

UNSUNG HEROES
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I'M GLAD THEY WERE THERE

It was late at night in a dimly lit parking lot. The department store knew they were there, but seemed unconcerned. I figured it was none of my business either. Though more than thirty were gathered, these young people were disturbing no one. I was there staffing a fireworks concession stand in the same lot. I watched them initially as a potential source of problems, but largely ignored them when it became apparent they were just socializing.

The man erratically driving a pickup truck through the parking lot did have my attention. Especially after he hit and dragged a shopping cart for a fair distance. I was just dialing the police when he rammed into the side of a car entering the lot from the street. Then he backed up, jumped a curbed island, and fled the scene at a high rate of speed.

After reaching a dispatcher, I ran to the side of the damaged car. The young people in the parking lot were already assisting the elderly couple inside. When the police came, I did my best to give them a report of what happened, but my details were sketchy and limited. I described a light colored, older pickup truck. The young people supplied the officer with the exact color, the year, the make, the engine size, the cab type, and body work that had been done to the vehicle.

While taking our report, the officer received a call about a second hit and run incident, likely involving the same vehicle. Against our advice, several of the young men left to drive away in different directions. They were searching for the vehicle, to call the police to it, before anyone else could be injured. One also offered to drive the elderly couple to their home (in another town) should their car prove to not be roadworthy.

Some would have called these youngsters vagrants and asked the police to drive them away. Some would have insisted they were up to no good and should not be allowed to loiter on other people's property. I was honored to have met them.