

Neighborhood Watch – Rude Awakening

For those of you slightly *inconvenienced* at 10:30 pm Tuesday night June 4th by the helicopter and police activity on the 800 block of Spring Island Way, allow me to share my version of the events. I was rudely awakened - from a sound sleep – by an insistent pounding on my front door. I heard the nearby sound of a helicopter and briefly wondered why my husband was not answering the door. As I begrudgingly wandered around the house looking for my family – I realized the pounding was continual. Hence – I stumbled to the front door and was greeted by Orange County Sheriffs, flashing lights and a megaphone instructing, “All Occupants of 842 Spring Island Way - Come out with your hands up!” Realizing that I was not in a dream - I held my hands high above my head, followed the Sheriff’s instructions EXACTLY and was subsequently surrounded by officers and handcuffed (first time in my life!). After being asked multiple questions about domestic violence, officers reporting that the perimeter of my house was secure, and confirming my story with my husband’s, I was uncuffed and reunited with my family.

These are the facts as I know them:

- A female called the Orange County Sheriff’s Office 911 line and reported a woman was being taken into the house at 842 Spring Island Way at gunpoint
- A helicopter and multiple cars were dispatched to the Cypress Isles neighborhood and roads were blocked off
- Neighbors were instructed to stay in their homes
- Officers surrounded 842 Spring Island Way and had automatic rifles pointed at the residence
- When my husband and daughter answered the door – they too were instructed to “come out with your hands up”
- My husband was handcuffed, placed in a Sheriff’s car and asked multiple questions about domestic violence
- Thankfully, my teenage daughter was not handcuffed, and eventually was allowed to stand next to my husband as my exiting was in progress
- After I joined the handcuffing party, stories were corroborated that no such domestic violence event had taken place, and we were all FREE to go back home
- No firearms were discharged nor were any animals harmed during this event
- Subsequent follow-up calls with the Orange County Sheriff’s Office have confirmed that the event has been labeled a “Suspicious Incident”, there is a strong possibility that it was a “swatting” situation, and that they were unable to trace the call.
- The Orange County Sheriff’s Office acted in good faith!

These are additional things that I have learned:

- There is this thing called “swatting” that is very real (google it!)
- The glow of the helicopter light made my peach shirt look pink to the officers

- 6'7" people do not really fit in the back of a police car
- If your neon green knee brace is around your ankle when handcuffed – neighbors think that you are being arrested for violating house arrest
- The asphalt at the corner of Divine Circle and Spring Island Way is extremely rough, and can cause someone walking backwards, and in bare feet, to stumble (can someone fix that?)

The moral of the story: The Orange County Sheriff's Office takes reports of domestic violence VERY SERIOUSLY!

In conclusion, if you ever find yourself in a similar situation, please do EXACTLY as instructed by the officers, and once the issue is cleared up – know that they will “apologize for any inconvenience”.

Kindest Regards,

Christine A. Culbertson, *a.k.a. “Occupant” at 842 Spring Island Way*