

The 'boogeyman' still with us

Following Al Qaida leader Osama bin Laden's assassination on May 1, CNN.com published a pulse survey. The popular Internet news portal asked site visitors if they feel safer now that bin Laden is dead. As of Sunday afternoon, more than 188,000 persons had responded. Thirty-eight percent had determined it too early to tell; 34 percent said no, and the balance – 27 percent – said yes.

At least one of my daughters would have joined those who answered yes. Her 16th birthday was on Sept. 11, 2001, and she is among those who were "creeped out" by bin Laden, to use her words.

When she spotted camels grazing on a Midway farm on Leestown Road soon after Al Qaida's attack on the Pentagon and the Twin Towers, she wondered if he might be hiding in Woodford County, near those camels, with ZIP codes 40347 and 40383 to foil suspicions of an international terrorist hiding here.

Bin Laden was her Big Bad Wolf, her Thing That Goes Bump in the Night, her Boogeyman.

We now know that it was in Pakistan, not in Midway, that bin Laden was hiding? Now that he's dead, should we believe our world is safer?

What danger did he pose to us in Woodford County? And,



– a boogeyman or boogeywoman, if you will – of local threat?

A look through the police reports published in last week's Sun prompts me to answer yes.

According to an account, someone left a dead raccoon covered in fecal matter on the steps of St. Paul's A.M.E. Church in Versailles. A more colloquial way of stating what happened: A dead "coon" covered in s**% was left on the steps of a church traditionally attended by blacks.

It's news that ought to have made the front page, frankly. At the least, it's the sort of news that ought to make us sit up and take notice.

We Woodford Countians don't like to think of ourselves as anything less than open-minded, open-armed, and tolerant. After all, our unemployment rates, our average household income, our educational attainment levels are the envy of many other Kentucky counties. These socio-economic markers are supposed to help ensure more enlightenment and tolerance,

while he

surely earned a spot as International Public Enemy #1, is there

an enemy

right?

In a world that has shifted its concerns toward an anti-Muslim bias, what happened at St. Paul's is a reminder that it's too early, at least in our county, to declare the war against prejudice against African-Americans a finished effort.

An open admonishment to whoever did this – shame. Shame on you for creating discomfort among a congregation that harms no one. Shame on you for dredging up "us" versus "them" emotions. Shame on you for stirring distrust. It was cruel to the church members. It was unfair to the majority who do not share your prejudice.

And while we're at it, shame on you for defiling the carcass of that raccoon.

This column is focused on life in Woodford County, and ours is a darned sweet existence. We're the envy of so very many, and deservedly so.

What happened on Douglas Street is proof that there is a boogeyman among us. It's evidence that things are not perfect.

What happened was an insensitivity that we, as Woodford Countians, shouldn't be able to easily shake.

We shouldn't want to easily dismiss it, either.

Susan Dunlap, Versailles, may be reached at susan.dunlap@uky.edu.