







A THOREAU MYSTERY

2/20, Thoreau

McKinley County Sheriff's deputies are looking for the men responsible for stealing a trailer from Elkins Pawn Shop in Thoreau Feb. 20.

It was on that date that Dick Elkins reported to the sheriff's office that someone walked up to the gate on his property and cut the lock, while another man drove into his lot, and then the first man hitched a trailer to his vehicle. The pair of thieves then drove away, taking the trailer with them.

Video surveillance indicated that the man who cut the lock was about five feet, ten inches tall and was heavy set. The driver of the vehicle never got out, so there is no identification on him.

The stolen trailer was described as being a black, flatbed trailer with a wooden bottom and side rails. It is between 16 and 18 feet in length.

BE CAREFUL WHO YOU ASK FOR HELP

2/18, Gallup

It began as a simple request for assistance after a man was reported waving down vehicles on Interstate 40.

When police got to the scene, they found Matthew Chavez, 41 of Albuquerque talking to a man who had stopped to give him assistance. Chavez said he was trying to get someone to drive him to a store to get gas because his car had run out of gas.

Gallup Patrolman Justin Foster offered to take him to get gas and dropped him off at the Giant gas station near the 36-mile turnoff.

A little later, he learned that the car had been reported stolen, so he went out searching for Chavez, and finally found him on a bench outside of Denny's Restaurant asleep. Chavez told Foster he was just standing by the vehicle and never said he was driving it.

This excuse didn't work, and he was charged with being in possession of a stolen vehicle. When Chavez was searched, police found him in possession of multiple EBT cards with different names on them.

A RECKLESS PURSUIT

2/16, Gallup

Area law enforcement officials, including city, county and Navajo, were all involved in a high-speed pursuit Feb. 16 in an effort to capture suspects who were driving a stolen vehicle. Gallup police first pursued the suspect vehicle as it headed south on State Highway 602.

Once outside the city, the pursuit was taken over by sheriff deputies and Navajo police.

According to a backup report by the sheriff's office, the vehicle was seen speeding as high as 88 miles per hour to avoid capture. As the pursuit continued, deputies reported seeing the driver put out his hand with his middle finger extended to show his defiance.

Finally, stop sticks were set up on Twin Buttes Road on the reservation boundary and the driver, later identified as Brandon Largo, 25, tried to avoid the sticks but ran aground on an embankment.

Largo then reportedly got out of the car and began running, and after a short foot chase was captured and arrested and turned over to city police.

SKIMMING IN GALLUP

2/15, south of Gallup

The Gallup area got its first taste of a crime that is a problem in many large cities in the country – skimmers being used to hack people's credit card information.

McKinley County Sheriff Deputy Jonathan Todachine Jr. was dispatched to the El Sabino south of Gallup on State Highway 602 because of a complaint that someone had tampered with the company's gas pumps.

Todachine talked to Roxanna Garcia, who told him she received a complaint from a customer that there had been fraudulent activity on his credit card account after he had pumped gas at the establishment.

Garcia said the company's pumps were checked out and skimming devices were found on two of the pumps. Technicians called to investigate said they had no idea how long the skimming devices were in place.

As to how they got there, Garcia learned that as long as you have a key to that kind of pump, it would open any pump for that brand and once the device is in place, thieves could retrieve the credit card information of anyone who used it.

The devices were removed from the machines and taken by the sheriff's office as evidence. As for the customer, he was told to contact his credit company to have the fraudulent charges

removed from his account.

THE DEAD WALK

2/15, south of Gallup

On Feb. 15, Sheriff Deputy Roxanne Slim was dispatched to Cousins Road south of Gallup to help a Vanderwagen firefighter who had found a man wrapped in plastic who was presumed to be dead.

As she continued to the site, Slim was informed that the man, later identified as Devin David, 31, of Milan, was alive and was disorderly. When Slim finally got to the site, she found David wearing blue jeans, and had no shirt on.

When she confronted David, Slim said he began walking toward her in an aggressive manner and she was forced to use her Taser on him to keep from being assaulted. As she was handcuffing him, she told him that she and the firefighter were only there to check on his welfare, but David refused to listen.

He was taken to the McKinley County Adult Detention Center and charged with assault on a police officer, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct.

WESTMAN AGAIN

2/13, Farmington

As Ryan Westman, 25, of Gallup remains in jail in Farmington facing charges of first degree murder, his crimes continue to surface.

On Feb. 13, sheriff deputies were going through his cell phone and looking at the photos he had downloaded when they came across a picture of a Nissan Altima vehicle identification number.

When they checked, they found that the vehicle had been reported stolen on Feb. 3. It turned out that this was the vehicle Westman had used to try to escape from police who were trying to arrest him in connection with the murder report.

The automobile was confiscated and is now in the sheriff’s impoundment lot. Westman now also faces charges for receiving a stolen vehicle.