

Safety and Security for the Over-55s

Compiled by
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Agio 
PUBLISHING HOUSE

and

CAREY PUBLISHING SERVICES



Agio Publishing House
151 Howe Street, Victoria BC Canada V8V 4K5
and
Carey Publishing Services
5-5187 Cordova Bay Road, Victoria V8Y 2K7
www.cpipub.com

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Safety and Security for the Over-55s

ISBN 978-1-897435-40-3 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-897435-41-0 (hardcover)

Cataloguing information available from
Library and Archives Canada

Printed on acid-free paper that includes no fibre from endangered forests. Agio Publishing House is a socially responsible company, measuring success on a triple-bottom-line basis.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For Audrey Robinson Mawby née Harrison (1930 – 2007)

With gratitude for over fifty exciting years of marriage

A significant percentage of any net income from the sale of this book
will be donated to the Audrey Mawby/CFUW Saanich Peninsula
Fund for the advanced education of young women.

A WORD TO THE WISE

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ENJOY READING

... this Guidebook was written to help you to be safe, not to be exciting or enthralling. The chapters discuss dangers from criminal action, disasters, and in your home. These are supported by free access to a Memory Aid on the internet with Action Lists you can print out to help you to maintain safety and security at and away from home.

FOR THOSE WHOSE EYES GET TIRED QUICKLY, OR WHO DON'T NORMALLY READ BOOKS

... read paragraphs 1 to 27 to find out how and why the content is presented, and then read the Action Lists in the Memory Aid. Just making sure that you have done all the things listed will help spot any problems. If you need to do something, the lists show you where to find the right paragraph(s) in the Guidebook. When you have a good feel for what's in the Memory Aid and how it relates to the Guidebook, read in Chapter 3 about avoiding bodily harm.

There are several ways of finding particular subjects:

- The 'List of Major Headings' on pages *v* and *vi* shows where each of the major subjects is addressed;
- A List at the beginning of each Chapter gives a breakdown of the topics covered in the Sections of that Chapter with paragraph and page numbers.
- Each Section starts by listing the headings with paragraph and page

numbers, indenting as detail increases. In the text headings decrease in emphasis or size to indicate increasing detail. This can help to find particular items or identify necessary action or priorities. For example, break-ins in your area could justify a look at Section 2 (Physical Intrusion) and following the headings down to ‘Things that could help’ and ‘Things we should do’.

- The Index at the back of the book lists particular subjects or items in alphabetical order with their paragraph numbers.

MY THANKS:

for permission to quote from published material, go to;

- Agenet
- Alzheimer’s Disease Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center
- American Geriatrics Society (Foundation for Health in Aging)
- American, Canadian and International Red Cross
- The Attorneys General of the States of:
 - Kentucky
 - Maryland
 - Nebraska
- Canada Safety Council
- City of Orlando, Florida, Police Department
- City of Tempe, Arizona, Fire Department
- Federal Superannuates’ National Association (Canada)
- National Institutes of Health (United States)
- Phonebusters of Ontario
- Prevent Blindness America
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Royal Bank of Canada
- United States Consumer Safety Commission
- United States Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service,

and for invaluable advice and assistance, go to;

Allan Anderson, Anne and John Anderson, Carl Coates,
Hannah Gibson, Gordon Henderson, Charles Mawby,
Greg Stevens, and John Walker.

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KEEPING TRACK

References to the Guidebook (Part 1) are by paragraph (para) numbers which are in sequential order.

References to the Memory Aid (Part 2) are by list (L) numbers.

PREFACE

WHY BOTHER

1. Getting to be a ‘Senior’, with or without teeth or hair, is not as much of an achievement as it used to be a hundred years ago, but for the majority of those of us who have done so it surely beats the alternative! We have so grown in number that one of every four people in the U.S. and Canada will shortly be over 55 years old.

Many of us were lucky enough to not only get this far but to bring with us children, grandchildren, siblings and perhaps even parents. Most have also acquired a greater or lesser accumulation of material things along the way. I certainly don’t wish my enjoyment of my family, friends or life in general to be cut short or impaired, and as you picked up this book you probably feel the same way.

**The prime reason for taking safety or security measures
is that we have something we don’t want to lose ...
our loved ones, our life, our health, our money or our
possessions, and age brings increased vulnerability.**

Let’s face it, no matter how young we feel, we are not as physically strong and flexible as we once were. Our reactions are slower, and our bodies take rather longer to mend after they are damaged, so our health and physical condition are more vulnerable than they were when we were younger. Also, we have accumulated more possessions than we had when we were young, and they don’t have to be enormously valuable to be important to us. We would hate to lose them, but there are people out there who are looking for an opportunity to steal anything of the slightest value. They will take everything we have, if they can.

Losing your life would certainly be significant, and losing loved ones, health, or possessions could dramatically affect and lessen the quality of your life. The fact that such a change could happen, and happen very quickly, has to be important to us all.

2. The effect of age on safety and security may be important to you because you already are a senior, or are looking ahead towards retirement without yet getting there. In either case there is some critical planning to be done. Alternatively, you may be a younger person concerned about older relatives or friends. Here also there are things to be learned, so that you can not only help them, but in extreme cases recognize danger signals without appearing to interfere or otherwise upsetting these folks.
3. For a variety of excellent reasons ‘old age’ is lasting longer and longer. Some enter it without any planning at all, perhaps because they haven’t done much planning in the past, or because they feel that there is little that they can do to influence the course of events. For such people life is something that ‘just happens’, and they will almost always be amongst society’s losers. Others plan ahead in great detail, but either don’t identify safety as a factor influencing their plans, or fail to accord it the attention it deserves.

Take time out to think about this for a moment, and ask yourself which three things could ruin your retirement plans, no matter how carefully you make them. I suggest that the most likely candidates are crime, disaster (natural or man-made), and bad health, and that they all deserve serious consideration.

In the first of these ... **crime** ... many recognize some of the danger by choosing to retire to a ‘safe’ community, or relying on local police services, but that is as far as their consideration goes. This is simply not enough. A mugging, a home invasion, a random shooting or a slick con game can change lives just as much as a severe accident or an earthquake, so even if their likelihood is small it makes sense to appreciate the potential dangers and be prepared for them. Crime is the subject of Chapter I (Staying Secure).

Depending on where we live, the second candidate ... **natural and/or man-made disaster** ... is also generally given some thought, particularly related to the cost of insurance (where it is available), but here again there are some other practical steps we can take to safeguard our future, and these are outlined in Chapter II (Guarding Against Disaster).

As for **bad health** ... the other candidate ... most of us pay attention to health costs. We know which company plans, personal insurance, services funded by governments and so forth apply to us, but there is other direct action we can take to control or at least influence our physical and mental well-being. Chapter III (Avoiding Bodily Harm) does not give advice on treating individual medical ailments or preach about diet, but suggests first aid action we can take to lessen the possibility of harm. Some of these will be especially important if you or your partner, because of illness or bereavement, have to undertake tasks which have always been the job of the other.

The #2 reason for safety action is that it can be effective.

4. This is one of the best justifications for action. If there were no ways in which we could protect ourselves, or if the cost in time, money and effort were too much to bear, then there would be some sort of justification for just ignoring the issue and taking our chances. The truth is that although nothing can guarantee us absolute safety, a bit of forethought can significantly reduce the probability of danger and minimize it if it occurs, with little or no cost. So ... if it makes sense to be careful, it makes sense to take a good look at what we should be careful about. Plenty of examples are used throughout the Guidebook in discussing the most important threats in all three of the vital areas ... crime, disasters, and health, with suggestions for appropriate action. In every case, it makes sense to have thought out in advance what you will do if something dangerous happens.

5. WHY I BOTHERED

As I entered retirement I looked for information and advice on safety and security. I found a great variety of useful information and guidance, in all sorts of places and from many excellent sources, but it was difficult to get a comprehensive view. I could not find a 'senior's safety manual' to suggest the whole range of matters I should consider or to advise or remind me of action I should take.

This manual results from that discovery. It started out as a collection for my own use of useful facts and suggestions about basics from some of the world's most expert sources, and at the suggestion of friends grew into a guidebook of safety and security measures and a memory aid. It has taken a few years to put together, but is up to date at the time of printing. No written material can guarantee to save you from harm, and this manual is no exception, but you can use the basic information and advice it contains to help you to reduce the risk to you and yours. It can also help you to make sure that when the time comes your assets, big or small, go where **you** want them to go, not into the pockets of strangers or governments!

Just remember that however you access the information, whether by thoroughly examining one major subject at a time or 'dipping' into the areas which most concern you, the value will be in the use you make of it.

*Carl Mawby,
Vancouver Island*

So survive ...
and enjoy life!

PART 1 - THE GUIDEBOOK

CHAPTER 1 - STAYING SECURE

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SECTION 1

SO WHO ARE THE PREDATORS?

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AND THEIR TARGET IS US?

6. Most of us would claim to be wiser than we were in our youth. We may well be self-reliant, have faith in our judgment, and think that we are more capable of coping with life than we ever were. Unfortunately, along with those threads of silver in the hair come virtual versions of the targets you see archers shooting at in competitions, but the ones on us are not for fun. There are crooks, sometimes in well organized groups, whose sole intent is to take whatever they can get as efficiently and as quickly as they can. The only risk they are interested in is the risk to them. I think of them as “the predators”, preying on those of us they think vulnerable, just as their counterparts do in the animal world.

They target seniors as victims for a variety of reasons:

- We have material possessions resulting from a lifetime of work;
- Many of us are trusting because we inherited the values of an earlier and seemingly gentler generation;
- We may have mellowed with the years;
- We are physically not as strong and quick as we used to be;
- The thought processes of some of us may have slowed and ...
- Among us there will always be weak, uninformed, gullible and/or careless and therefore vulnerable targets waiting to be exploited!

7. At some stage you will be checked out as a target, and even the slightest perceived weakness can encourage the wrong sort of interest in your affairs.

