

## COMMENTARY

# The Fear Team



Are you afraid? Should you be?

I say, if you aren't afraid, then get with the program. BECOME afraid.

Maybe you should be afraid for yourself, or maybe for others. I don't know which is worse, but if you've ever been afraid, then you know the drill: You practice a constant low-level anxiety, you harbor the sense that you control exactly nothing, that no matter how much care you take, or how cautious you are, or what trail you walk down, a great big bugaboo's going to step out of thin air and ruin your day. Maybe forever.

A criminal. A terrorist. A disease. A police officer who has discovered some heinous crime, physical or financial, that you never realized you'd committed — maybe you snuck four ounces of shampoo through airport security or something, and now, pal, you're looking at a lot of federal time.

There's plenty to fear, all right, especially since we know that the outcome of everything — of every ambition, every hope, every life, every success, every friendship, every love, every trip to the grocery store — is ultimately mortal. Death is waiting at the other end, and probably a tunnel of pain at the final portal. Which means every one of us is the platoon point man, a really unenviable position, because we're all certain to get picked off.

So, naturally, there's a lot of talk about fear, especially at times when we might be inclined to forget about it for a few minutes and actually enjoy life, like at the holidays.

Well, I'm here to tell you (prompted by the thoughtful consideration of the Cape Coral Police Department), that it's time to be afraid.

In William Faulkner's story, "The Reivers," a wise old character makes a fine distinction between being afraid, and being scared. He tells a young boy that it's fine to be scared — in fact it's necessary, sometimes. But it's senseless, and even harmful to be afraid, he advises.

Now what does that mean? I think it means that if you go shopping over the holidays, you shouldn't start out by strapping on the fear that you're likely to be robbed, beaten, mugged, shot, stabbed, or snatched. Instead, you should go shopping with gladness in your heart, and maybe a note of gratitude for the plenty that allows you to go shopping (unless you're shopping, say, in downtown Baghdad, in which case you should strap on both fear and an automatic rifle). And ONLY IF you discover that a criminal is out and about where you're going, then you can be scared (not afraid, per se, but just scared). Because then, there's something there, something besides nameless fear, and you can react to it. Or better, you can act in the face of it, and force it to react to you.

Well, I say that's all poppycock. This Reivers stuff is not the attitude practiced by the ever-vigilant men and women of the Cape Coral Police Department — or by me, one of their ardent supporters. These men and women face a 24-7 war against crime.

They're afraid, and they have a right to be. And I'm afraid because they want me to be, and I support them. Also, we don't mind if you're afraid, which is why we thoughtfully send out HOLIDAY CRIME PREVENTION TIPS. They send them to the media, and I,

the media, am sending them to you. We're a team, see, the Fear Team, and that's "positive," because we're "positive." And that's "proactive," because we're "proactive." And we're also pusillanimous, but never mind that now.

We don't fiddle around on the Fear Team. We don't do holiday recipes, like that never-before-published classic, "The Cape Coral Police Holiday Cookbook and Donut-Hole Locator Map."

We do not print catalog gift ideas, although many of us want to (I have the copy ready-made for the cops, which I will donate if they want it: "Purchase your authentic Cape Coral Police Department replicas of badges, handcuffs, handguns, pump 12-gauge shotguns, high-aerosol pepper spray, police radios and actual night-shift snack foods of the kind consumed by real police officers on the job, while supplies last.")

Pretty good, huh? A sure money-maker in a climate of fear. But we don't do it, because we're professionals.

We do not do charity advisories, either, okay? "Drop off gifts for the poor today at Cape Coral Police Headquarters, where exhausted and angry off-duty police officers working desperately for holiday overtime pay will protect your contributions with M-16 automatic rifles, M-60 machine guns, M209 grenade launchers, TOW light anti-tank weapons, Redman surface-to-air missiles and surplus Army helicopter gunships, with ground positions secured by heavily fortified, concrete-and-steel bunkers so you can enjoy the holidays assured that your gift will never fall into the hands of the criminal element, or any other element."

No, none of that for the Fear Team. Instead, we keep you afraid, right through the holidays. That's our gift to you.

Which is why I want to introduce the holiday season beginning today — Thanksgiving Day — by thanking Dyan Lee, the media relations coordinator at the Cape Coral Police Department.

Dyan, who may be afraid of a lot of other things, but is not afraid enough of hard work, recently sent me this list of be-afraid, crime-prevention tips.

Here it is word for word, for your benefit.

## PRESS RELEASE

Date: November 16, 2007

Subject: HOLIDAY CRIME PREVENTION TIPS

The Cape Coral Police Department urges citizens to be cautious during the holiday shopping season. Below are crime prevention tips to keep citizens safe:

- Shop in groups or with friends and family during daylight and evening hours
- Park close to the store if possible
- Avoid dark, secluded areas
- Take valuables out of the car when you lock it
- Never put packages in plain view where a thief can steal them
- Stay alert by remembering where you park
- Be aware of suspicious people or suspicious cars
- Watch your purse by holding onto it, not leaving it in your shopping cart
- Never flash large amounts of cash
- Educate your children on how to find a store clerk or security guard if needed
- Have your keys out when you leave the store
- Look around your car, both inside it and underneath it as you approach
- Put all packages in your trunk
- Use an escort or mall security if you have too many packages

All excellent advice. Although I might add that you should move from your car to the mall in fire-team formation. You should never be up more than three seconds, running and dropping and running again, until you get inside the mall. And if you can, you should hire recently fired but not-yet-prosecuted Blackwater security personnel to escort you to and from your holiday shopping experience in armored Humvees.

Happy holidays from the Fear Team! ■



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with innovation.  
Teamwork makes  
it happen.**

— John Ammons, Vice President

— Leah Kirby, Vice President

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