Crime captured by hospital security cameras

By Sue Cross

In the long concrete tunnels beneath University Hospitals, two things are obvious: the echoes and the cameras.

Surveillance cameras provide "peace of mind" for hospital employees and visitors who find themselves walking alone through the narrow hallways accompanied by the echoing sound of their heels striking the concrete.

The tunnel cameras are part of a surveillance system of 30 video cameras and 17 monitors. The cameras also "watch" parking lots, lobbies, pharmacy areas and offices.

Four new cameras — covering the emergency room, two business offices and the parking lot and south entrance of Dodd Hall — recently were added to the original system, which was installed in 1981.

In the tunnels, where the most mischief one is likely to find is a skateboarder skimming the smooth concrete floor, a camera "provides mostly a psychological advantage," says Elliot Boxerbaum, director of hospital security and safety.

But, the cameras record more than mischief. Video recordings of crimes witnessed through the camera system have helped officials locate an expensive hospital cart stolen as a prank by students and press criminal charges in several theft incidents.

One of the 17 monitors now located in the lobby of University Hospitals is equipped as a video recorder. Alarms in the hospital gift shop and in pharmacy and business offices automatically switch cameras in those areas onto the recording monitor when the alarm goes off.

The recorder and 16 smaller monitors are watched by one of 12 security officers who run the system from 3 p.m. to 8 a.m. each day. The security officers also communicate by two-way radio with the University police and take about 25 phone calls each day from people reporting incidents or requesting assistance, Boxerbaum says.

About 80 percent of the reported incidents are reported by telephone or in person to security officers. The officers also document between one and five incidents each day with the video recorder, Boxerbaum says.

Most callers report small thefts, he says, such as wallets taken from desk drawers. In the parking lots, most incidents involve property damage or theft, Boxerbaum added.

The parking lots are monitored from rooftop cameras. At the security station in the hospital lobby, the cameras can scan a large section of the lot or zoom in on a car until the watching officer can read its license plate.

The outside cameras also have low light adjustments for night surveillance.

In the hospital emergency room, the camera purposely is placed to be obvious to visitors and discourage unruly behavior, Boxerbaum says. "This camera has been particularly helpful in recording potentially, disorderly situations," he says.

In public areas such as lobbies, cameras are hidden behind opaque coverings so that people will not feel uncomfortable, he says.

The system is busiest between 3:30 and 5 p.m. when officers are answering calls about incidents that happened earlier in the day, and from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. when hospital shifts change and "when the bars are emptying," Boxerbaum says.

Boxerbaum says he has received no complaints about the system since its installation. He has, however, received requests for more cameras, usually from employees who want additional surveillance for their "peace of mind."
Morrill Cameras To Be Investigated

By BOB TAMASY
Lantern Staff Writer

Installation of two television cameras between the 14th and 15th floors of Morrill Tower has been halted, but concern among students continues and confusion still exists over who authorized the installation.

Gordon B. Carson, vice president for business and finance said Sunday he had no knowledge of any plans to install any cameras in the tower, but he surmised that the cameras date back to the fire in Lincoln Tower last spring.

He said the committee appointed to investigate the fire recommended that special equipment be provided in the towers.

Carson said the University has been investigating some of the items suggested, “and quite possibly the electricians and technicians are just getting around to checking out some of this equipment.”

John T. Mount, vice president for student relations, said he was advised at noon Friday that workmen were installing the cameras in Morrill Tower.

He said a check with Milton W. Overholt, director of housing, and Ruth H. Weimer, dean of students, showed that neither had any information about the installation. “I therefore asked that the installation be halted until there was an opportunity to evaluate the need for them.”

“I have been advised by those making the installation that the plans for installation developed last Spring Quarter as part of a program for the security of the students,” Mount said.

The cameras are the same type used in department stores for security purposes, and can be turned on or off at any time.

In the towers, women live on floors four through 14, and men on floors 15 and above. Students have charged the cameras are designed to catch people going from one area of the dormitory to another.

Mount does not think the cameras are intended as a monitor on the students, but instead for security purposes. Mount said he will conduct an investigation to determine what these purposes are.

“When the halls were designed, before construction, it was under discussion to have such security measures installed,” he said.

Mount said he cannot blame students for their concern, especially in terms of questioning the cost to install and maintain these cameras. “I will not support further expenditures of money for the installation of television cameras,” he said.

Mount said he preferred not to make any further statements regarding the actual status of the cameras until the investigation is conducted and further information is available.”
BIG BROTHER—This modern clock located on the second floor of the Administration Building does more than keep time. With hidden cameras behind the hours of 12, 3, 6, and 9, it watches while you watch! There are more like it in the building.
Unused spy cameras removed

By Chuck Durley

Five cameras hidden in four wall clocks and behind a grill to photograph demonstrators who might take over or cause a disturbance in the Administration Building have been quietly removed without ever being used.

The $6,573.90 security system of cameras, their control panel and the clocks which were installed following the 1970 spring riots were dismantled and the holes plastered during the past Labor Day weekend, University officials said.

President Harold L. Enarson, who said he was not informed about the hidden cameras when he first took over the reins of the University on Sept. 1, 1972, ordered them removed because they were "irrelevant."

The hidden cameras — part of a beefed up security system that included the installation of loud speakers around the Oval and hiring of rent-a-cops — became a sore point with students who charged the clamp down was unreasonable.

"Even if only a few students see that as 'Big Brother' ready to snap a camera, it's too many," Enarson said. "I don't think we want to live in fear."

The modern looking clocks were located on the east and west walls of the first and second floors of the Administration Building and were designed to take panoramic pictures of the area.

The fifth camera was tucked away in an opening above the main entrance to the building and was aimed toward the main stairs. The control panel for the system was kept in a cabinet in the Bursar's office.

In addition to taking pictures during a disruption, the still cameras also would be activated if thieves tried to rob the Bursar's office, Enarson said.

"The Bursar's office operates just like a business enterprise and handles a great deal of money, which means there is a real need to make certain it is secure," Edward Q. Moulton, vice president of business and administration, said.

The cameras were purchased and installed under the direction of Gordon B. Carson, former vice president of business and finance, and several low level administrators, University officials said. The administrators are no longer with the University.

Moulton said the hidden cameras have been replaced by a new security system in the Bursar's office to protect it. However, he declined to discuss the details.

"If people knew about our security, then it would not be security anymore," Moulton said.

Enarson said he was chagrined when he did not learn about the building security cameras right away.

"They were never activated. . . and did not contribute anything," he said. "But as long as they were just sitting there I saw no harm."

The cameras and clocks now have been turned over to Loyal E. Grovesteen, manager of the Inventory Department, as surplus equipment.

Grovesteen said he would write a letter to the company from which the equipment was purchased to see if the University could get credit for them.

Otherwise, Grovesteen said, the security system will be put out for competitive bidding.