The #3 reason for safety action is that whether you like it or not increasing age makes you a target.

Some people who read this will respond with disbelief. They feel secure in their own circle of friends, or don't do anything that they think is risky. They've never been 'suckered', they don't think they have much to excite thieves, and anyway they believe that it probably won't happen to them. Some will even be fatalistic about it, thinking "We can't change our destiny!"

To these people, I offer my wish for good luck and my thanks. You get my wish for good luck because the statistics are stacked against you, so there is a high probability that sooner or later you will not only be part of some crime statistic or other, you'll be suffering as a result. You get my thanks because you are going to be making a real contribution to my safety. The predators are looking for you and will almost invariably concentrate on you as the easiest prey. The rest of us, by taking a few simple steps that will distinguish us from the easy targets, can reduce the probability that we will be victimized.

THE OPPOSITION

8. Regrettably, there is an exception to the rule that safety action can be effective ... if you are in the wrong place at the wrong time you might be caught in a totally irrational and dangerous situation. Examples are terrorist acts and those horrific racial or gender based killing sprees which occur from time to time. Short of withdrawing from society altogether, there is no way you can be sure of avoiding them. If some crazed person decides to open fire on a campus or to blow up a building, and if you happen to be within range, then you take your chances. As for terrorist action, it is still sufficiently rare that for the vast majority of us the probability of harm is slight. However, we should be aware of the potential, and safety precautions we should take are listed in The Memory Aid.

9. But it is not just terrorists, mentally disturbed, or other irrational people who could do us harm. We are more likely to come into contact with ordinary criminals, so it is important to know what we can do to reduce the chance of getting harmed by them. Any good military strategist will tell you that the first step in either an offensive or defensive action is to understand the enemy. In the same way, the first step toward limiting our vulnerability to predators is to accept that they can be dangerous, and that we have to understand the principles (or lack of them!) and other factors that govern their actions. Then, and only then, can we protect ourselves with a real chance of success.

10. Predators come in two broad types ... those who think and those who don't. The type and impact of the threat they offer differs, so that they can and should be considered separately, so let's start with the least intelligent ...

The Non-Thinkers

11. The non-thinkers are in some ways the most dangerous. Most of them are responding to one or more of the basic and strong instincts such as hunger, greed, fear or envy ... or they are desperate for money to buy drugs:

- The very fact that they do not think out their plans in advance makes their actions hard to forecast, and therefore difficult to counter.
- They may be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, without an active conscience or other compassionate influence.

12. Non-thinkers are largely responsible for a current increase in the number of home invasions involving elderly residents, as well as most 'opportunity' muggings in cities and suburbs. And then there are the cleverer ones ...

The Thinkers

13. Some predators think deeply and effectively before committing a crime. Less likely to cause gratuitous physical harm, they present different dangers:

- They will conduct or be behind the most costly crimes.
- As repeat offenders, their experience can increase their efficiency.
- They have developed specialized skills to achieve their aims.
- They will be careful, so solving crimes and recovering possessions will usually be more difficult.

14. These career criminals are often good at their trade, minimizing danger to themselves, seeking and attacking the weakest victims. Most experienced break-and-enter thieves, for example, will quickly judge the risks in getting into a residence, and then decide whether or not to move on to an easier target.

15. As professionals, they rarely cause pain or death. They may use force to try to stop interference or to conceal their identity, but know that by doing so they increase the punishment they are risking.

16. Unless you attract sophisticated jewel thieves, if you take the defensive steps detailed in this manual, most professional crooks will leave you alone and look for easier prey.

Preparing To Deal With Both Types

17. We must be able to cope with both of these types. You will find this discussed wherever it applies in Part I, and there are brief ‘action reminder’ lists in Part 2 (the Memory Aid).

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KEEPING THEM OUT

18. There used to be a saying that “Your home is your castle”. Nowadays not too many homes have drawbridges and turrets, but the thinking behind the expression is still good ... no matter what sort of building we live in, our home must be the one place where we are as safe from harm as we can be.

19. Predators can get into our homes in three ways ... they can be invited in (to work or as a guest), they can break in, or they can just walk in. The first of these, the ‘inside jobs’, are discussed in Sections 4, 5, and 6. This Section (2) deals with ways in which we can prevent or deter break-ins and walk-ins.

20. Unfortunately, in recent years this has become more difficult to achieve. Believe it or not, two more homes will be broken into in the U.S. or Canada in the time it takes to read this paragraph. “So what” you might say, “There are

lots of homes ... they're probably a long way from me!" Well, think again! ... crime will affect one out of every six of our households this year, and the predators will 'score' an average of well over \$1,000 per home. Check out the crime rate in your area, but don't relax if the figures for your neighborhood are not too bad ... if your defense lags behind that of your neighbors, guess who is going to get hit next!

21. An even bigger worry is that a high proportion of these hits will be by 'non-thinkers', and many of these will damage a home, not just steal from it. As an example, some years ago my house and that of a next-door neighbor were broken into, in broad daylight, in the same year. My home was entered by professionals, obviously 'thinkers'. According to the police, the intruders had been watching to determine routines, and were in the house for less than five minutes. They stole most of my wife's jewelry, almost all our silver, and a TV. We were furious, but our neighbors were even more so. While they were away 'non-thinkers entered their home, stayed for hours, smashed all the glass and crockery they could find, urinated on a sofa, defecated on the beds, smeared the stuff on the walls, and ruined antique furniture and a piano. Both experiences were horrid. The fact that some crook has been rifling through your things, in your home, brings with it a nasty feeling, but the additional and deliberate trashing of your home causes even deeper revulsion.

22. We both learned lessons from the break-ins. I learnt that if my house had been more difficult or dangerous to enter the burglars would probably have considered the risk unacceptable and moved on. My neighbor learnt that a monitored break-in warning system can save much money and heartache. It was also clear that because our houses were well back from the road and partly screened by trees and bushes, we could not count on observation by neighbors or passers-by, so we needed to take extra precautions.

23. We learned that the vast majority of residential break-ins happen during the daytime, not at night. Most homes are occupied at night, noises are more easily heard, even small moving lights can attract attention, and it is more difficult to see either danger or possible loot. Residents go out during the day, when it is also easier to 'read' the signs that indicate if there is anyone home.

24. Advice from a variety of sources about action we can take to keep predators from breaking into our homes, and what should be done if these measures fail, is included in the rest of this Section.

PREVENTING PHYSICAL INTRUSION

25. A lot of the things we can do to keep our homes safe from break-ins are very basic, but even so it is easy to miss some of the essentials. One way to avoid doing that is to divide the job into major tasks, each of which can be clearly distinguished from the others, and to look carefully at each one.

26. I have chosen to examine them in a way that applies to just about every sort of residence, from a tiny apartment in the middle of a city to a grand mansion in a rural area. I start by looking at a single-family home surrounded by a garden, because this involves the biggest number of challenges, many of which apply to all homes. The differences for other homes are then identified and discussed.

27. Once you have read this section and developed or reviewed your own plan, do remember that it is easy to let things slip and end up with gaps in your defense. Check lists for your periodic review are therefore included in Part 2 (the *Memory Aid*). Most are in question form, and refer you back to the appropriate bit of text in Part 1 if you need to take action or are in doubt. They serve as an excellent memory-jogger, and if there is nothing to be done at the end you can feel satisfied that your defense is in the best possible shape

28. Also take a look at ‘Jingle’ (*B1 in the Memory Aid*). You may judge that you don’t need one, but even very young people who should remember things without a problem have found a jingle useful. As we get older, automatic memory aides such as ‘jingles’ can help us avoid dangerous mistakes.

The Law

29. Local and other laws influence what we can and can’t do. Local laws, including building codes, determine how we must fit into our neighborhood and tell us what permissions we will need to take specific action. Laws produced by higher levels of government further limit how we can relate to others. If we are building new structures or making substantial changes to our property,

we should get expert advice to ensure that we don't get into trouble or have to spend more money for changes. Examples are:

- Erecting a fence or a wall (building codes)
- Using barbed wire or broken glass (building codes or danger to public)
- Cutting down trees (local environmental restrictions)
- Installing a siren (noise limits) or external lighting (driving hazard or annoyance).

30. Normally someone at your local government office can advise, but if you are in any doubt, get a ruling in writing. This is especially important because many insurance policies exclude responsibility for any liability resulting from or caused by an insured property owner's failure to comply with a law. In these days when even someone stumbling and banging his or her head on your step is likely to sue you, you don't want to be left without insurance coverage!

31. Believe it or not, you can also be sued by intruders who hurt themselves while breaking into your property. Not easily believable, but 'unusual hazards' *can* render you liable for damages.

Your Community

32. Your community is your first barrier against crime. Most of your neighbors share your desire to be safe and secure, and there may already be groups doing something towards that end. Many communities have organized 'neighborhood watches', so that residents can look out for each other and help the local police force. If there isn't one in your area your local law enforcers will probably be happy to help set one up. You don't have to be a vigilante ... simply reporting suspicious activities will help to do the job.

33. One of the easiest and yet most important ways in which we can cooperate is to keep each other informed of our movements. It is a good feeling to know that someone we can trust knows roughly where we are and, if we have gone out, when we should be back. Equally, when living alone, it is a good idea to have regular contact with a neighbor, so that if you miss the contact someone will know that something is wrong and sound the alarm. This is such a simple

thing to arrange, yet in the case of an attack, a fall, a traffic accident or some other incapacitating event, it could mean life or death.

34. We older folks, and retirees in particular, have a lot going for us. We have time, talent and a presence throughout most areas. We can provide local police law enforcement with a superb information network, making a positive contribution to the safety of our homes and streets. We may be able to help them in other ways, such as coping with some paper or other administrative work to increase the time that officers can spend out where it counts.

