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On the freezing cold weekend after Thanksgiving, police found a Radford University student face down and unresponsive in a Madison Street parking lot. After a short police investigation, a lengthy stay in the hospital, and some digging of their own, the victim's friends and family now believe he was assaulted with a blunt weapon by one or more individuals, and left for dead.

Close friends and family of this senior, who was hospitalized after a violent incident in November, have come forward to warn students about the dangers that lurk off campus, and give an update on his recovery.

The sources closest to the incident, the victim's mother and roommate, have requested to remain anonymous for this article because they feel that violent criminals are still at large in connection with this case.

For months now, the family has struggled to help their son through his recovery process and piece together the events of that night, despite his attack resulting in severe brain injuries which affect his learning abilities and memory.

"He doesn't remember being in the hospital at all for the first week, and he was there for three weeks," said the victim's roommate.

What is clear is that the student got a ride with a designated driver back to dark side from Main Street. After being dropped off near Deli Mart, he had decided to walk a short distance to a friend's place.

"That was about 11:15 at night . . . normally this place would be crowded with kids; it was

Thanksgiving weekend. Everybody had gone home,” said his mother.

“Literally, from his backyard, on Davis Street, you can see the friend’s duplex on Madison Street,” explained the victim’s mother. However, he had not told the friend what time to expect him, and his own roommate had already gone to bed. At approximately 3:40 a.m. a patrol officer from the Radford City Police Department happened to drive by and spot him lying in the parking lot of his friend’s building.

Immediately he was transported to the Carilion New River Valley Medical Center, where it was determined that his injuries were life threatening and he was taken by helicopter to Roanoke for more extensive treatment. The police originally suspected he had simply fallen down and hit his head on the pavement, or possibly had been hit by a car.

“He had a traumatic brain injury, so he has no recollection of what happened,” explained his mother. Injuries like this are uncommon from falls, but are more frequently linked to soldiers who have been in explosions, or victims in motor vehicle accidents.

“I had five different professionals tell me that he could have not possibly sustained his injuries from falling,” said the mother, of her own investigative work into the incident, which involved medical professionals and the opinion of a forensic nurse. At that time police detectives who were assigned to the case told her that they still believed the cause of his injuries was a simple accident.

It is the opinion of the sources in this article that he was attacked with a weapon. A bat or board was suggested by the types of injuries that he sustained. They do not believe that he was targeted for personal reasons; instead he was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The relay between the RCPD, the hospital, and the RUPD also left family and friends scrambling for answers at the time of the incident. In this case the university was not officially notified until the victim’s mother went in to withdraw him from his classes. The victim was not known to carry a wallet or credit card, so if an attack was motivated by robbery, it appears the assailants left empty-handed.

“He didn’t have identification or anything; they were trying to figure out who he was,” said his roommate. “At 6 a.m. I got a knock on the door . . . I came downstairs to police and his mother telling us that he is in the hospital.”

They all rushed straight to the hospital where he was receiving emergency treatment.

“We didn’t know if he was going to have to have surgery to relieve the pressure and bleeding in his brain,” said the roommate. “We didn’t know if he was going to live or die at that point.”

After an estimated four hours of lying unconscious in the freezing cold temperatures that night, he also suffered from hypothermia. However, this turned out to be a crucial factor in his ability to stay alive.

“The cold is what stopped the bleeding and pressure on his brain,” explained his roommate. Extreme cold temperatures coagulate and slow down blood flow, which in this case, kept enough blood from pooling in his brain for him to maintain vital bodily functions.

At this time, it is predicted that he will make a full recovery within the next six months to 12 months. Despite suffering from the condition which affects his memory and critical thinking, called anomic aphasia, he has already regained the ability to drive and plans to return to school to finish his degree. Currently he splits his time between living at home with his family, doing speech therapy, and coming back to Radford to see his friends. He still cannot have a job or re-enter school until more therapy is completed.

“Aphasia means loss of language,” explained Jill Cottam, a student in RU’s graduate speech and language pathology program. “Possible deficits as results of aphasia may include verbal production, auditory comprehension, reading and writing. Normally it’s associated with stroke.”

“He’s literally a walking miracle,” said his roommate with a smile of relief. “It’s amazing that he’s doing as well as he is.”

The lessons learned by those closest to this incident were ones of safety and gratefulness. They strongly wished to relay the importance of walking in groups and staying out of possibly dangerous situations to other students at RU.

“My friend is over 200 pounds, he’s over six feet tall, and they attacked him,” said his roommate. “I even asked for mace for Christmas . . . you don’t think of that in a small town like Radford.” The building where he lived has also installed new security cameras in case something like this ever happens again.

This attack was just one in a string of incidents over the holiday months. A similar case involving a local resident being forced to withdraw money from an ATM by three unknown males, and a female being mugged at knife point near Walker Hall have also gone unsolved. Over spring break, a series of arson fires reported on dark side targeted unattended vehicles parked near the street. Students should take precautions when going out; advice and safety tips are available on RUPD’s website.