

Knock, Knock, Who's There? The

Pat 4/11/75

By Art Buchwald

A few weeks ago heavily armed agents of the FBI broke into a young lady's apartment in Alexandria, Va., at 10:30 at night and said they were looking for Patty Hearst. They had no search warrant, and claimed they didn't need one because the warrants already out for Patty Hearst covered them. Obviously they didn't find Miss Hearst, but they scared the hell out of all young ladies living in the Washington area.

I received a call from the daughter of a friend of mine who lives on Capitol Hill. She wanted to know what she should do if someone knocks on her door late at night and says he's from the FBI.

"Well," I said, "the FBI has very clear guidelines on that. They've been warning women for years to bolt their doors at night and not open them to anyone."

"But if don't open the door they'll break it down,"

she protested. "And then the landlady will make me pay for a new door."

"Now wait a minute. The only reason the FBI broke into that lady's apartment in Alexandria is because her neighbors said she looked like Patty Hearst. You don't look like Patty Hearst, do you?"

"How do I know what Patty Hearst looks like?" she said.

"Everyone knows what Patty Hearst looks like. She has long hair, wears a black beret, an Army jacket and carries a submachine gun in her hand at all times."

"That's the picture they print in papers," the young lady protested. "But she also wears wigs and dresses and high-heel shoes. Some people have even said she was seen in blackface. Every girl in America could look like Patty Hearst."

"That's true," I admitted. "I agree you have a problem. Let's see, suppose when the person from the FBI knocks on the door you demand he shove his credentials under it?"

FBI... FBI Who?

Capitol Punishment

"The girl in Alexandria did that, and that's when they broke down her door. The FBI said they thought it was a trick."

"I can see it from their point of view," I said. "After all, if you are from the FBI and someone demands your credentials you could indeed believe the person is Patty Hearst. If the girl had nothing to hide, she'd take the FBI's word for it."

"So you're suggesting I open the door if someone knocks on it and claims he's a G-man?"

"I'm not saying that exactly. Perhaps you could go to the phone and call the FBI and ask them if they had sent someone."

"The girl in Alexandria did that and the agents pulled their guns on her. They were going to shoot her. I'm telling you I'm scared stiff. I used to be afraid of just burglars and rapists. Now I'm afraid of the Justice Department."

"Couldn't you put a large sign on your door saying,

'Patty Hearst is alive and well and living in a lesbian commune in Disneyland?'"

"I guess so," my young friend said. "But why can't the FBI find another way of catching Patty Hearst without breaking into everyone's apartment because some kooky neighbor says she lives there?"

"In all due respect, I don't think it's your job or mine to tell the FBI how to catch Patty Hearst. After all, they're professionals, and if they break down enough doors someday they'll find her."

"In the meantime, I believe every woman living alone will have to make up her own mind whether to open up when someone who says he's from the FBI comes knocking or write out a check for a new door. That's a small price to pay to have a law-enforcement agency that protects all our constitutional rights."

"You've been a big help, Uncle Art. I don't know how to thank you."

"Don't mention it," I said. "And sleep well."

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