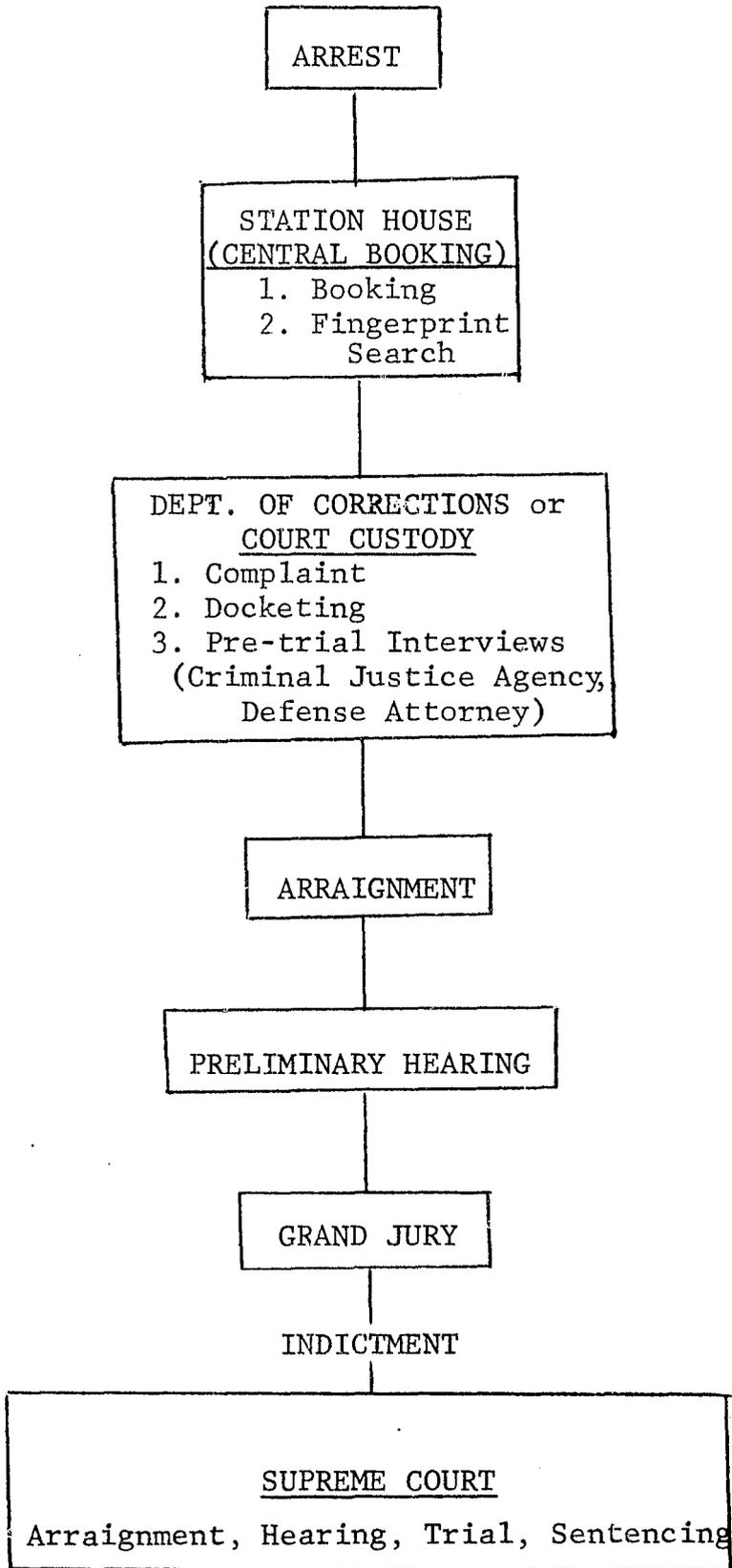
Court Custody - The victim and/or witness to the crime makes a statement to the court, and the suspect is officially charged with a "Complaint." A "Docket Number" is then assigned to the case, and the defendant can be interviewed by his lawyer and by a representative of the Criminal Justice Agency.

Arraignment - This normally occurs within forty-eight hours of the arrest. At this time, bail may be set by the judge and a date for the hearing is determined. If the defendant is not represented by an attorney, and cannot afford to hire private counsel, then a court-appointed lawyer will be assigned to the case.

