

Mrs. Linden raised her family in the house next to mine. Both of our homes were small – cottages, really – each with two bedrooms and one bath. The Little Rock neighborhood was shaded with oaks that were planted in the 1940s. Many of our other neighbors knew Mrs. Linden from days when their children had played together. Every time Macintosh escaped underneath my fence and raced through the neighborhood, his adventure was talked about for days.

Early one sweltering morning before the sun had risen, Mrs. Linden phoned me with desperation in her whisper. “There’s a man in my house. He’s in my house!” I pulled myself more fully awake. Why had she called me instead of the police? Had someone really broken into her home? Was he still there?

Clearly, I needed to make the 911 call for her. “OK. I understand. Keep still – stay in bed – and I’ll get the police.” It took precious seconds, but she promised to stay where she was. I called the police.

What next? If a man really was in the house, would he rape her? I visualized Mrs. Linden, beaten and terrorized. The thought enraged me. I grabbed the wooden baseball bat that I kept next to my bed and yanked on my shoes. If you have to fight, go into it 110%. I was entirely ready to bash this man’s head. As I closed the front door behind me, I saw Macintosh. And I stopped moving.

He sat on the floor, oddly motionless. I could say that he spoke to me, but you wouldn’t really believe me. I did hear words though. *What in the world are you DOING?* Left unsaid were all the reasons that stomping into my neighbor’s house would be a disaster for her and for me. I hesitated, one hand on the doorknob and the other holding my bat. My dog stared at me but didn’t move. I had the peculiar thought that God was speaking to me through Macintosh. But that was just silly.

A silent police car slid to a stop in front of my house. The car’s headlights were off. As the officer stepped into the yard I ran down my front steps and told him everything. He glanced at my bat before he walked quickly and silently around to her back door.

I paced our yards while a few early rising neighbors joined me. Eventually the officer opened the front door. The intruder jimmed her back door open and left the same way. Mrs. Linden was understandably agitated but physically unhurt. I still wondered why she hadn’t called 911. She considered it a triumph that the man hadn’t found her purse.

Less than a month later she moved to an assisted living facility near her son in Texas. And Macintosh jumped on everyone, routinely escaped from my backyard, raced through the front door every time it opened, and danced for every phone call and doorbell ring. He never again sat still.

*Dear God, instruct me and teach me in the way I should go. Counsel me with your loving eye on me. Speak to me in whatever way I will hear. Speak louder if I need it. Amen.*

Cindy Brown Bair

