

Majority of robberies within 2 blocks of cop shop

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

and the robber ran off with the iPhone, his backpack that had \$600 rent money in it and his medications, leading to all sorts of difficulties. He made a police report with a good description, he says. "But nothing ever happened. I still see the guy in the

neighborhood."

Surprisingly, up to a third of neighborhood robberies Capt. Gary Jimenez describes in his weekly community newsletter result in arrests. Some are a result of prompt reporting and good descriptions. According to the station's annual report to the Police Commission, average arrival time on the crime scene is 2:35 minutes, 3:21 minutes or 6:51 minutes,

depending on whether the call is rated A (in progress), B or C priority, respectively.

Reports show that robbers tend to hang out in the hood after their dirty work. That's because many live in the Tenderloin, O'Brochta says. Or maybe they're addicts, come into the neighborhood for services and spot an opportunity, then linger in familiar territory. Jimenez's estimate that up to 85% of TL arrests are of out-of-towners doesn't hold for robbers.

"For narcotics, that's certainly true, but not this particular group," says O'Brochta.

O'Brochta's been in the department 15 years, 12 of those in the Tenderloin, and for 10 years on and off in plainclothes, making him a cop regularly in harm's way. He and another sergeant each supervise four officers in the plainclothes division of the Street Crimes unit. They're also known as the Robbery Abatement Team, a special unit begun in 1991 when robbery was more prevalent. One to four times a month they stage vulnerable-looking decoys.

A typical decoy operation will put an officer in distressed clothes and makeup such as a beard or fake bruises and blood. The cop may feign drunkenness or stumbling disorientation, and use a prop such as a beer can, or walker, even a wheelchair. He'll maybe have a wallet showing, or just bills. A concealed surveillance squad monitors from nearby. When a predator strikes, an arrest of team of at least six officers strikes back.

Sometimes the robber fights back.

"We've had injured officers," O'Brochta says. "I've seen the brutality."

If you are coming to the Tenderloin at night to stay until midnight, O'Brochta cautions, be aware of your surroundings and travel in groups.

Robberies may continue to fluctuate but he says there are fewer reported cases now than 15 years ago when the neighborhood was wilder, TL Police Station hadn't been built and the force had fewer cops.

Two years ago, O'Brochta says, there was an unusual trend of mugging pedestrian commuters from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. when witnesses were few. "It was in the Tenderloin and at the edge of it," he said, "Crack addicts were doing it." Bringing in more cops squelched it. ■

MY STORY

Our reporter foils seething mugger

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

came around to my right side and fell into perfect step with me. His left arm went around my left shoulder. I figured it was someone I knew or someone who knew me as a neighborhood newspaper reporter and had something to say.

But it seemed strange and he was just a blur at my side when I felt something pointed and hard jam against my right ribs, concealed by his coat. It felt like a knuckle. "Got any money?" he growled. I hadn't looked at him. It happened in blinding speed, three seconds, maybe four.

I didn't think, just reacted. I spun off his arm toward the wall, whirling to face him, knees slightly bent and leaning forward, the ready position in tennis to receive a serve. The wall now at my back and he in front of me, I was rapped by this 5-foot-9 Latino of medium build in a light gray hoodie that fell a foot below his waist. He wore baggy denim pants and was in his late 20s, early 30s. He reset to face me, too, and was hunched forward, arms spread and ready to grab me if I bolted.

His eyes were smoldering dark pools of hate, like nothing I'd ever seen. I was chilled by them, but not dumbfounded.

At once I feigned a move to the right with my shoulders to check his reaction. He shuffled to adjust, but not very fast, and I knew all I needed to know. Then I did the double I used against the fastest guards in high school — small fake to the left, big fake to the right, then the full burst back to

the left — and I was around him untouched and through the parked cars. "Leave that man alone!" a black woman in the crowd yelled. I was way out in the street and hearing no trailing footsteps and knew before I looked back that I'd smoked him.

I kept jogging down the street and took a reassuring glance back before pulling up and sauntering across the intersection. Looking back, I saw him at the edge of the crowd, not disappearing or fading into it but fixed, staring back at me, daring me to return.

My heart was still racing when it dawned on me how I had dropped my guard. I had been overconfident and preoccupied. I hadn't even looked at the crowd as I swept through it. Sloppy.

The store owner had already left for the meeting so I went on to the station, but without retracing my steps. It was a busy meeting, and I had no time to process the ordeal. Bottom line was I felt I had just run away from some guy and so what? Still, the potential danger and risk made an interesting story of peril that I wasted no time the next day detailing to some of The Extra's staff. At one point, I demonstrated the double fake.

Their attentiveness and knotted foreheads told of their concern for my safety. They asked if I had filed a police report. I said no. That didn't sit well and I was lectured on "the right thing to do." I agreed.

"What if he had a gun?" asked a reporter.

I stared blankly at her.

The next day I added a second personal rule: Review the first rule daily. ■



BOEDDEKER PARK IMPROVEMENTS

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is partnering with the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department to help improve Boeddeker Park.

WE NEED YOU!

Tell us what would make the park a better place.

PLEASE JOIN US:

SEPTEMBER 16, 2009 (Wed), 5:30-7:00pm
OCTOBER 3, 2009 (Sat), 11:00am-12:30pm
OCTOBER 20, 2009 (Tues), 3:30-5:00pm

LOCATION: Boeddeker Park Clubhouse
240 Eddy Street

FOR MORE INFORMATION



Please contact Jennifer Worth of The Trust for Public Land at (415) 495-5660 x386 or jennifer.worth@tpl.org, or Marvin Yee of the SF Recreation and Park Department at (415) 581-2541 or marvin.yee@sfgov.org.



City and County of San Francisco
Recreation and Parks Department

Rock out at a Ban(ne)d Books Week event



San Francisco Public Library

Have Lunch with the Banned!

SF Main Library, Larkin Street steps
Thursday October 1, 2009, Noon-1:30 p.m.

Join Bay Area writers and musicians including Frank Portman, Jack Boulware, Kathi Kamen Goldmark, Ben Fong-Torres, Penelope Houston, Patricio Johnson, Richie Unterberger, Roy Zimmerman, emcee Jewelle Gomez and more.

Celebrate the freedom for everyone to read what they want—and rock out as they wish—at a lunchtime music-themed Ban(ne)d Books reading and performance on the Larkin Street steps of the Main Library

American Library Association
Banned Books Week
Sept. 26-Oct. 3, 2009

FRIENDS of the
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