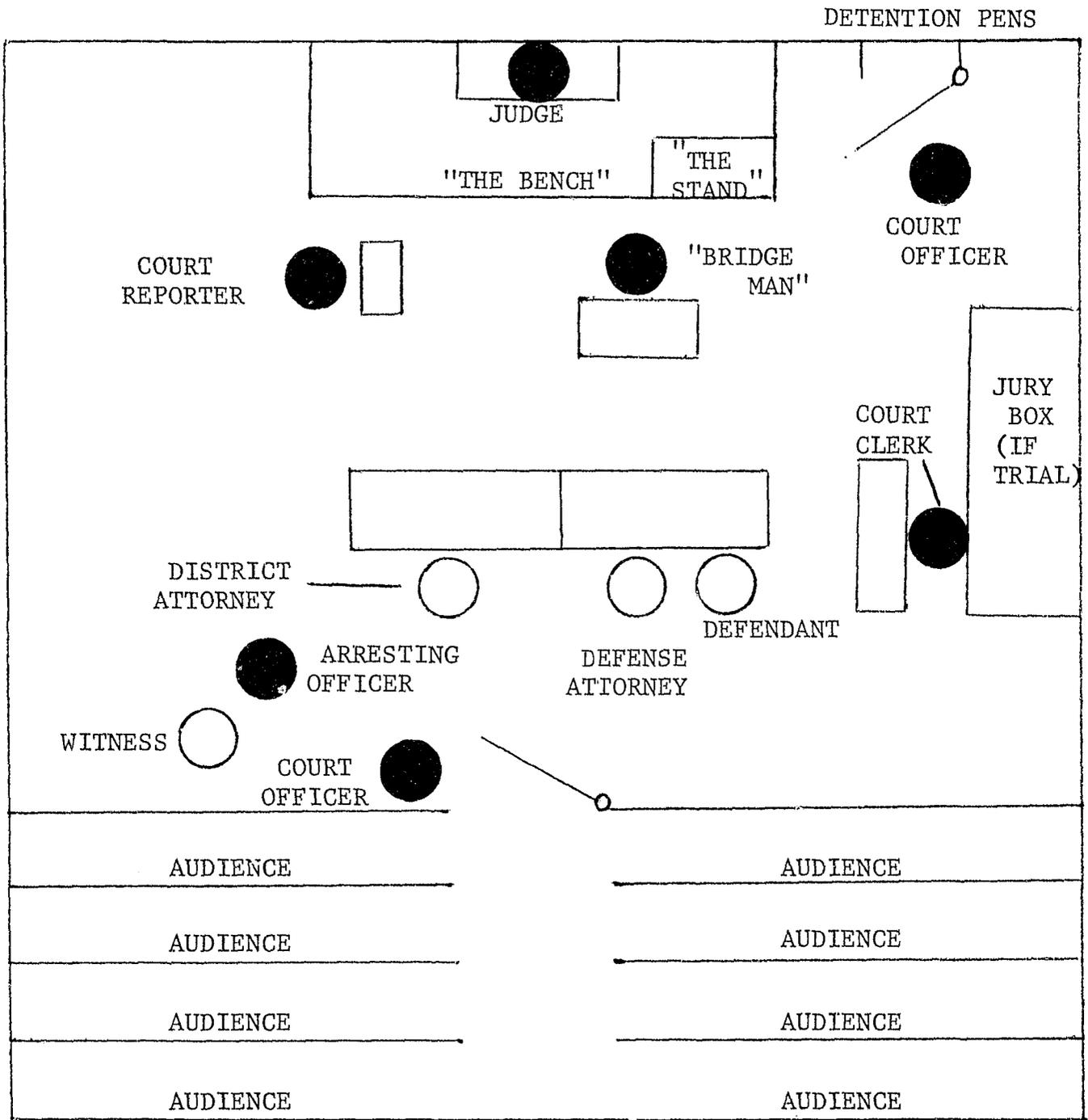
Preliminary Hearing - This is to determine if the case should be considered by the Grand Jury for possible indictment.

Indictment - An indictment is merely a decision by the Grand Jury that there is enough evidence for a case to be referred to the Supreme Court for arraignment, hearing and possible trial.

CRIMINAL COURT PROCESSING CHART



THE COURTROOM SCENE



This diagram represents a typical courtroom scene, with each person who plays a part in the proceedings represented by a circle and positioned in the proper place of assignment. The dark circles represent employees of the court and/or uniformed peace officers who are responsible for the security of the courtroom. The white circles represent civilians.

FAMILY COURT

If a person under the age of sixteen years is arrested, his or her case is processed through the FAMILY COURT. The criminal justice system for juveniles differs significantly from the adult system in Criminal and Supreme Courts.

After arrest, a juvenile is not arraigned immediately before a judge. Instead, a juvenile is interviewed by a probation officer of the Family Court. If the accused admits to having committed the crime, and if the victim chooses not to press the case further, then the defendant may be released without having to appear before a Family Court judge. The Family Court probation officer is then assigned to supervise the released juvenile.