35. So volunteer, and discuss with your neighbors anything that might improve safety. As an example, it may be that bushes or hedges on public property could hide one or more individuals waiting to leap out at you when you get off a bus or out of your car to open your gate or garage door. There may be a good case for getting the foliage trimmed back regularly, or getting permission for you to do the job when you feel it is necessary. Alternatively, moving a parking spot a few feet might eliminate a hazard as you or your neighbors enter or leave your properties. Being part of the action and/or having the support of your neighbors could help to make such safety action happen, and taking the initiative in matters of security helps everybody.

36. If you are not already a member of the AARP or CARP (respectively the American and Canadian Associations of Retired People), I strongly recommend that you become one. The cost of membership is just a few dollars a year, but the cumulative effect of millions of small subscriptions means that members get a lot for their money. Some of those benefits are really effective local programs. Contact your Association to find out if any of their safety programs, which have already had a beneficial impact on safety in many communities, are active in your district.

From The Gate To The Walls

The Aim

37. The Aim is to ensure that, as far as possible, between the boundaries of your property and the walls of your residence:

- There is no hiding place from which an attacker could attack or surprise you as you get out of your car or into your home.

- Anyone approaching the house has to do so in the open.
- Windows, doors, steps and other possible points of entry to the house are open to the view of neighbors or passers-by.
- There are no items in view which might tempt a thief.
- Outhouses or other structures are secured at all times.
- The area looks well tended and there is nothing to indicate that the house may be unoccupied.

38. Clearly, these aims conflict with others. Many people have gone to a lot of trouble to put in their trees and bushes, and don't want to be overlooked by their neighbors. Achieving a balanced approach can be difficult, but making the effort may save your possessions or your life.

Things That Could Help

39. **Fences:** Your first line of defense against intruders. Open or 'see-through' fences are more effective than walls or tall hedges, which screen anyone inside from the view of passers-by. A potential intruder knows that if he or she is seen on the residence side of such a fence they will be evidently in the wrong. They also know that sooner or later they will have to get back over or past the fence to get away, which could be difficult when carrying loot, especially bigger items such as TV's or appliances.

40. **Gates:** Many properties have side or rear gates close to the house or hidden from passers-by by hedging or the building itself. These should be as noisy as you can make them, difficult to get over, and secured by keyed locks or padlocks and chains. A normal 'garden gate' kept unlocked at the front of your house should also be noisy to open and shut.

41. **Padlocks:** can be bought in a variety of shapes, sizes, types and materials, and it pays to get high quality laminated steel ones. Those for use outside should be weather resistant, hardened against cutting, with tumbler locking mechanisms. If you are going to use several locks, look for sets that use the same key, as this will lighten your key-ring and save time when you are looking for the right key. If you acquire padlocks or any other locks from the last owner when you move into a property, have them re-keyed or replaced.

42. **Vegetation:** If trees, bushes and hedges screening your property from the road are too good to lose, prune or replant to provide ‘windows’ opening up the view from the outside. As a first priority, remove any branches or limbs that could help the predators reach windows or balconies, as these invite break-ins! Other vegetation around the house, particularly near windows and doors, should be kept trimmed, so that it provides as little cover as possible. Also, choose plants with sharp thorns or barbs for beds under windows ... well placed holly or cactus, for example, can be very discouraging!

Detached Garages and Sheds

43. Outside structures should NOT provide concealment for intruders, either from the house, neighbors, or passers-by. A clear area overlooked by windows and open to view by other properties or a public right of way is a real deterrent to predators. Anything that could provide cover as intruders move or wait for someone to drive in is undesirable.

44. If used for storage, they should be big enough to store any tools, equipment, bicycles, or other valuable objects that are outside the house. Leaving such things in the open is inviting trouble, and leaving ladders, chairs, or tables where they can be grabbed to use to reach windows or balconies is equally dangerous. Many of us still use bikes for exercise, and bicycle storage is particularly important. More bikes are reported stolen than any other piece of property ... one every three minutes or so. Between rides, use a steel U-bar to lock the frame to an immovable object, even in a garage or shed.

45. These should be secure and in good condition ... bicycles, barbecues, toys, tools or other objects are easily taken from an open garage, so why put temptation in someone’s way? (One thief stopped his truck outside my son’s house, walked up the driveway, picked up a golf bag and clubs in the garage, carried them down the driveway, and coolly drove off with them!). Use keyed locks or strong steel padlocks on all doors, and ensure that any hasps are as tough as the locks. (see *Entry Doors* at para 56).

46. **External Lighting:** When choosing a target, most burglars will try to avoid a house with well-lit approaches. Exterior lighting can therefore be an

excellent investment. A mix of lights can achieve maximum impact and reduce cost, and the following guidelines should help.

Areas to be lit, in order of priority, are:

- Ground level windows, doors, porches, stairs, and other possible points of entry to the house or free-standing structures. At the very least, all potential entrances (including those to garages) should be kept well-lit at night or be covered by motion-sensing lights.
- Clumps of trees or bushes, the sides of free-standing structures, and all other areas of the garden or yard where a thief could hide.
- The open ground a thief must cross to get to the house.

Lighting Notes:

- Floodlights are most effective. Less intensive lighting is far less bothersome to intruders. Ornamental lighting is generally too dim. Place lights high up, where they cannot be easily reached or damaged, positioned so that beams don't shine in through windows, so an intruder will not know if anyone is watching.

Motion-sensing lights can be effective and reduce operating cost. Being caught in a floodlight when it comes on can unsettle professionals, let alone amateurs, as they don't know who is watching.

- Most controls that turn lights on or off at preset times are now reliable, cheap to buy, and can save energy. So can lights controlled by photocells responding to the change between night and day. Such controls can provide a really excellent crime deterrent, fooling potential burglars into thinking that an empty house is occupied.
- Remember to check your local lighting regulations, and make sure that any new lights do not upset your neighbors!
- To get a good idea of the capabilities and costs of the latest systems available, go to one of the bigger hardware stores. Take a rough sketch of your property, ask one of the experts in the lighting section for his or her ideas, but don't rush into a purchase. Take your time, if possible seeing the different types of lights actually working in the dark. Neither the most nor the least expensive may be right for you. Low cost may be

important, but so is getting the lighting mix that will work effectively round your residence.

- **External Alarm Systems:** Most of us have no need to install a sophisticated system to cover the area outside our homes. A bunch of valuable tools in a free-standing garage or workshop might justify the cost of linking window or door openings or movement triggers to a general alarm system, but make sure that you don't call out the law to deal with a mouse or a cat! (see *Alarms* at paras 64 to 67).

47. **Dogs:** A large, fierce-looking and fierce-sounding dog can be a real deterrent! If you don't happen to have one, you can still put up 'Beware of the Dog' signs, as they may deter predators.

48. **Sound:** I heard of someone who recorded the very scary growls of a pair of huge German Shepherds, and linked them to his safety system so that they sounded whenever the system was triggered, but that may be going a bit far. Certainly, the use of sound as well as light to pretend that someone is home suggests that a house may be occupied, thus increasing the apparent risk to the predator if a break-in is attempted (see para 70).

49. **Signs:** Other signs that may deter some intruders, especially when linked with 'Beware of the Dog' signs, include: 'No Solicitors', and 'No Salesmen'.

Things We Should Do

50. Once you have made your property outside your home unattractive to potential thieves, maintaining that standard should be a priority.

51. The most important Do's and Don'ts outside your home are:

DO's

- DO check your lights regularly to make sure that they are still working at the right times (power stoppages can really mess them up!). DO check alarm systems at least once each month.
- DO keep ladders and tools locked up and out of sight.
- DO get your mail held or picked up while you are away, and stop newspaper deliveries
- DO arrange with neighbors to keep an eye on each other's property

(especially when one of you is away), picking up mail, magazines, or anything else indicating that the house is empty.

- DO have the area kept neat and tidy (grass cut, etc.) while away.
- DO display your street number in large, well-lit and easy-to-read figures so police and emergency personnel can find your home quickly.
- DO take an occasional burglar's eye look from the road, alley, or neighbors gardens, to see just how easy or difficult it would be to hide near or get close to possible entrances to your building.

DON'Ts

- DON'T leave doors or windows unlocked unless you are right there (leaving the garage or shed door open while you cut the grass at the other side of the house or visit the bathroom is NOT clever)
- DON'T leave things you value unattended outside the house.
- DON'T 'hide' keys on the porch, under a mat or pot or above a door. The predators know all those 'hidey-holes' better than you do.
- DON'T list your first name in the phone book, use your first initial.
- DON'T put your name on your mailbox; it makes it easier for a cruising thief with a phone book to call your home to see if it is empty.
- DON'T leave notes on your door or newspapers/magazines unattended anywhere in the area. They broadcast the fact that there is nobody home and are the first thing a cruising thief spots!

Inside The Residence

The Aim

52. At and inside the building our aim is to safeguard our persons and property by: discouraging entry, stopping those who won't be discouraged, but if that is not possible sounding an alarm and minimizing loss.

Things That Could Help

53. The 'shell' of a typical home consists of walls, floors, roofs, doors and windows. Few, if any, burglars are going to try to get through your walls or floors, so we must first consider the roofs, doors and windows, then decide if and how they should be supported by an alarm system.

54. **The Roof:** Seemingly an unlikely place for a break-in, the roof of some single-family dwellings is actually the safest place to do it. Shallow roofs accessible from the ground, leading to windows or trapdoors hidden from neighbors or passers-by, are ideal for entry. Once inside, attic doors or trapdoors are rarely locked or alarmed. Take a good look at your roof and the doors or trapdoors that lead to it to see if windows or trapdoors need reinforcement or locking devices. If these are necessary, a good hardware store should be able to provide whatever is required and suggest a procedure.

55. **External doors:** There are generally three types of external door: entry doors, sliding doors (often glass), and garage doors.

