

# San Francisco Chronicle

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

## Baby Survives Pacific Heights Carjacking



BY BRANT WARD/THE CHRONICLE

Parents locked in trunk, boy left on porch

By Sabin Russell  
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For one hour and 40 minutes, all Janette and Greig Fennell could do was pray for their baby boy.

Nine-month-old Alexander had been sleeping peacefully in his car seat when the couple pulled their Lexus into the garage of their Pacific Heights home on Saturday night. It was a quarter to midnight.

Before the garage door rolled down, in walked two masked men. One of them pointed a gun.

What ensued was the kind of nightmare that every parent dreads — but this one had a happy ending. Janette, 41, and Greig, 46, are safe. Alexander is unharmed and happy, beaming like a cherub.

"We're shaken. We're in shock. We haven't slept all night," said Greig, interviewed on the sidewalk in front of his Washington Street home. "The most important thing is that we are back together again,

Alexander Fennell had recovered after being left alone in his car seat while thieves locked his parents into the trunk of their car

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# CARJACK: Infant's Ordeal

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as a family. We didn't know that 12 hours ago."

Apparently unaware at first that there was a baby in the back seat, the gunmen had forced the couple into the trunk of their car. The lid slammed shut.

Before the carjackers backed the car out of the garage, police say, they took the car seat with Alexander still in it and carried him into an adjoining foyer. The carjackers then sped away, leaving the garage door wide open.

"I have a little angel pin on my lapel," said Janette, who appeared remarkably calm after the ordeal. "I was praying and praying. I didn't care what happened to me, just that he'd be OK."

As the car drove south through San Francisco, Greig strained his ears for the sound of his son. "I could not hear him crying," he said. "I couldn't hear him at all."

The carjackers drove the car to McLaren Park, a lonely expanse at the south end of the city, where many neighbors are reluctant to walk at night. Police say the thieves threatened the couple, and struck Janette on the back of the head with a blunt object. They robbed the couple of \$5,000 in jewelry and \$200 in cash, locked them back in the trunk and apparently fled.

Desperate to help their son, Janette and Greig tore at the insulation at the back of the trunk. Groping in the dark, they finally peeled back the insulation and found a metal bar attached to the lock. The

trunk popped open. At 12:59 a.m., they ran up to a telephone booth and dialed 911.

Police found Alexander, safe and sound, still in his car seat, at 1:06 a.m.

Janette, meanwhile, declined treatment for her head wound, which was superficial.

A search for the carjackers is under way, but investigators have little to go on but the sketchy descriptions of the masked men, the stolen items and any forensic evidence they can glean in the examination of the car.

Neighbors were shocked by the crime but relieved that no one was hurt. "I'm horrified," said a man who lives across the street from the Fennells. "We love them dearly."

Dominique Bourdier, another neighbor, had noticed the police cars early Sunday morning but was unaware what had happened. "You think of this as a peaceful neighborhood, but there have been a lot of break-ins to cars."

Janette said bitterly that the thieves were "kind enough" not to leave Alexander in the garage, where he would have been exposed to the night chill. But the foyer provided little more protection, shielded from the street only by a metal security gate.

"Can you imagine?" she said, shaking her head with disbelief. "They left the garage door open for more than an hour and a half. Anyone could have walked in and taken him."