

# Drama in Haunted House Causes Stabbing Accident

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It was to have been a fun night, but it didn't turn out that way.

Margaret Gatch, 17, of 7918 Evans St. was nursing a minor stab wound Monday morning. Both she and Larry Anderson, 17, her senior classmate at Northwest High School, were counting their blessings that the wound wasn't serious.

The wound to the lower right portion of Miss Gatch's rib cage occurred during a skit the two and another schoolmate had volunteered to stage at the Millard Jaycees Haunted House, 72nd and F Streets.

They were not representing Northwest officially, but according to Miss Gatch, the school was to receive a part of every Sunday night admission paid by any of their schoolmates. She said representatives from other schools were to do skits on other nights.

Miss Gatch said the three went to the haunted house Sunday afternoon to work out the skit.

They decided to enact a "mad scientist" scene, in which Miss Gatch would be the victim, Anderson the attacker and the other schoolmate the scientist.

They borrowed a kitchen knife from a friend, told their parents what they were going to do and reported back to the haunted house about 7 p.m.

There was time for two rehearsals. Miss Gatch placed a pillow inside the right side of her T-shirt. That was to be the target area. The trio rehearsed once under regular illumination and once under the black light that would be used when the first group went through the house at 7:30. Everything went as planned.

Then the first admissions began their tour. Miss Gatch, lying on a bed, began screaming. Anderson, in dark robe, began his fiendish approach. The knife came down.

"At first, it didn't hurt a bit," Miss Gatch said Monday. "But then I felt the blood and thought, 'My gosh, I've been stabbed.'"

True to the slogan that the show must go on, she continued playing her role until the spectators had moved on. Then she looked at Anderson. "You got me," she said.



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Miss Gatch . . . "I've been stabbed."

His reaction, she said, was one of shock.

Adults at the house summoned assistance and Miss Gatch, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Gatch, was taken to Bergan Mercy Hospital and then was transferred to Methodist at the request of her doctor.

She was then treated and released.

Miss Gatch said Monday she probably would be able to return to school by Wednesday.

Why didn't the players use a rubber knife? "Everyone asks that," Miss Gatch said.

"But by the time we figured what we were going to do, it was too late to buy one. No one ever dreamed anything would go wrong."

She said none of the parents of the three knew a knife was to be used. Said Mrs. Gatch: "If we had, we would have put the kibosh on it."

Miss Gatch said she believed Anderson felt worse emotionally than she did physically. "We are good friends; have appeared in plays together," she said. "We've talked twice since it happened."

Monday, a distraught Anderson offered sympathy to Miss Gatch and her family. "It's really a shock," he said. "I relive it every 30 seconds and I almost can't handle it."

He, like all involved, expressed thanks that Miss Gatch had not been seriously hurt. "I've learned a lesson," he said.