56. **Entry doors:** (front, side or back, between the house and the garage, or the garage and exterior) should be made of solid core (one-and-one-half-inch-thick) hardwood, or metal-clad. A door, however, will be only as strong as the door fittings:

- Hinges should be substantial, made of steel, with pins on the inside, and so firmly fixed to the door and frame that under attack the door or frame would splinter before the hinges give way.
- Entry door frames should be solid.
- Locks should be high quality, pick-resistant, and dual cylinder, with reinforced strike plates and long mounting screws to keep them from being ripped from the door frame. Change lock cylinders and keys on all exterior doors whenever you take over a house or the keys have been stolen or lost. Dual cylinder locks, which need a key to open them from either the outside or inside of a door, prevent thieves from breaking a pane of glass in the door and then reaching through to turn the knob, but dual cylinder locks can block or slow down anyone trying to get out in a fire or other emergency ... a particularly bad idea for us if we are not as quick as we used to be. Hang the key close to the door but invisible and unreachable from the outside, making sure that anyone in the house will be able to find it in the dark in an emergency.
- Replacing door panes with specially treated safety glass or shatter-proof plastic may be effective, but the material is expensive and can be difficult to find. Twenty years ago my wife came home from a shop-

ping trip, inserted her key in the front door, heard a crunch from under her feet, looked down and saw broken glass. As she looked up through the glass panes in the door she saw that one was shattered, then caught a glimpse of legs running along the balcony above the hallway. She ran next door and phoned the police, but by the time they arrived the intruder was long gone, fortunately with only costume jewelry. Just enough of the glass had fallen outside the door to crunch a warning, otherwise she would have entered, come face-to-face with the ‘non-thinker’ who had broken in, and might well have been harmed. The lesson was learned, and we now use dual cylinder locks wherever windows are within reach of them!

- Dead-bolts, which resist stresses more effectively than locks, are essential on entry doors. Use a model with a full one-inch bolt and toughened steel inserts. They may have to be operated in a hurry, so must be easy to use. Door chains also have their uses, but are no substitute for properly fitted dead-bolts.
- Normal door chains will not withstand a shoulder charge by a heavy man, so that you could not only be faced by a successful intruder, but be injured by the door in the process. A wide-angle peephole can help you to identify visitors without having to open the door first, and if you don’t have one and can’t see visitors from a window, have one fitted.
- Floor-mounted latches can stop a door opening more than a couple of inches, and can thus provide back-up to deadbolts. Some door stops can be locked in and out of position by a toe ... always a help if your knees or back are stiff or arthritic (and if they aren’t now, they may get that way!).

57. While not a door fitting per se, a speaker system helps you to keep the door in its safest position ... closed ... until you are satisfied that the person outside it poses no threat. If not already part of your home’s internal communication system, a two-way speaker system can normally be added at small cost, and is easy to use. For those of us who have difficulty in moving about, there are now (wireless) radio-operated speaker systems that can be used wherever you are in the home, and from a bed or a wheelchair. While these cost more than a simple fixed two-way voice system, they can cost less to install and be a tremendous

help. For an idea of equipment and installation costs, contact your nearest major home equipment store.

58. **Sliding Doors** are a favorite entry point for burglars. They often have relatively weak locks that hook into the frame, and are normally easy to break open. Extra security devices (sometimes optional when a door is bought) such as metal plates to prevent jimmying, safety bars and auxiliary locks can be effective, and adding a strong, keyed lock can prevent through-glass opening (cutting a hole in or breaking a panel to afford access). Other useful improvements include adjusting track clearances on the doors so they can't be pushed out of their tracks, and inserting screws or keeping a strong metal or wooden bar along the interior track to prevent the door being slid open.

59. **Garage Doors:** Once inside an attached garage, a thief can then take time to break through the door between the garage and the house. That door, as well as any side or rear entries to the garage, should therefore be treated as an external door. The main (vehicle entry) doors should also be well secured whenever you know that you will not need to open them (examples: when you are locking up for the night or away on vacation):

- Climbing in and out of cars requires more effort as we get older, so many of us rely on automatic garage door openers. These, although convenient, can often be opened by electronic gadgets easily acquired by predators. Some automatic openers are or can be fitted with security devices, but the most effective way to lock a garage door in position is the good old deadbolt ... most reassuring if you are concerned about break-ins while in the house.
- Pull-up or push-up doors can be secured by high quality keyed doorlocks, to enable locking from the outside. However, extra force can be applied because of the distance of the door top and/or bottom from the lock, so for these doors also, deadbolts should be installed.
- Most modern openers are also fitted with lights that come on when the opener is used and stay on for a predetermined period afterwards. This is essential for security, as you must be able to see that there is no-one there before you get out of your car. When driving into a double garage you may wish to leave your car doors locked until you are inside and

can see that there is no one hiding in wait, a trick of some criminals who invade properties owned by seniors.

60. **Internal Doors:** Once inside and out of public view, it is relatively easy for intruders to ‘jimmy’ doors or smash locks, so leave interior doors unlocked when the house is empty. However, a floor-mounted latch, if used with a solid and soundly-hinged bedroom door, could hold up intruders for precious minutes. Think of it as turning your bedroom into the equivalent of a ‘keep’ in a castle, a stronghold defenders can retreat into until help arrives.

61. **Windows:** can be extremely vulnerable. Indeed, in some areas it is still advisable to put bars or metal grills at particularly exposed windows, normally those at street and/or basement level. If this is unacceptable, armored glass can be effective, but is much more expensive. If your windows are wood frame, check to make sure that the wood between the panes cannot be easily pushed in ... why go to the expense of strong glass if a burglar could get in by putting a shoulder to the framework between panes! Check also that the bolts securing bars or grills are firmly anchored and cannot be undone from the outside, and that at least one window in each room with safety bars has a lock to permit exit in case of fire (the key hung nearby but not visible or reachable from the exterior) . Inexpensive and easy to install ‘Charlie Bars’ should be available in major hardware stores, and are much cheaper than modification of the window, frame, and surround.

62. Fortunately, few of us must take such an extreme approach, but it makes sense to ensure that we have as much protection as possible, including:

- Windows near locks barred, tempered glass, or (strong) plastic.
- Keyed locking devices on double-hung windows to prevent them from being raised from the outside. Some of the locking devices available at hardware stores permit a window to be kept open a few inches for ventilation, but stop it being opened further. For ‘stoppers’ in wood-frame windows, an option is to slide a bolt or nail through a hole drilled at a downward angle in each top corner of the inside sash and at least half-way through the outside sash, but check that such inserts can’t be seen from outside and don’t come loose if the window is wiggled.

- Window locks fitted with dead latches to prevent jimmying with thin knives or credit cards. Such locks are inexpensive, and worth having.

63. **Curtains:** prevent others seeing into your home. A desperate ‘non-thinker’ may be tempted if he can see that there are only one or two elderly people in a house, and thinks that he can bully them. He may be drawn by the sight of something easily sold for drugs or cash, or by an unoccupied room through which he could get into a hallway and eventually bedrooms. ‘Thinkers’ often prowl through neighborhoods during an evening, hoping to see into lit rooms to learn which houses are likely to provide the most valuable loot. Temptation is dangerous, and curtains or blinds are an excellent deterrent.

64. **Alarms:** Internal ‘perimeter’ alarm systems can be very effective. Nowadays, there are all sorts of materials, equipment and gadgets we can buy to help prevent someone breaking into our homes, to frighten them off, or to warn of intrusion. A variety of electronic alarms and security devices on the market may meet your individual security needs, and an equal variety of monitoring services can respond if your system is set off. The costs can vary wildly, and you should be prepared to decide what you need. Security systems now available can activate an alarm:

- when a door or window is opened.
- when something interrupts a laser beam.
- when someone steps on a rug, a piece of carpet, a stair, or flooring.
- when anything moves within a defined area.
- when air is displaced by a body entering a room or house.
- when smoke, fire, or carbon dioxide is detected.
- when an emergency button is pressed or a radio device activated.
- or when a phone line goes dead.
- and some of these alarms can:
 - operate on the house power supply.
 - operate on or have back-up power from batteries.
 - be physically linked to a phone system.
 - be linked by radio to a phone system or directly to a monitor.
 - make a warning sound within and/or outside a residence.
 - sound an alarm in a neighbor’s house.

- contact either a security, fire, or health monitor or police, depending on the alarm triggered.
- alert people monitoring the system who call you to see if an alarm was real and:
 - send a radio car to take a look, or
 - call in the police, fire or ambulance services when necessary.

65. If you feel that you ought to have some sort of security system, get expert advice. Your local police force may have someone who could drop by to discuss your needs with you ... many are too busy, but some have crime prevention programs that could be helpful, and there are excellent companies in the security business. Just remember that not all the people selling security systems are experts or have your best interests at heart, so if you can, choose a system that operates well for a friend or neighbor.

66. If you don't know of one that fits, find three reputable companies who provide home security systems and services. Then ask each of the three to suggest a system and quote a price, but before you sign any contracts, follow the excellent recommendation of the City of Orlando Police Department and ask these questions:

- About the business:
 - is it local and does it have a state/provincial license?
 - does it offer 24 hour service?
 - will its products get you reduced insurance rates?
 - is there a warranty?
 - is there a service contract?
 - if the system is monitored by a central station, is it a person or tape?
 - if you are out of town, will the company have someone respond to the location to assist the police?
 - are there any complaints on file with the Better Business Bureau?

- About the equipment:
 - could you and your spouse easily operate it.
 - could pets in your house trigger any motion detectors.
 - is it wired-in or battery operated?
 - if wired-in, does it switch automatically to battery power without activating (in the event of a power failure)?
 - if activated, will it automatically shut itself off or reset?
 - if the control box is exposed, will it activate if tampered with?
 - are all wires protected from the elements and rodents?
 - if an audible system, is it loud enough for neighbors to hear?
 - does the system have a time delay to allow time to activate or deactivate without false alarms?
 - will it also connect to fire alarms?
 - is the system approved by Underwriters Laboratory (U.L.)