If the victim insists on pressing the case, however, it cannot be adjusted and must be taken to a Family Court judge. A petition will be drawn up which must be signed by the victim. The victim, who is called "the petitioner," will be represented by an Assistant Corporation Counsel (in some boroughs, however, the District Attorney is taking charge of prosecuting serious juvenile cases). A Family Court trial will then take place, at which the victim will testify. If found to be guilty, the juvenile will be adjudicated a juvenile delinquent and will face confinement in a state facility for up to two years for the most serious of crimes.

VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN NEW YORK CITY

In each borough of the City of New York there is a program to assist crime victims (who will be acting as witnesses) with the many problems related to crime and its effects.. If you become the victim of a crime, and an arrest is made, you can receive help from the following offices:

- BROOKLYN: Victim/Witness Assistance Project - 120 Schermerhorn St. 11201
Tel. (212) 834-7400 during court hours
(212) 834-7444 Mon. - Fri., 9 A.M. - 11 P.M.
Weekends, 4 P.M. - 11 P.M.
- BRONX : Crime Victims Assistance Unit - 215 East 161st St. 10451
Tel. (212) 590-2115 Mon. - Fri., 8 A.M. - 5 P.M.
(212) 590-2318 " - " " - "
- MANHATTAN: Witness Aid Bureau - 100 Centre Street 10013
Tel. (212) 732-7300, ext. 553, Mon. - Fri., 9 A.M. - 5 P.M.
- QUEENS : Special Victim's Bureau - 125-01 Queens Blvd. (Rm. 106) 11415
Tel. (212) 520-2132
- STATEN ISLAND : Victim/Witness Services - 67 Targee Street 10304
Tel. (212) 447-6555, Mon. - Fri., 9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

CRIME ALERT COMMITTEES

A Crime Alert Committee is a small group of senior citizens from a particular organization, such as a senior citizen center, which works closely with public officials in the areas of crime prevention and crime victim assistance. Such a committee serves three major functions:

The first is to keep abreast of the latest crime prevention information being dispensed by public and private agencies, and then to assist other senior citizens in obtaining this information. This task might be accomplished by arranging public speaking dates with crime prevention officials, and by preparing and distributing a crime alert newsletter to other organization members.

The second is to help organization members put crime prevention strategies into action, such as organizing lobby patrols or buddy systems for shopping. The committee members would help plan such activities, and then would actively participate in coordinating their implementation. This would include helping to resolve problems and keeping track of how well the crime prevention strategies are working.

The third is to assist organization members in acquiring the services offered to crime victims by public and private groups. Such services would involve housing and rental problems, building security, welfare assistance, medical attention, food, clothing and legal assistance. When committee members learn of a needy senior citizen (particularly a crime victim in their organization), they would immediately start the referral process moving by contacting the social service agency which has been designated to coordinate crime victim services within the local precinct. The designated agency would then determine the precise problem of the senior citizen, and how services could be obtained to solve it.

The Crime Alert Committee would ideally perform each of these three functions. However, depending on the individual needs and resources of each organization, the committee might decide to focus exclusively on one or two of these functions. This committee would be comprised of at least four persons: a chairperson, a recording secretary and two or more other members. These persons should be selected by the membership of the organization and make regular reports to the membership about current and planned activities.

SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR OLDER CRIME VICTIMS

Senior Citizen Referral Service - In each police precinct in New York City, a social service agency or community organization has been designated by the Field Operations Division of the New York City Department for the Aging to coordinate services for elderly victims of crime. The scope of assistance provided by these referral centers includes housing, rental problems, shelter, welfare assistance, medical attention, building security, food, clothing and legal assistance. To find out the name and telephone number of the referral agency serving your neighborhood, contact your local police precinct. (If you don't know the telephone number of your local precinct, call the police information operator at 374-5000.) If you are in need of crime victim's assistance on a weekend, or between the hours of 5:00 P.M. and 9:00 A.M. on weekdays, call the American Red Cross at 787-1000.

Crime Victim's Compensation - If you have sustained personal physical injury as the result of a crime, you may be eligible for compensation. Awards may be granted to cover:

1. Costs of medical or other services not paid by other insurance.
2. Loss of earnings and/or loss of support.

Further information can be obtained from the New York office of The Crime Victims' Compensation Board at 270 Broadway, New York, N.Y. Their telephone number is (212) 488-5080.

Conflict Resolution and Mediation - Interpersonal conflicts between neighbors, family members, or tenants and landlords occasionally lead to unnecessary fights among those involved. To obtain help in resolving such problems before they become too serious, call the Institute for Mediation and Conflict Resolution, at 425 West 144th Street, New York, N.Y. 10031. Their telephone number is (212) 690-5700.

REMEMBER: IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT EVERY CRIME WHICH OCCURS IS REPORTED TO THE POLICE DEPARTMENT. THE POLICE NEED YOUR HELP TO WIN THE WAR AGAINST CRIME. IF YOU BECOME THE VICTIM OF A ROBBERY, ASSAULT OR CONFIDENCE GAME, CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY!



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