

REPORTER NEARLY GETS THE POINT

By Kieran Crowley

MY OBIT KEPT intruding on the situation, interfering. How much space would the paper give my murder, I wondered. Would it be buried inside under an ad or would it be front page news?

POST REPORTER SLAIN — Killed By Crazy Queens Man.

I was able to concentrate very well while talking, explaining, trying to calm him, as he held the foot-long serrated knife to my ribs.

But when he rambled hysterically, he would take the knife away and wave it about and a little voice said my paper was not likely to wonder if I was perhaps being held hostage until after deadline.

"They're already mad at you. Your copy is late," the voice said.

The guy had gone off like a bomb in the middle of an interview in his dining room, grabbed the knife and begun screaming:

"Somebody's lying! Somebody's going to pay! They can't do this to me!"

It happened after I mentioned a fact I was sure he knew — that his only son had been arrested for murder — when he went berserk.

He did not know.

It had all been routine up to that point, the trip to the Queens precinct, the detectives describing the shooting at a press

conference and then the walking of the suspect past the cameras and reporters.

When I knocked on the door of the home where the suspect lived with his father, it wasn't unusual that I was alone because the lensman who photographed the arrested teenager was on his way back to Manhattan for the afternoon final deadline.

The father told me he was upset and sad and had just returned from the stationhouse himself after talking to detectives about his son and the shooting.

He told me that it was all a terrible mistake, that the gun his son had been holding had gone off accidentally.

But when I mentioned the murder charge, he cut me off:

"What murder charge? My son isn't charged with murder. The detectives told me they understand it was all an accident. They told me it would be OK," he said.

I took a deep breath and told him the truth. I described what his son looked like and what he was wearing when he was led away from the precinct in handcuffs.

The father, a hard-working guy, snapped and grabbed the knife.

I'm going to die with my pen and notebook in my hand, I thought, because somebody else lied to this guy about his son.

"What if they spell your name wrong in your own obit?" the little voice asked

me. "You'll never know."

I realized I could not rely on my colleagues, good as they were, to write my obituary as well as I could, so I resolved not to die.

I began talking and didn't stop for about 30 minutes, until the father knew I wasn't lying, that I was on his side, that I would fight for his son in print, that his son needed a lawyer and a lot more talk I don't remember before I said:

"You can't help him if you're in jail, too."

Then he began to cry.

At first there were tears of rage coursing down his reddened cheeks, then came sobs of sadness.

Still crying, he looked at the knife held in his whitened knuckles with a confused, puzzled expression and then put it on the table.

I wished him luck and left with the interview I got before he detonated.

I rushed to a phone, called the paper, told my editor what had happened and assured him I was OK.

After a short pause he asked: "But you got the story?"

Award-winning N.Y. Post reporter Kieran Crowley no longer does interviews with cutlery in sight. His better half, Riki Nemser, wields a wicked brush and embellished the story with a cartoon.



Riki '90