67. Some security systems also monitor medical problems, so if you have or are likely to have such a requirement, make sure that you take it into consideration when you select a security system.

68. Once you have any sort of system, take care to use it properly, not only for your own safety, but because if you frequently set off false alarms neighbors and police may cease to take them seriously, defeating your whole purpose (and you may be contravening local municipal ordinances). So consider ease of use before the system is bought.

As a fallback, if it's signal will reach the garage, keep your car key on you or by your bed, as a loud car horn waking up the neighborhood is likely to worry most predators.

69. **Lights:** Lighting, and the way we use it, is just as important inside the home as it is outside. By using electric timers (available for a few dollars) to change lights, making your house look occupied, you can often fool predators into leaving your property alone, and going on to an easier target. This may be difficult to achieve if your neighborhood is under observation by professional thieves, but it can work with opportunists, particularly the non-thinkers.

70. Some more expensive timers replace an electric power switch, and not only control room lights but have a variety of built-in programs to control whatever that switch is connected to. These can be confusing, but the simple type to plug in between a lamp and a power socket is good enough for most of us. They are easy to set up, and some switch on and off at different times daily.

71. **Sound:** To someone standing outside a door or window, the sound of a radio, CD or tape player suggests that a home is occupied, thus increasing the apparent risk if a break-in is attempted. Leave a radio playing loudly enough to be heard outside the house, or a TV which can be seen from a window. For longer absences, a radio can be linked to a time control.

72. **The Phone:** definitely a defensive asset, which has saved lives and property on literally millions of occasions. There are three things to consider.

73. The first is to make sure that the phone line coming into the residence is out of reach. Most thieves won't bother to cut a phone line, and 'thinkers' are unlikely to do so if they know that the residence has a monitored security system. However, some criminals who are intent on breaking and entering whether or not you are there, and particularly those who specialize in terrorizing elderly occupants, will if they can reach them cut phone lines before they enter. If emergency services would take a long time to reach you, use a system which activates an alarm if your line goes dead.

74. The second is to have your local police, ambulance, and fire service numbers entered in your phone memory or keep them by all phones. Extensions have been used effectively many times when breaking glass or other noise has warned of intruders. Having the list in your bedroom or study when you are resting or reading and can't be bothered to answer the door (see para 123), can be a lifesaver if a 'knocker' tries to break in.

75. The third is the way in which the phone is used. Be careful not to give any verbal indication of absence, and don't have the message on your answering machine give even a hint that you are away from home. Use or get a strong male voice to record your messages for you. Predators believe that women are more vulnerable than men, and that one person is an easier target than two or more, so have the message from the 'Blank household', or 'Blank family', or

say “Sorry we can’t come to the phone at the moment”. And don’t talk within earshot of strangers about going away, an easy thing to do in a bar or hair-dresser’s chair.

Things We Should Do

76. **Vary our routines:** The ‘thinkers’ will watch a neighborhood to see if houses are left empty at particular times and for particular periods. Those of us who are not tied to a timed schedule, avoiding regular routines (such as shopping for two hours with friends every Friday morning, or walking for an hour every day at exactly the same time) may just deter a potential break-in, or at least worry a thief enough to make him rush and, we hope, miss things.

77. **Use our defenses:** The first rule of residential security is to know what our defensive mechanisms are, and then to use them.

In more than half residential break-ins the intruder gets in through an unlocked door or window.

The vast majority of those doors had locks and the windows had catches ... not in use! The probability is that if they had been locked the intruder would have moved on, looking for an easier target. So, whether you decide to rely on simple fasteners or install more sophisticated defenses, **USE THEM!** If you don’t, and the predators steal your most treasured possessions, it will be your fault! Compose your jingle (see *Memory Aid List B1*) and use it faithfully.

78. Don’t forget that most intrusions occur in daylight. Leaving windows open to air rooms, or doors unlocked to save bother, always takes a risk (in some really rough or isolated neighborhoods even when you are in the room).

79. At night, if heat or ventilation needs cause you to sleep with an open window, you have a problem. Even if it is only ajar, an open window is an invitation to a thief, and once that thief is inside your bedroom theft may not be the only crime committed. Elderly householders who have awakened during a burglary have been killed or seriously injured to prevent them raising an alarm or to find out where valuables are kept ... and age may not prevent rape or sexual assault

... women in their seventies and eighties have been viciously raped, and men over eighty killed, by intruding Non-Thinkers.

80. If you just have to have more air, either use the simple ‘stoppers’ described in para 62 or go to a hardware store and tell them your problem. There are several ways to get air in and out, ranging from gadgets which will prevent a window from opening more than an inch or two, to fans or air-conditioners which will fit into the window. The associated costs range from a dollar or two to hundreds of dollars, so see what best meets your need. There are small hardware stores that personalize their service, and big ones that have experts in just about every household hardware problem you have. Choose two, and then compare their products, price and service.

81. If you are living on your own, and don’t feel that you can handle either the technical aspects of the problem or dealing with a hardware store, ask for advice from neighbors or at your Seniors Center. Just don’t invite in predators by leaving a window ajar or a door that opens to the touch!

82. **At the door:** There is one absolute rule ... NEVER open a door without seeing who is waiting on the other side. If you hear the doorbell or a knock at the door, LOOK to see who is there. This is why having a wide-angle peephole or window view of the entry is so important. A speaker system cannot warn you if the arm of the person whose voice you hear is being twisted, or if there is a knife or gun to his or her back. You may think that this is being overly dramatic, but it happens. So why not be on the safe side? Then if the visitor is a stranger, announce loudly “It’s OK, I’ll get it”.

83. BEFORE opening the door to a stranger, ask him/her what he/she wants. A speaker system helps, but if you don’t have one, call out ... and for us macho old guys, don’t think that just because the stranger outside is female, young, and attractive you can handle the situation. She may have a gun or a knife, or a thick shoe to jam in the door, or a huge and nasty partner in crime waiting just out of sight ... anyway, nowadays slips of girls can be expert in all sorts of martial arts, or so my granddaughters tell me.

84. Don’t open the door until you are fully satisfied about the visitor. If it is a tradesman or service person, first have them produce identification. These days

anyone can copy any card or document on a computer, so if you have the slightest doubt about it ask the company, using the number in the yellow pages, NOT one given to you by the visitor. The visitor can wait ... after all, he/she wants to talk to you and has the option of leaving. If a stranger at your door pleads for help, don't let them in; tell him or her to wait and call 911. Then call the police and wait inside, with the person needing help still outside.

85. Some kind seniors may feel that it is rude to keep someone waiting outside the door, or be embarrassed about telling them, from behind the door, to go away. Do it ... embarrassment is a lot better than the risk of danger!

86. Also, don't be impressed if a salesperson says that a neighbor told them to call, it may just be a ploy, or your neighbor may not have checked the stranger's credentials.

87. If you think a caller is suspicious, or is checking out your area, phone your local law enforcers to let them know. Many break and entry specialists 'case' potential targets, and some masquerading as salesmen will pretend to try to find a suitable time to bring back a product or a quote when they are really trying to find out when you will be out. They may also ask about your neighbors, saying either that they want to show them a product or that they have been trying to deliver something, so if they ask "How long will they be away?" or "When will they be back?" just tell them "I can't say".

88. One last thought about answering the doorbell ... you may be tempted to ignore it. You may be undressed, in bed, on the phone, or just feel tired, but if you can do so at least take a quick look to see who is there. If it is someone you know and wish to avoid, you can always keep quiet, but if it is a stranger, use your communication system to speak to them, or do so through the door. Before breaking in most burglars ring a door bell or knock to see if anyone is home. Remember also that some of the predators can dress, look, and sound like anyone from injured motorists to religious missionaries, yet another good reason for not opening the door to strangers.

89. Pretend that you are a burglar and examine your defenses, and better still get someone else you trust to do so. Make sure that without a key none of the door and window locks can be opened from the outside. Look in through the

windows at night to see if the curtains are effective, and move any tempting valuables, especially any that can be easily carried, out of direct view.

90. Don't advertise! A delightfully carved plaque outside a home not only lets friends know where you live, it enables even a non-thinker to look you up in the phone book and call to find out who is at home, or if the house is empty. The call could even be made on a cell-phone right outside the door, to hear the ringing. Equally, use only your surname and initials in the phone book, as your first or nickname can be a useful tool to any thief.

91. Lastly, anyone you employ around the house, ranging from a cleaning person who comes in every couple of weeks to a butler, cook or maid, should be checked out before they start, and then taught how to use any security systems and take the right precautions. Insist that they do not talk to others about you, your belongings, your habits, absences or travel plans.

Minimizing any loss

92. There are those who can afford to donate beautiful and valuable objects to museums, or who like to keep them locked up in bank vaults, but most of us want our most precious things where we can see them and enjoy them as we age. Insurance can help, and we should all insure against fire, theft and loss, but insurance cannot make up for the loss of things of sentimental value.

93. Over the years a lot of people have put thought into finding ways in which we can minimize any loss if the predators do get in. Those that I think are the most important are listed in the following paragraphs.

94. **Duplicating photographs.** For me, the most irreplaceable objects in my house are the photographs of loved ones and events. They have no value to a thief, but could be thrown into a bag by someone taking picture frames (amongst other things), destroyed by a vandal or by fire. Fortunately, back-up copies are now much easier to get and to keep. You (or perhaps a grandchild) can copy the originals into a computing system and store them on disk ... just make sure that the quality of the eventual copies is good enough. Also, most good camera stores now make excellent copies at small cost. Just store the disks or the copies safely somewhere away from your home.

95. **Keeping a list** of serial numbers of televisions and all other appliances. This is particularly important now that identification numbers can be entered into computers and checked whenever stolen property is recovered.

96. **Indelibly marking objects** likely to be taken. This discourages theft, providing a means of identification if stolen property is recovered by police. Many law enforcement agencies lend an engraving pen to householders with advice on how to use it, so ask yours if they can provide help or advice. If not, try your local residents association or municipal office. If none of these can give you any help, you can always buy or rent an engraving pen fairly cheaply.

