

Jeff Prugh
724 Ridge Drive
Glendale, CA 91206

7/19/93

Dear Jeff,

When Lil came back with the mail she called to me, "jackpot day!" It is! So this is brief thanks for your 7/14 and the enclosures.

Your piece on being robbed is a good one. Awful experience! But the major question as I see it is eliminating, to the degree possible, what makes people rob and steal.

That will not be at all easy, if presently at all possible.

The piece on the Commercial-Appeal expose is interesting. The C-A refused me copies of what they got under FOIA or the identification of their requests so if I decided to get the same info for the historical record I would not have search fees to pay.

With tongue in cheek I neddled Carroll about what he'd ~~sa~~ said about Livingstone.

He apparently gave the letter to Livingstone. He did not respond to me.

I enclose copies of both letters. Gives you an idea of what Livingstone is and what standards publishers now have when they see the assassination as a license to print money.

You are probably correct re Mahoney. Proofs, not ms. Ms due 4/15. No proofs yet is provocative.

Glad you are extended until September!

Thanks and our best,

Heard

Jeff Prugh

July 14, 1993

Dear Harold:

Good to receive your letter, tho' I'm sorry to learn that somebody is implicating you, of all people, as an accessory (of all things!).

I telephoned someone in the promotion department at Carroll & Graf. A man named John Maloney (not sure of surname spelling) says his department has not yet received the "manuscript" (he probably meant galleys), but that he expects they'll be sending out promotional material in about 30 days. He said he would send me the material then (and I'll relay it to you).

The book, he says, is titled Killing the Truth.

I also enclose a copy of material you may have seen regarding MLK and the Memphis Commercial Appeal's investigative series on Army Intelligence collaborating with the Klan to spy on the King family for three generations (and the N.Y. Times/Washington Post downplay of the Memphis report).

Hope you're continuing to fight the good fight for your health -- and I thank you, on behalf of Chet, for all you've done in calling attention to The List. I'll always be proud that it's now accessible to students of Hood College -- and proud, too, that it'll be there nearby to your voluminous investigative handiwork.

A warm "hello" across the miles, too, to Lil...and I look forward, as ever, to staying in touch. (My tour has been extended 'til September, then--who knows?)
My best,



724 Ridge Drive
Glendale, California 91206

Enclosures

Preventing Crime Isn't as Easy as It Sounds

Many people cry out for more police on the streets. But who is to say that the offenses won't simply be committed where officers don't happen to be physically present?



By JEFF PRUGH

What can be done to reduce murders in our cities?" a radio talk-show host once asked his guest.

"Put doctors in the police cars," Chet Dettlinger, a former assistant to the Atlanta chief of police, replied. "If even *one* life can be saved at the scene of a shooting, it's worth the effort."

I pay a lot more attention to street crimes nowadays. Not so much about why they happen, but how. Not so much about how our police look for suspects, but how hopelessly ineffective they seem to be about fixing crimes at the front end, *before* they happen.

It's not just because I've long believed in the gospel according to Dettlinger, an iconoclastic ex-cop (now an Atlanta attorney), who asked me to help him write a book about Atlanta's series of killings that in 1979-81 made headlines around the world.

It's because I'm now a crime statistic myself, having been robbed at gunpoint.

It happened in the dead of night not long ago, on a pitch-dark residential street.

A car with its lights off sneaked up on a friend and me as we stood in the street after dining at a restaurant. The passenger pointed a gun at us through a window.

"Carjack," I thought.

That very morning, two men had turned up dead in North Hollywood, the apparent victims of separate carjackings.

But those cases had occurred Out There—in the San Fernando Valley, parts of which seem as immobilized by fears of street crimes as Atlanta did by those multiple killings when I worked there.

My robbery wasn't supposed to happen where it did—in upscale La Canada Flintridge, just east of the Valley. It's top-heavy, with half-million-dollar-and-up houses. Hints of Dodge City rarely turn up except on TV.

"Brothers, we want your money," the gunman said coolly but menacingly.

"You got it," said my friend Arel Sederberg, managing editor of the Foothill Leader newspaper.

"Sure. It's all yours," I echoed timidly, staring at the gun.

We had lingered for about 10 minutes preparing to say goodbye. Now we wondered: Would this be the last goodbye we would say to anyone?

The gunman's accomplice bolted from the driver's seat and took our cash and my wallet. I kept watching the gun.

"Give us your keys—we don't want your car," one of them said to my friend. That was to keep us from chasing them.

Then they were gone, leaving us dazed, mute, rattled.

At the sheriff's station nearby, deputies pestered us with routine questions that suddenly seemed hard. Our descriptions were sketchy indeed.

When you're looking down the barrel of a gun, you become a knot of human frailties, not a trained observer in action, even if you do work for a newspaper.

In the aftermath, I have been thinking about the frailties of our free society, which is so overrun by robberies, carjackings and drive-by killings that we all seem either blasé or prisoners of our fears.

As many cry out for more police officers on the streets, the skeptic in me says that no amount of police presence, patrol cars, helicopters, night sensors and other high-tech hardware will prevent crimes.

Maybe *this* robbery could have been prevented, on *this* street, at *that* time by police presence—but who's to say the same crime (or worse) wouldn't have been committed elsewhere at that very moment, on a street where the police *weren't*?

Of course, the police often catch criminals. But as Dettlinger points out, crime-solving and crime-prevention are different things. "If you have to apprehend someone," he says, "then prevention has, in most instances, already failed."

On this night, I wondered if some of those crime problems Out There had been flushed to La Canada Flintridge.

And I thought about my newly learned lessons: Don't make yourself more vulnerable than you have to be. Don't park or loiter where it is (or will be) dark. If you get unlucky, keep cool and don't resist anyone brandishing a gun.

The truth is, it can happen to any of us, anywhere.

But having figuratively dodged a bullet, maybe I should think less about Out There than Up There. Somebody Up There apparently liked us.

After all, this story could have been reported by someone else. On the obituary page.

Jeff Prugh is a Times Valley Edition staff writer.

A close call -- my first-ever holdup...