

Thieves make off with historian's prized, southwest collection

Written by By Kimberly Gaona Sun Correspondent
Wednesday, 29 April 2015 14:52

Police busy with a garden variety

of robbery calls

When it comes to raising a family, one thing that most all people have in common is the want to keep them safe and secure. This security becomes threatened when someone breaks into the family home, or steals or destroys something on the property. The multiple burglaries that have struck, not just in the city, but McKinley County as a whole, serve as a reminder for citizens to be vigilant.

Martin Link, a well-known local writer, historian and all around Gallup citizen, just had this happen to him last month. According to the police report filed, Link was given a stack of ceremonial newspapers that he wanted to add to his collection, which was housed in his shed.

What he found inside the shed is that almost 100 of his precious Navajo woven rugs were missing along with two dozen pots of Anasazi, Hopi, Navajo and Zuni origin.

The police report, filed by Officer Andrea Tsosie, says that there were boot prints and pry marks found at the scene, but a surprising lack of fingerprints.

"It was a lifetime of collections, these items were eventually going to go into a municipal museum which I was just in the process of planning," Link said. "What they have stolen, it was not just from me, it was stolen from the community, I hope they can sleep at night."

Link added that the stolen collection was worth about \$150,000.

Link said that on April 15 at least one Gallup police officer was in Santa Fe responding to a tip from Link checking on items recovered from a man who was arrested for robbery. Link said he

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saw the arrest on the news and that the man arrested admitted that almost all of the items found at the man's residence were stolen from Gallup.

He called the local police and was told that they were going to send someone to look at the recovered property. He hopes that if he doesn't benefit from the recovery that other citizens of Gallup will.

In another complete violation, Justin George returned home to his residence in Vanderwagon to find items missing. McKinley County Sheriff's Office Deputy Robert Turney took a backup report due to the residence being on Navajo land.

George showed Turney footprints that led around the residence, pry marks on doors and windows and explained items missing, according to the report. A chainsaw was taken from his vehicle, and a long extension cord and air compressor were stolen.

"I told him that there had been numerous burglaries in the area and that our office is working on most of them," Turney said in his report.

Sheriff deputies also responded to an unusual theft of trees on Smith Lake Drive located in Thoreau. The accuser Eric House told Deputy Johnson Lee that the barbed wire to his fence had been cut and three dead pinon trees were taken off his property. The large tire tracks led him to believe that his neighbors had used a tractor to take the trees out of the ground and then had repaired the barb wire that had been cut. House declared the amount of the trees stolen to be approximately \$300.

In the Vanderwagon area, Jonathan Helf called MCSO to report that two guns had been stolen from his residence. After being away from his home for a couple of days, Helf found his Mossberg shotgun missing. The gun is described as having a brown stock and silver barrel, there is also a shell pouch on the stock.

His handgun missing is described in Deputy Chris Escamilla's report as a "Ruger GP100 .357 Magnum with a 4 inch barrel, black handle with silver frame and barrel." Both weapons were

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valued at over \$600.

Deputies are currently on the lookout for what Helf described as a "small white pickup truck," which he saw in the area. Lt. James Mariano said that the vehicle was possibly occupied, at the time, by three dark-complected males.

"We are encouraging residents to secure their property, have their doors locked, windows closed and locked, if you have bolt locks, use them, these are daytime burglaries that are occurring while people are at work," he said.

Maiorano said the Sheriff's office is encouraging neighbors to watch out for each other and to call in any suspicious activity as soon as possible.

He also suggests that any high-dollar items, especially guns, be removed from plain sight.

In a more recent burglary, Brandon Yazzie came out of his work place at DCI Biologicals and heard a window break. It turned out to be the window to his vehicle and he saw 25-year-old Trenton Ranger crawling out of the back window.

He followed Ranger into the Marcy Lane housing area, which is where Ranger resides, and confronted him. He was hit by Ranger.

According to the report, officer Tsosie followed Ranger and finally caught up to him at the back door of a residence on Marcy Lane where she drew her gun and ordered him to get on the ground.

Ranger was taken to jail and booked on the charge of burglary. Yazzie's vehicle sustained damage and his black leather wallet was taken out of the vehicle, according to the report.

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Gallup Police Department Capt. Rick White said that vigilance can go a long way in preventing crimes like these from happening or at the very least catching the people who are responsible for committing these crimes.

“We need neighbors to watch after neighbors, call police if they see suspicious activity or suspicious vehicles in the area or parked at neighbors houses,” White said. “Citizens need to be the eyes and ears for the police.