

Any woman can be a Wonder Woman

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Chances are that if you keep your head while others about you are losing their's, you don't fully understand the situation!

There is no better illustration of the truth of that statement than my friend Gloria's experience when she was dining at a swanky restaurant with her husband. Suddenly, Mike exclaimed, "Get down!" and quickly followed his own instructions. Gloria calmly turned around to see what was amiss. Recounting the event later, she said, "The restaurant appeared empty, although I knew the tables had been full of people. "Then I saw the men with guns who were robbing the place and realized that every diner but me was on the floor."

She quickly ducked under the table, but had the presence of mind to reach up and retrieve her purse from the table top. "I was calm until it was all over, but when the police arrived and tried to interview me, all I could do was sit on the floor in the middle of the restaurant and cry!"

My mother was an individual who withstood a crisis like a rock only to fall to pieces afterward. One night when sister Lesta and I were very young and Dad was away, a man tried to break through the heavy outside door to our apartment. Mom, who was a sound sleeper, said she might not have heard him until too late had I not kept her awake because I was fussy with itchy chigger bites.

Mom hurriedly called a male friend in an upstairs apartment, thinking that he, being closer than police, would be her quickest help. He, however, had a different idea; he called law enforcement and stayed safely put. Left to her own devices and determined to protect us, Mom placed a chair in the middle of the foyer, sat in it and aimed her trusty .22 pistol — a weapon she had previously targeted only on tin cans — directly at the door.

"You know how most people's hearts speed up when they're scared?" Mom asked me years later when she told me about the incident. "Well, mine beats hard but slows way down. It was going THUD ... THUD ... THUD."

The police showed up just in time to save, not Mom, Lesta and me, but the burglar! He had almost battered through the door, having no idea what awaited him on the other side. Turned out he was wanted by the FBI and I have always felt he was lucky to be given to them instead of Mom.

I aspire to be as brave as Mom was, but I fear I will never attain her courage nor that of my friend B (that's her name, no ea on the end of it and no period either). With two neighbors, B was kidnapped at gunpoint, driven to the country and marched by their captor down a remote river road where the terrified at trio was ordered to lie face down. Her neighbors complied, but B — who had talked to the kidnapper all during the long ride — did not. She looked at the man pointing a cocked gun at her and said, "I'm sorry. I can't do that. Whatever happens, I have to see your face."

When she recounted the experience to me, I told her that I, too, would have talked a blue streak to him during the ride, but doubted I'd have the nerve to face the business end of a gun. I think that, like most people, I would turn away. But B's bravado saved her life

because the kidnapper hesitated long enough for her to talk him into leaving to check whether he had actually killed another neighbor. While her elderly neighbors hid, B — better equipped to go for help — set off across unfamiliar territory in seek of aid. The story ended sadly because the kidnapper returned, found her neighbors and killed them. It was devastating for B who tried to save them, but she remained strong until she had to view a line-up which included her kidnapper. Then she fell apart.

All that talking B did with the kidnapper enabled her to elicit information that police used to identify him. Her testimony helped put him away, hopefully forever.

My friend Karen exhibited the courage and presence of mind to slam her van into reverse when a man approached her with a gun. He fired and two bullets lodged in the engine. Karen escaped and her husband presented her with an angel pin he had a jeweler craft from the bullets.

These four brave women demonstrate that it's quite all right to fall apart after a crisis as long as you stand strong during it! Wonder Women all, I salute you.