

Who Do You Trust?

I think I need to warn everyone before you even start reading this article, this is the first time I've wrote an article where I'm so p***ed off I don't even know what to do with myself. Since I'm neither a destructive or violent person when I become consumed with anger I don't kick, scream or cuss, I cry (I know I'm such a girl). I know several people who would be so happy if just for once I would throw a kicking, screaming temper-tantrum but I can't because I don't know how to (although right now I really wish I knew how).

I guess now it's time for me to explain what's got me this upset. In short, a few days ago my house was burglarized. Now for the long drawn out story. When I was a little girl I had a great-uncle and great-aunt who never had any children of their own and helped raise my Dad and later helped raise me. I think I was probably about 7 years old before someone explained to me that they weren't my grandparents. I just thought everyone got 4 sets of grandparents and one great-grandma. Besides spending endless hours at their house growing up, these were also the relatives my family went to live with after our house burnt to the ground when I was 12 years old. These very special people were the ones who spent several sleepless nights with me while my Dad was in the hospital with 3rd degree burns over 30% of his body. Anyway back to the story. When I was little my great-aunt and uncle had an antique pickle jar they kept change in. I was always fascinated by this jar (it stood about 16" tall, was made of molded glass that looks like a barrel and had a metal lid and a wooden handle and I just found out this week it was manufactured between 1910 and 1940). I remember this jar getting broken when I was little and I was so upset that it was gone. Although they never replaced it, I never forgot it. My great-uncle died when I was in high school and my great-aunt died when I was in college but before they died they had given me a bunch of pennies they had saved and I still had them up until a few days ago. Not long after they died I told my mom I wanted an antique pickle jar (there was no e-bay then). My mom searched for this jar for a couple of years and finally found one and gave it to me for my birthday one year. The first thing I did was put my pennies from my great-aunt and uncle in it and I have been saving my own change ever since that time. Every few years I'll clean out so much of the change but I've always been careful never to get near the pennies in the bottom of the jar. The last time I cleaned out half of the jar I cashed in over \$500 worth of coins. A few months ago my daughter noticed the jar was getting close to being full again and wanted to know what I was going to do with the change this time. I told my daughter this time she would have the privilege of spending a few hours with me counting and rolling change because this time we were putting the money in her savings account. She was so excited! That was then and now she's heartbroken and scared to be home alone even for a few minutes.

A few days ago someone thought something so precious to me should be his or hers. Some self-centered, narcissistic a**hole walked into my house, into my *bedroom* and stole more from me than they realize. From what the police have told me whoever did this to me knows me and is familiar with my home. Although the pickle jar was sitting on the floor in my bedroom even people who have been to my house a lot have never noticed it. But all it took was for one "friend" to notice it and decide they should have it. I truly hope the person who did this to me gets to read this article. I want you to know the other things you took from me. Not only did you take a precious gift away from me you also took away my feeling of being safe in my own home. I feel so violated that someone was in my bedroom. You took all trust away from me. How sad is it that I can't feel safe in my own home or even trust my "friends" now? The police have told me because I was such an easy mark not to be surprised if it happens again unless I make some drastic changes. So because of what you did to me I now have my house locked up like Fort Knox. Because of you I got to talk to a friend I haven't talked to in a while who works for ABF Security Systems and she got to talk to me about her actual work verses just talking about fun stuff like we've always done. Because of you I got to see the same police officer that helped me when I had to deal with the guy who needed to entertain himself at my expense. They tracked that guy down and put him in jail I hope they do the same to you! And since I know the jar had to weigh between 75-100 lbs I hope you either gave yourself a hernia or dropped it on your foot and broke your foot! And I hope that whatever you spend the stolen money on only brings you misery! You broke my trust, you took away my security, you took away my "pennies from heaven", and you stole from my child. I hope you get to experience every ounce of hurt that my daughter and I have had to go through. And lastly, just when you think this has been forgotten and you think you're finally safe and able to sleep at night again, don't be surprised if there's a knock on your door that will change your life as much as you changed mine!

