

After the attack

I learned from the doctors that because I was dressed in a suit and tie, my life was saved. When my throat was cut, the knife was impeded by my starched shirt and tie.

A question asked a lot that I hate to answer and I never volunteer is "It was those blacks wasn't it?" My brother, Dee, wrote me the sweetest letter telling me, "You can't condemn a whole race for the actions of a few."

After the initial, "How horrible!" the following remark would be, "What did you do to make them knife you?"

My answer was, "I walked into my lobby."

It was impossible for people to comprehend that it was possible to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

For the first two or three months people would glare at my neck and say things like, "They really did damage to you." It was not possible for me to get through a day without someone making a comment about my neck. Although, I didn't like to talk about it. Most people didn't know some one who had been cut, so they would want the sorted details.

One of the saddest stories was Eddie Shellman, now principle dancer of Dance Theater of Harlem, but at the time a teenager said, "Who cut you?" As if he was asking about the weather. Where he lived to him it seemed common place.

When I moved into Manhattan some student would walk me home every night and the elevator man would walk me to my door and wait for me to enter. If I saw two black men walking toward me, my heart would palpate.

When I was telling Dustin Hoffmann's wife Annie Byrns the reason I couldn't see his movie *The Clockwork Orange* she wanted more details, and I tried to oblige. I went to teach class and had a panic attack. I didn't know what it was, but I thought I would die.

After reading about a knifing in the newspaper at lunch, when I was teaching at Performing Arts, I couldn't finish my eating. During my afternoon class I had chest pains so bad that I couldn't continue to teach. I was rushed to Lenox Hill for a heart attack. While I was at the High School I was sent to the Hospital twice. At that time no one put the knifing and these attacks together. A panic disorder had yet to be recognize by the medical community.

To this day, 23 years later, I still have to have movies seen by some friend, who will check it for violence, before I can see it.

About four years later, I began to had these attacks on a regular bases. It got so bad that I couldn't teach. I had already left the High School of the Performing Arts. I always tried to

have a friend like Shirley Bassatt or Nansi Clement in class to take over when I couldn't continue.

My cousin, Evelyn, in Oklahoma, would call me daily and I would bust into tears.

Finally my friend Marvin ask me to call Dr. Ward, the doctor who had removed the stitches. Dr. Ward had retired to Long Island. He was an angel from heaven because he knew what I was going through and it had a name and a treatment. He started me on Elivil at 25mg, increasing the dose about every two days until I was taking 400mg a day. He also suggested I see a therapist. Helen Gallagher, who played Maeve Ryan on *Ryan's Hope*, recommended her therapist who was excellent and I spent four years with him.

It took three weeks for the Elivil to work, and I have never had another panic attack. It took me about two years to come off the drug; cutting 25mg at a time. It finally got to 25mg every other day, to every two days and finally three times a week. When Dr. Ward thought I could go cold turkey he put me on Valium to this day.

I have little or no respect for the police, for when I told them if I saw the men I could identify them. I was never allowed to look at pictures.