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## Names aren't real news

Virginia Wallace-Whitaker

*Assistant Professor of Journalism, University of Maine*

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# Names aren't real news

To the editor:

I would like to comment on the recent coverage of reported rape at UMO (*Campus*, 9/14/83; 9/29/83; 10/5/83 and the *Bangor Daily News*).

"Names make the news" is an old, old concept—almost as old as "she must have been asking for it." Surely a more valid test for the disclosure of names exists than the one Professors Hamilton and Neal cite: the high incidence of so-called acquaintance rapes. It is true that 75 percent of rape victims know or have previously seen their attackers. It is also true that some 45 percent of all rapes take place in the victim's home. Does it follow that women should never go home, or that all acquaintances have the right to commit violence?

A better test for disclosure may be a rather simple question: what is the usefulness of the information to the community? The real news for UMO women in the initial story is that not all rapes are the work of a stranger who springs from the shadows. The news is that to be alone with a male in a situation where psychological or physical dominance is possible—even in the seeming safety of a dormitory room—is to be at risk. There is valid information for us in the fact that a rape was reported.

Details such as the hour, the place and the prior relationship between the two people add to our alertness.

Disclosure of either name, prior to court action, does not, in my opinion, make the story more credible. Nor does the disclosure of race.

In the light of the court's decision to dismiss charges, and by the test above, the story in the *Campus* (10/5/83), seems sensitive and appropriate. The previously published name of the accused attacker is used. His side of the story, as well as that of the police, are presented. But for all women, the additional disclosure Wednesday by the *Bangor Daily News* of the woman's name created an unwritten second story: to report a rape is to risk further humiliation. That's an ugly story indeed. It's also a bitter truth we need to learn about newspaper reporting and the court system. It is the reason why rapes go unreported.

There are no easy answers, as Hamilton and Neal point out. But between full and immediate disclosure in rape cases and the mythical one-liner "something happened last night," there is a continuum of stopping points. The *Campus* story proves reporter judgment is possible.

Virginia Wallace-Whitaker  
Assistant Professor of  
Journalism/Broadcasting