How safe is MIT at night?

Amherst Hall runs past my dormitory; I have always considered it part of MIT. To me, the alley evokes images of pianos falling from rooftops, wide-eyed freshmen sneaking down R.O. Week, and motorized splashing puddles on pedestrains. I thought the alley was safe; I had no qualms about travelling along it. "I guess there's a sense of security that's developed there because we've never had a problem," observed MIT Campus Police Chief James Olivieri.

My vision of this alley was shattered when I learned that a Wellesley College student was sexually assaulted as she walked along Amherst Alley. I grieve for the victim. News of such a tragedy shakes the entire community, reminding us of vulnerability to the city around us.

It makes me especially apprehensive about walking alone on campus at night.

I am aware of the problems of living in a city. I try to avoid danger whenever I can, but I refuse to live in a state of constant fear. I usually call the Campus Police escort service when I wish to walk across campus at night, but I would never have thought to call on for a short trip down Amherst Alley.

Rape has always terrified me; I hate the feeling of vulnerability and weakness the thought of such violence provokes. Sometimes I wonder if I have not overestimated the strength that would be necessary to overcome such violence; I hate the feeling of fear I experience when for some reason I am alone at night.

People of all ages walk out of a subway station with a strange man at their heels. The man may have ignored during daylight hours becomes a focus of dread. I swirl my eyes and pray that he will leave me alone. I gave apprehensively at all of my surroundings, looking for escape routes, trying to maintain awareness of the real or imaginary dangers I face. I strive to keep my eyes open and guard myself in some way to walk near. Are old men safer than young ones? Am I short or not less hostile than tall ones? What sort of intensity provokes such thoughts in fear?

When I must be alone at night, I try to follow couples. The proximity of other people makes me feel safer; whenever I am alone, I will be assisted. Yet such couples often resent my presence. Their eyes acme of me with the same sort of intensity, trying to get caught. Sometimes they understand, though, that all I care is freed from fear.

Rape is destructive; it attacks not only individual women, but it places barriers between all strangers. It has forced me to be suspicious, to categorize those who pass by as safe or unsafe, hostile or helpful, friend or foe. The violence of rape has intruded upon our community, letting us know how weak we are. It has reminded me once again, of the danger of being alone—anywhere.

Statistics are an inadequate measure of human tragedy. When I read about rising crime, I find it difficult to match cold numbers with real possible victims. So far, all of the MIT Campus Police, the number of rapes reported at MIT has not increased since 1970, even though the female population of the Institute has grown since then. The Campus Patrol provides an escort for any man or woman who does not wish to travel alone at night. They do not mind providing the service.

That quiet street that runs past your dormitory is not really that safe at all.

Jenn-Lynn Halldal

Column/Ivan Fong

Some ways to write better

"Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, nor that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell."

I have repeated William Strunk's memorable and eloquent advice on writing style to reaffirm a simple principle that has helped countless students to improve a term paper, and to address a continuing concern that has caused the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) to propose a Writing Requirement.

The concern for the writing ability of MIT undergraduates is apparently shared by faculty and students alike. A recent survey of about 100 socially oriented, conducted by MIT's Writing Program, indicated that of the approximately 40 percent who responded, professors feel that, on average, 50 percent of MIT's graduating seniors lack competence in writing. Faculty members also report of complaints by employers of MIT graduates that, in specific cases, many alumni have not fully developed adequate communication skills.

According to a December 1981 CEP report, the student Committee on Educational Policy surveyed undergraduates in the spring of 1981 and found that over half of the respondents felt there was a need for an Institute requirement for writing competence. Alumni lament their lack of sufficient writing practice during their undergraduate years, and students are quick to realize the merits of written fluency.

Students are often very much interested in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, but find that more demanding humanities courses are surprisingly deficient in offering or science requirements, or crowd out necessary social and personal pursuits. It is the abysmal writer, however, who

Column/Mark Templer

Reagan deficit is inexcusable

President Reagan has drastically altered the course of government during his first year in office. His severe cuts in social programs and massive buildup of military expenditures met with little successful opposition in Congress. His loose fiscal policy, however, has landed him in deep political trouble and may force Congress to reverse course and cut the priorities of government spending and taxation.

Ronald Reagan was elected President in 1980 on a platform that promised to increase defense spending, cut taxes, and balance the budget. His Administration has been very successful in achieving the first two of these goals. Its supply-side policies, nonetheless, have not balanced the budget. Though domestic programs for the poor and underprivileged have been decimated, the federal budget is awash in red ink caused by an unprecedented military buildup and gigantic tax cuts skewed to benefit the rich. The numbers are staggering: the Reagan Administration has forecast a $92 billion budget deficit for fiscal 1983 and similarly large shortfalls in ensuing years.

Many economists argue that these large budget deficits will seriously damage the economy. The Government must finance deficits by printing money and borrowing heavily in credit markets. The former could reignite inflation; the latter could send interest rates to new heights and stymie any recovery from the recession. In addition, huge deficits reduce investor confidence, promote instability in financial markets, and instill a belief that government cannot manage its fiscal affairs.

It is little wonder that in this election year the Reagan Administration's budget proposals have appalled members of Congress—especially conser-

vative Republicans. Many conserva-

itves have spent their entire political careers protecting the vir-

tues of a balanced budget, and now a Republican President is asking them to approve a budget

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