For everyone else I hope I haven't scared you off and you decide to never read my articles again. Although, I was planning on writing an article on security, I wasn't planning doing it from the victim's point of view. I

know I never planned on being a victim and I'm pretty sure no one else does either. So as summer rolls around and most of us are trying to get out and enjoy the long warm days, there are others who are getting busy this time of the year also. As the weather warms up, more and more thieves come out of their winter slumber. And since I seem to be the poster girl for "Sh** Like That Could Only Happen To Me" I think I'm pretty qualified to write on this subject. I want to give you a few things to think about before you jump on the iron horse and leave all of your precious belongings unprotected.

I know some of you keep your motorcycles in storage lockers due to lack of space at your house. (Here's one more "this one happened to me") when I got the new wheels and tires for my truck I put the original ones (they only had 5,000 miles on them) in a storage unit. Two years ago someone picked the lock on the storage unit and stole over \$2,000 worth of wheels and tires. And what did I learn from that lesson? In my case I should have bought a better lock. So when choosing a storage unit these are the things you should look for and if anything ever gets stolen these are also the questions your insurance company is going to ask you. First of all make sure the place you choose is gated with some type of locking gate. Second, make sure the facility is well lit. Third, invest in a good lock. They now make locks that can't be picked or cut off with bolt cutters because they fit so tightly. And lastly, try not to let anyone see what you have in your storage unit. After mine was broken into, I now have it locked up like Fort Knox and I never open it if there's anyone around.

Next, I want to talk about your home. Although we've all heard it over and over again, make sure when you leave your house that all of the doors and windows are locked. The police will tell you it's not even a good idea to leave your windows cracked in the spring if you're not home. If you have an alarm, make a habit of turning it on every time you leave the house and always make sure the garage door is closed. I know some of you hate your neighbors but try to form an alliance with neighbors so everyone is watching out for each other. If you're going to be gone after dark set timers for lights and TV's or radios. Motion detector lights around the outside of your home are also a great idea. And here is a tidbit of information that I didn't know until this week. The police told me that there is a remarkable link between home maintenance and repair (i.e., new roofing, siding, storm cleanup) and break-ins. So keep your house locked up at all times.

Now let's talk about your motorcycle. More and more motorcycles are being stolen from people's garages while they are home (scary, huh?). Never leave the key in your motorcycle even in your own garage. Keep the garage door closed as much as possible otherwise you are advertising what you have. Last year several people had their motorcycles stolen out of their garages while they were in the house (talk about having big brass ones). There were a lot of rumors floating around last year regarding some of the rides. There was a lot of speculation that riders were being followed home by people in cars who would later come back and wait for the opportunity to steal the bikes. So once again *pay attention*. If you feel like you are being followed go ahead and make a few extra turns to find out if you are being followed and if you are, don't go straight home. Try not to lead a thief back to your own home (but if you have someone you really hate let them follow you to their house, I'm just teasing!).

Although I feel the need to apologize to my readers for this month's column, here are a few facts that have recently come to my attention that I would like to pass along to you: 96% of homes burglarized do not have a security system, 60% of break-ins occur during the day when your neighbors are at work, 85% of all break-ins go unsolved and I fell into 100% of these categories.

To the person who burglarized my home, although I don't know your name and I don't know your face, I just want to thank you for teaching me a lesson that I never imaged being taught by someone who I considered to be a "friend". To my loyal readers, I know something like this has happened to more of you than I realize and I know you understand how I feel. But here is my question, "Who do you Trust?". My second question is, once someone breaks your "trust", whether someone breaks in your home or breaks your heart, "Can you ever truly learn to trust again?".

By next month hopefully I'll be back to being my optimistic self with my warped sense of humor but for now I'll just pass along these words from the wisest woman I know (my Momma), "That which does not kill us only makes us stronger!".

Until then, be SAFE, have Fun and Enjoy the Ride of Your Life,

Cam