97. Some time ago it was usual to engrave items with your Social Security number, but this could be used to impersonate you (see Section 6, 'Identity Theft'). So use your driver's license number and issuing State or Province. Mark such things as disk-players, stereos, radios, television sets, video cameras, and appliances. Put the mark where it can quickly be seen on the back or side of larger items, and on any major sub-components that can be detached and used separately (e.g. motors). A jeweler can inconspicuously engrave smaller items such as cameras and watches.

98. Your local law enforcers can probably also provide stickers, announcing that your goods have been marked, for you to put in your windows. This is an excellent deterrent to break-ins, because it shows that your goods are going to be difficult to sell and will bring less cash. It also shows the 'thinkers' that you are taking the matter of security seriously and have probably taken other defensive measures.

99. **Keeping Lists.** You will have listed the really valuable items to support your insurance policy, but keeping a list of the contents of each room is also a good idea, noting if they have been marked with your identification number. If your home is ever burglarized or burnt a reasonably up to date list will help you to identify what you have lost. Supporting this list by videotapes or photographs, and keeping both the lists and supporting evidence in a safe place outside the home, really helps to get claims paid.

100. **Safe Places.** The safest place to keep valuables from theft, fire, flood or earthquake is in a bank safe deposit box. Never keep large amounts of money at

home, even if nobody else knows about it. Just the suspicion that an attractive sum might be there could attract predators, but you may need a ‘hide-away’ at home, and choosing one needs a fair bit of thought.

101. Thieves, even the non-thinkers, will turn out drawers, look underneath and behind them and behind wall art. Given time, they will probably find anything hidden, so the key thing to remember in selecting a hide-away is that you are trying to buy time, in the hope that intruders will be disturbed or leave before getting to your valuables. Although they do not guarantee safety for your things, ten possible ideas of where to locate a secret compartment to buy that time are described below. The first five are probably better for home-owners, and the second five for apartment dwellers or renters.

- **Walls:** Because most are hollow, there may be hidden space behind every wall. The ideal spots are behind solid, fixed items, like coat racks, or boards along closet walls supporting the clothes hanging pole. Remove the attachment and hollow out a compartment. Make sure you camouflage your handiwork well.
- **Beams:** Ceiling and wall beams are popular architectural features in homes. Make one of the false beams movable, and hollow an opening out of its top or back side.
- **Baseboards:** Carefully pry a short section of baseboard away from the wall, then hollow out a compartment and replace the baseboard.
- **Paneling:** Wall paneling offers a method of opening up large areas of dead space. Your best choice is behind actual boards fixed to the wall individually, not behind the 4' X 8' sheets.
- **Mirrors:** For a compartment offering little depth, but a large area of space, you can construct a hollow behind a full length mirror on your closet door. Hollow out your compartment, then mount your mirror with sliding tabs.
- **Furniture:** Secret spaces built into furniture have been favorites for centuries. A simple approach is to remove the molding of a table or desk, and make a hollow.

- **Bookcase:** The lowest shelf of a bookcase is usually raised several inches above ground level, with this space enclosed by a base molding. Make the shelf removable.
- **Light Switch:** A secret space can easily be built behind an electric outlet plate or light switch.
- **House Plants:** Secret compartments can be constructed in the base of your plant pots: this will be especially effective if you have lots of plants. Seal your valuables well in plastic if they can be damaged by moisture
- **Buried Treasure:** Don't overlook the oldest technique ... burying your valuables, but make sure you have an accurate map of where your treasure is buried! These ideas may prompt thoughts of other even more unlikely potential secret compartments in your home, but whichever you choose, make sure your craftsmanship is flawless, and don't reveal your hiding place to anyone who can't be completely trusted.
- **Lastly:** Leave a jewelry box with realistic-looking but inexpensive imitation jewelry in it in a top drawer to mislead non-thinkers.

102. **Firearms.** Note that, with some exceptions, Canadian law requires firearms to be stored unloaded, and either inoperable (using a secure locking device such as a trigger lock or cable lock, or by removing the bolt or bolt carrier) or 'locked in a sturdy, secure container or room that cannot be easily broken into' ... makes sense to me!

Differences for Other Homes

103. Once we retire most of us choose to stay in one area for a while, often down-scaling to smaller accommodation in multi-residence buildings. Most of the principles I have outlined for single-family homes apply to apartments, town-houses, strata homes and other multiple unit dwellings, although they may have to be applied differently.

104. **Outside influences:** All the comments made in paras 31 to 36 apply, but in addition, the Residents Committee (or Owners Council or whatever the occupants call their representative group) is especially important (I'll refer to it

as The Board). You *must* know what powers The Board has in relation to you, the other occupants, and the developer (if there is still one with an interest).

Appropriate questions relating to security and safety are:

- How is The Board constituted?, and do the occupants control it?
- What responsibility, if any, does The Board have for security?
- What changes is it empowered to make?
- How does it pay for security services or changes?
- How much money can The Board demand of occupants?
- What is its record on matters affecting security?
- What power do you have to change things that worry you (e.g. installing bars in a ground-level window, or replacing your door)?

105. Even if you are happy with the current security arrangements, buildings and neighborhoods change, not always for the better. Security needs can change too ... sometimes a new bus line can bring criminals from a rough area, or budgetary constraints can reduce police protection. You need to know if The Board will and can take appropriate action, and if the cost of such action is likely to be acceptable to you and your fellow-occupants.

106. **Between The Gates And The Walls.** The aim and approach remain the same as for detached homes, although a car park external to the building requires special attention. Such car parks, whether they are single or multi-story, can attract ‘non-thinkers’ looking for a quick ‘hit’ to raise cash to buy illicit drugs or alcohol.

107. Short of on-site human guards, the most effective arrangement is a combination of bright lighting, open sides (in multi-story parking), an open layout and overlooking windows that make anyone in the car park feel exposed. Video cameras are a deterrent, either monitored or recording, and signs with pictures of video cameras and warnings about being watched should be displayed prominently at all entrances and on every floor. Stairs and entrances to the building should be open to view from the exterior.

108. The most important safety precaution you can take is to remain alert. Drive into any parking area with doors locked and windows up, look carefully around, and be prepared to drive away if there is anything to cause alarm. If there is a stranger who could reach you before you get to the elevator or en-

trance to the building, wait with your doors locked until he or she has gone. Most of us can't move as fast as we once did, so you may wish to have a noise-maker in your hand as you move between the car and the entrance.

109. **Inside The Building.** The comments made earlier about single family dwellings apply equally to apartments. Also, shared areas need extra care.

110. If you remotely control entry to the building, 'buzz in' only those visitors you know are safe. If there are unanticipated deliveries (flowers, etc.), phone to check with the shop or office that sent them (use the number in the phone book). This may delay the deliverer for a few minutes, but the extra time is part of the cost of providing good service. If you are still suspicious, insist that the deliverer show you their credentials through the 'spy-hole in the door before you open it.

111. Indoor garages, whether they are above or below ground, require just as much care as the outside car parks ... sometimes more so, as they are rarely under observation. Even the stupidest 'non-thinker' can find a way to sneak into a parking garage, whether or not the door is card-controlled, and don't let management print your apartment number on your assigned parking space, as that advertises your absence when your vehicle is out!

112. Elevators are generally safer to use than stairs, but can be a danger spot. Before getting in look inside to make sure that there is no suspicious stranger concealed in a corner, and if there is a stranger inside the elevator when it arrives in a basement make sure that he or she leaves before you get in. Also, look at the indicators when you enter, and if the basement button has already been pressed even though the elevator is empty ... get out and wait for the next one. Whichever floor you are at, get off immediately if someone suspicious gets in, and don't get in yourself if it arrives with someone suspicious in it. If you are concerned about someone waiting at the elevator door with you, pretend that you have just remembered something and walk away. If a stranger gets out at your floor, slow right down or wait until they are out of sight before walking on.

113. The hallways should be clear of hiding places and well lit, so that you can see clearly when you are in the corridors and when you are looking into them, either from the elevator or through your door.

114. An apartment door should be considered an entry door (see para 56), with a deadbolt lock and wide angle through-door viewer. If possible, do not master key these locks to management locks. The manager of the building can be given a key in a sealed envelope to be used for emergencies only, not for such things as repairs, etc. If there is a chain that when engaged limits opening to a few inches, it should be strong and solidly secured by (at least) one inch screws in solid wood, both to the door frame and the door itself.

115. Laundry rooms are a prime target for ‘non-thinkers’ when they gain access to an apartment building, so extra care is justified. Approach your neighbors to find out when they will be doing their laundry, and arrange to join them. This is for their safety, as well as yours, so don’t let refusals bother you, just keep on trying until you find someone who will cooperate.

116. The key thing to remember is to keep an eye open for anything that looks suspicious ... and that means anything which causes you even the slightest concern. We don’t react as quickly as we once did, so be ready to do the right thing at the first sign of any danger. When you are in a public area in your building think about where danger might come from and how you should respond. If it never happens, you have lost nothing, but if it does, a split second could save your property and perhaps even your life.

If the predators get in

117. If this sub-section didn’t cover more, it could be entitled “What to do if there is even the slightest HINT that your home has been broken into.

118. **If you are outside ... walk away.** The ‘hint’ may be a broken or open window, a door ajar or unlocked, marks around a lock, a noise from inside, or anything out of place or changed since you left. Do not enter, or prowl round the outside peering in windows, or stand still and yell, scream, or make other loud noises ... just WALK AWAY! The only exception is that if an intruder comes out and approaches you ... go quickly to neighbors or where there are other people, and if you can’t do that, make the loudest noise that you can!

119. The important factor here is the unknown. You don't know who or how many are inside. You don't know if they are thinkers or non-thinkers, armed, drunk or high on drugs, desperate or frightened.

120. This is one situation where discretion really is the better part of valor! Walk quietly away to the nearest phone and call your local law enforcers to tell them what has happened and who and where you are. If you can, keep the house under observation while you do so. If you have a cell phone, you could wait where you can see your home and then phone, but there is much comfort in having other people around you. Try to get a good description of anyone who comes out, but let the lawmen deal with them. It is their job, and they are trained to handle it.

121. When you enter, check with the lawmen before you touch anything. Tell them if anything has been moved, and what if anything is missing. Hand over a list of identifying marks on the stolen items as soon as you can. Look also for things that the intruders may have left behind them, and if there are any leave them untouched and tell the lawmen where they are. Burglars have left behind fingerprints, driving licenses, briefcases, tools and even target lists at the scene of a crime!

122. **If you are inside** and hear a suspicious noise, sniff quietly for smoke, as sometimes the first warning of a fire is noise. If there is no trace of smoke, your choice of action will obviously be influenced by where the noise seems to have originated, who is with you in the home, whether there is a way out close at hand, the time of day, and what security systems are installed.

123. If you are alone, and you think that someone has broken in, sneak out quietly to the nearest phone and call in the law. This approach frequently not only saves occupants from immediate danger but results in the capture of the intruder. Some years ago our next door neighbor's daughter, still in her dressing gown and feeding her baby, ignored her doorbell, then heard breaking glass at the back, crept out of the front and ran round to my house. Two very large electricians working there captured the miscreant, and kept him cornered until the police (called by my wife) arrived.

124. She had got her priorities right, putting personal safety first; and property safety second. You cannot tell how dangerous the intruder(s) may be, so your first priority must be to get yourself and those living or staying with you out of danger. Then, and only then, phone the lawmen.

125. If you are on your own but cannot sneak out quietly, lock and block your door, and phone the police. A floor-mounted latch of the type mentioned in para 56 might hold up an intruder long enough for help to arrive, or for him to worry that it might do so. If you have no floor-mounted latch, a strong chair placed at an angle under the doorknob may help. If your phone is dead, or the predators assault your bedroom door, shout or scream out of the window for help.

126. If there are young grandchildren or other small children in the house, your first thought must obviously be for them. In recent years several children have been kidnapped from houses where other family members have been sleeping, and stopping the kidnapper before he or she gets away is critical. The options are: to go directly to the child's room and then raise the alarm; to quietly rouse anyone else staying in the house first; or to immediately sound an alarm. Your choice, just react quickly and do not waste time.

127. Others in the house should be warned and if possible brought together in the safest room available as soon as an alarm is activated, whether it sounds locally or not. Making a loud noise and shouting "I've phoned the police" may scare off the burglar, but be extremely careful about searching the house. It is far safer to stay where you are until the law arrives. If you do want to take the risk of searching before you call your local law enforcement center, have one person at a phone ready to call for help at the slightest sign of trouble.

128. Crying 'wolf'. Most of us will remember the story about the young shepherd guarding the flock who cried 'wolf' so often that his back-up eventually ignored him, and that is when the wolf raided and killed his sheep.

129. The analogy is a good one. Too many false alarms will certainly decrease anyone's interest in coming to the rescue. In many areas false alarms will result in a fine and refusal to respond, and not only bother your neighbors but could result in action to make you disconnect it.

130. This can be avoided if you check before you buy, so that you know that your system will work well and is unlikely to create false alarms if you use it sensibly. However, don't be reluctant to use it, or to call for help, if and when you believe that there is danger to you or to your property.

131. **If you come face to face with an intruder**, do not make threatening gestures or indulge in verbal abuse, If you do he or she is probably going to try to hurt you. Say that the law is on the way. As soon as he/she has gone, and if you have not already done so, sound the alarm or phone for help.

132. If you are in bed or napping in a chair, pretend to be asleep. If you are not, and if you are not sure that you can get to somewhere safe before you are caught, stay where you are and take a good look at facial and physical characteristics and dress, so that you can brief the lawmen when they arrive.

133. If you are attacked and the intruder is trying to hurt you, make noise! Only you can decide whether to remain passive or resist. At our age the choice must be governed by our condition and judgment of the situation.

If the intruder has a lethal weapon resistance could be fatal, but if you feel that you must defend yourself, hit where it can most damage. None of us are as strong and agile as we used to be, but the targets we can access most effectively are:

- Eyes (with straight fingers)
- Throat (with side of hand, knuckles, side of arm or elbow)
- Groin (with knee)
- Shin (with foot)
- Ear (with elbow ... the hardest thing on you!)
- Knee (with foot)
- Top of foot (with foot)
- Center of chest (with fist, elbow or top of head) and
- Fingers or back of hand (with anything you can bring to bear).

**Remember that the overall aim is to safeguard
our persons and property, not punish the predators
or increase our danger!**

SECTION 3

AWAY FROM HOME

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IN THE LOCAL AREA

BACK-UP

134. If you live alone, having a friend or neighbor know where you are and when you should be back is very important. Whether you are going to be away for a few hours or a month, if you fail to return as planned the knowledge that you are missing and roughly where you went may bring help if something has gone wrong. If something totally unexpected happens, like being stunned by an

accidental fall into a ditch, or getting mugged and left under bushes behind a car park, there is at least a chance that you will be found before it is too late.

135. If you don't have a neighbor ready to join you in backing each other up, check with your nearest senior's center, or church. There could be someone there who would be delighted to provide such mutual back-up. To make it work you don't have to go into great detail, just enough for someone to have a good idea of how you are traveling, where you will be, and when you will be back.

WALKING

136. Dressing for walking

Dressing for a walk, wherever you are and whether it is a stroll, for shopping, or to get to a meeting or appointment, can be important. While you can't totally prevent the possibility of problems, you can certainly minimize the risk:

- **Identification:** Carry a card or note listing your name, phone number, any medical problems you have, and the name and phone number of the person to be contacted if you are incapacitated in some way. Do this as well as wearing any medical alert bracelets or necklaces.
- **Non-interference:** Wear clothes that will not slow you down if you want to move quickly, and shoes that won't slip or turn your ankle. Do not wear earphones which could prevent you hearing approaching vehicles or warning shouts, or headgear that could limit your vision. Remember that we are vulnerable to traffic knock-downs, and once we are knocked down it is much easier to steal anything we are carrying.
- **Wearing valuables:** Keep them out of sight! Money, wallets, jewelry (including watches) are targets of opportunity for muggers and thieves. As an example, my sister was given a very special necklace for a major birthday, and in celebration wore it to walk to her birthday lunch. As she waited to cross the road to the restaurant, a smartly dressed man asked her the time, and when she looked down at her watch he snatched her necklace, cutting her neck in the process, and ran. He was not caught, and the necklace was never recovered.
- **Carrying money:** Carry only what you need, if in cash stored in several internal pockets. Carry only those credit cards you will use. Don't

make regular trips to pick up Social Security or other payments, as they could be noted, and sooner or later you may be waylaid. *Have pensions and other regular payments deposited directly to your bank account.*

- **Purses:** Don't keep your money, credit cards, or other valuables in your purse. It is like putting a sign on it saying "I'M HERE AND EASY TO GRAB", so keep the valuables elsewhere on your person. If you must use a purse, carry one without a shoulder strap. The week before this section was written, an elderly woman in an upscale area on the west coast died after being knocked down when a youth on a bicycle grabbed the shoulder-strap of her purse.
- **Packs:** Fanny packs and other bags which can be fastened to the body can carry valuables safely, but wear them in front, like kangaroos, as some are easy to cut at the back without your knowledge so that the pack can be jerked away. Before you buy fanny packs, money belts, bags to be attached to a leg or hung from a neck, test them thoroughly. Some of our necks and shoulders may be less or better padded than they used to be, but the muscles aren't as powerful, and a slightly uncomfortable arrangement can become a real pain by the end of a day. Equally, our bodies may not be quite as easy to contort while trying to get at money or items stored away in a concealed pouch, ensuring that everyone within view knows exactly where to find the place of concealment.

137. Watching how you go

**In the last year for which I have statistics,
ONE-THIRD of pedestrian fatalities were over 65**

Avoiding real or contrived accidents: More pedestrians aged 65 and older are killed in accidents than those in any other age group. By the time we get to this age we should have better judgment and take fewer risks, but we may not hear or see as well, can't run or jump as fast to get out of the way, and our bones are no longer green. If we are knocked down in a fake accident it is more difficult to prevent someone taking something or picking our pockets, and thieves who use such an approach don't care how badly their victims are hurt. Even though we

have been walking around in traffic for years, it is worth reminding ourselves from time to time of the basic rules for doing so safely:

- First and foremost, look after yourself – take exercise, eat right, have routine ear and eye examinations, and take medications as prescribed.
- Wear well-fitting walking shoes or boots, with low heels and firm soles.
- Carry as little as possible. Take advantage of home deliveries.
- Plan your walk so that you miss deserted areas and don't have to hurry.
- Keep and look alert. Watch where you and other pedestrians are going.
- Never cross against or try to beat a light.
- Never step out between parked cars or trucks (and watch for cars backing out from stalls in parking lots or garages).
- Always cross at a marked crosswalk, or an intersection.
- Stay on the sidewalk and look and listen until you are sure that the road is clear, or all cars have stopped.
- Never trust a driver to avoid you ... don't provide a chance to hit you.
- At night, or when the light is bad, be especially careful, wear reflective tape and carry a flashlight.
- If you have to wait alone at a bus stop, plan where to go if you feel threatened.
- Anywhere, if something feels the slightest bit wrong ... get out of there!

138. **Avoiding crime:** Just looking alert will deter some bag-snatchers and pick-pockets, who are looking for easy targets, and seniors on their own or carrying things are tempting. Here again, a little advance thinking can reduce risk. Don't take a chance on getting lost, just decide on the safest route you can take to do the things that you want to do, and then follow it. If you need to go out in the dark or through places or areas which are worrisome, either get enough company on your walk to feel safe, or put off the trip until you can do so. You, and only you, can decide how much risk you want to take, so try to measure it in advance and make a conscious decision. It's your life!

139. While on foot, remember the basic rules for keeping as safe as possible:
- Stay in well-lit areas, avoiding dark places.
 - Always prearrange meetings so that you meet in a safe environment.
 - Walk in the middle of the sidewalk, staying away from concealed doorways, alleys, trees, bushes, vans and trucks.
 - Watch out for anyone just hanging around on or near the sidewalk, and for persons sitting in cars next to the sidewalk ... car doors can be used to knock down elderly people to set up a robbery.
 - Don't carry large or heavy bags or boxes that obscure your view or impede your movement.
 - If another pedestrian stops to ask you a question, keep moving or stay as far away as possible. If you do stop, keep looking at him or her. Don't look away to see your watch, or in a direction you may point out.
 - If someone in a car or van asks for directions, don't approach the vehicle, just answer as best you can from where you are.
 - When you return home have the door key in your hand so that you can open the door immediately.
 - If you think you are being followed, go as quickly as you can to any place where there are other people. If that is not possible, cross the road, go to the nearest store, business or residence and call the police.
 - Don't accept a lift from a stranger.
 - If a robber asks for your wallet and/or purse, toss it away from you, he may go for it, giving you an opportunity to get away.
 - If someone snatches your purse, bag, or package, let go. Injury is worse than loss. If someone threatens you and demands money, give it to them to avoid injury, note as many things as you can about their appearance and voice, and hold any screams until they have left, but if you are about to be hurt, use an alarm if you have one, yell, scream, wave your arms, and do anything you can to attract attention.
 - Keep your keys where you can get at them easily, and have them out and ready to use when you get to your door or your car.
 - Above all else ...STAY ALERT!

140. If you use public transportation:

- Plan each journey, and know which buses or subway lines you must take. If there are changes between lines, take written directions with you so that you will always know which vehicle or train to board.
- If you are going to return by public transport, check that the lines you will have to use will still be running when you need them.
- Always wait in well-lit areas, preferably with other people.
- Don't accept a lift from a stranger if there is any alternative.
- Keep well back from platform edges until buses or trains have stopped.
- Have the exact fare ready, to avoid showing watchers where you keep your money, and cab fare in case you can't get on the last bus or train.
- Ride as near the operator as possible during off-peak hours, and whenever there are few riders.
- If someone onboard bothers you, change seats and tell the operator.
- On trains, pick cars with people in them, and if your car gets too empty get out and into another one.
- Sit in an aisle seat, not against a window where you can be trapped.
- Keep any packages in your hands or on your lap. If you put them down they may be stolen or forgotten.
- If you need directions, ask the driver or a woman passenger, preferably one carrying shopping.
- When getting off a bus or tram, watch people around you.
- Watch out for pickpockets in crowded buses, coaches, trains, stations and escalators, as all of these are favorite pickpocket hunting grounds.
- Have the exact fare or pass ready in hand when boarding a bus or tram.

141. If you use a taxi:

- Have the address of your destination hand-printed on a piece of paper so that you can be sure that the driver knows where you want to go.
- Carry a card from the hotel or wherever you are staying.
- If you have ordered the cab by phone, let the driver find you. Don't ask "Are you for Mr. Mubblewubble (or whoever)", because the driver

might just be a predator looking for an easy mark. Ask “Who are you meeting?” and don’t get in unless you get the right answer.

- Make a note of the cab number and color, and sit in the back.
- Pay and check the change while you are in the vehicle, so that the driver can’t drive away with your money.
- Make sure that you have reached your destination before you get out.
- When arriving home in the dark, ask the driver to wait until you are safely inside.

SHOPPING

142. As we get older, shopping gets more difficult. Distances seem to get longer, and bags seem heavier and more awkward to handle. While shopping we are therefore more vulnerable to a quick attack than we used to be.

Shopping with a family member or neighbor is a good idea, even if you split up to shop individually and then meet before coming home. If you have a car, you may find someone in your area who would appreciate the offer of a regular lift to and from your shopping center. If you don’t have your own transportation, don’t stand on ceremony ... ask one of your neighbors for a lift when they go shopping. You may have to fit in with their times, and hurry up or wait for a while, but the security advantage is significant for both of you.

143. For many older people living alone, shopping trips are the major source of contact with others, and offer a sense of ‘belonging to the community’. Through your local church or senior’s organization, find out if there are small groups who get together for such expeditions, or set about forming one.

144. In shops or shopping malls, the basic rules apply:

- Be careful when using revolving doors, as whatever you are carrying could be snatched and long gone before you can get back out.
- Keep your wallet out of sight, and don’t display rolls or wads of bills.
- Don’t leave purchases unattended or your purse in a shopping cart. If you look away for two seconds either could be gone.
- If possible, avoid washrooms at the end of long passages.
- Don’t enter passages that are not well-lit, especially near closing time.

145. Mall parking lots are frequently targeted by non-thinkers. The lots are difficult to monitor, offer hiding places, and normally easy to get away from. Try to walk through with someone else. If necessary, wait for someone.

146. At malls, park as close to the main door as you can. Park close to a light, and seek people moving about, as there is a better assurance of safety in numbers. On the way out, ask for a security person or packer to walk you to your car. If you think that it is in a 'safe' space and choose to walk to it alone, have your keys in your hand and watch out for anyone sitting in cars you pass. Be wary of drivers backing out who may not see you, and of anyone who speaks to you. If they ask for help, stay away. Tell them that you will send help from the nearest store or the mall cops and keep walking.

147. Look to ensure that there is no-one in the back of a car before you get in., and if parked next to a big van, enter from the other side. Once inside, lock the doors, start the engine, and get going. Don't sit around checking your shopping list or putting your hair right. Women are apparently particularly attractive targets at such moments, and a mugger or rapist can be inside your car in a second and have you at the point of a gun or knife.

148. Ladies, be wary. Nowadays there are some sick predators out there, and to some of them age is not a deterrent.

DRIVING

149. Getting into and out of your vehicle safely at home is a good start or end to any journey (see para. 59, for a garage at home, paras 106-8, for multiple car storage).

Breakdowns

150. Knowing that your vehicle will not break down is just as important. Having your car stop in the wrong place invites the attention of predators, particularly non-thinkers. Keeping your vehicle healthy is therefore a real contribution to your security, yet for reasons of economy, nostalgia or lethargy many of us use vehicles that are past their prime. If your vehicle isn't running reliably, I suggest very strongly that you either change it or get it fixed.

151. I also suggest that you carry a cell phone. You may never use it, but if you have one handy to summon help in an emergency it could save your life.

152. If your vehicle breaks down and you can't restart it, you are going to have to make a quick decision ... do you go for help or raise the hood and stay in the locked vehicle? Frankly, the advice given by experts seems to be equally divided between the two options. If you can use a cell phone to call for help, and if that help will come quickly, it may be safer to wait in the vehicle with the doors locked. With shops or residences nearby, it could well be safer to go to them, explain the position, call for help and wait there.

153. If strangers ask what they can do to help, get them to phone the police. If you are stranded on the road, without suitable homes or shops nearby, make your call or raise the hood and then find a place of concealment where you can watch the vehicle and the road. When a repair truck, a police car, a bus or some other suitable vehicle drives by, emerge and wave for help. If you merely sit by the road providing an opportunity for crime, the invitation may be accepted.

Basic Driving Rules

154. If you have been driving for forty or fifty years you don't need a driving lesson here, but from time to time it is useful for us all to remind ourselves of the basic driving anti-crime rules:

- Plan your route before you start any journey, no matter how long or short, so that you minimize unexpected problems.
- Never take short-cuts that you don't know or clearly remember. Doing so can risk being trapped in a side street or cul-de-sac, and even if you are not harmed take much longer than a known route.
- Keep the doors locked while driving and when out of the vehicle.
 - Carry a steering wheel locking device. It may deter non-thinkers.
 - If parked on a crowded street, with shopping bags or parcels on the front or rear passenger seat, keep the car keys in your hand while you walk round to the driver's door. This may sound a bit paranoid, but is worth doing. I certainly can't get from one side of my car to the other in the two seconds it would take a youngster to leap in and lock the doors before driving away.

- Never leave the engine running or your keys in the vehicle when you get out, even if you stay right by the car. Cars have been stolen in the driveway of a home, or while drivers have been helping an elderly or handicapped person to get in, sometimes with severe injury to the passenger. Keep any valuables in the car out of sight in the trunk.
- Never pick up hitchhikers. Gentlemen, when you feel sorry for that poor lady standing in the rain, remember the hitchhiking ‘ladies’ in Florida who took their benefactors into the woods and then shot them. It may be unlikely, but it could happen anywhere.
- Never respond to insults, challenges, or harassment at intersections, just drive away. Road rage is real and can be deadly. If followed, attract the attention of a policeman or drive to the nearest police station.
- Stay in gear at stop lights, to quickly drive away if threatened.
- If your vehicle is attacked at an intersection ... drive away, directly to a police station if that is possible. If someone in front of your vehicle is trying to harm you and won't get out of the way, drive over him.
- Do not stop for an unmarked police car in an unpopulated or secluded area. Instead, put on your flashers and drive to a place where there are people. If you have a phone with you, call #77 in the U.S. or 911 in Canada to let the police know what you are doing. This should be the only time to use a phone while you are driving, and even then ... only if you can do it safely.
- Do not park for a rest or a sleep by the side of the road, and only stop in rest areas if there are others there.
- If your vehicle breaks down, and if you have a cell phone, use it to call for assistance. Whether or not you stay in the locked car, put up the hood, or walk to a safer area must depend on your judgment of the location, the risks and your physical condition.
- When arriving home after dark, leave your headlights on until you are in the garage and have shut the garage door.