Getting high in Colorado

4/22, Gallup

In what may be one of the few cases so far of a New Mexico resident being arrested for bringing into McKinley County marijuana he purchased legally in Colorado, a Ramah man is now facing drug charges in state court.

McKinley County Sheriff's Dep. Brandon Salazar said he was driving south on U. S. 491 near the four-mile marker when he noticed the car in front of him cross the fog line twice.

He did a traffic stop and talked to the driver, identified as Richard Martin, 64. As he was explaining to Martin why he was being stopped, Salazar said he could smell what seemed to be

marijuana coming from inside the vehicle.

He asked Martin where he was coming from and Martin said he had been in Colorado for a few days attending a music festival. He asked Martin if there was anything in his vehicle and whether he had been smoking in the vehicle.

Martin said he had not, but there had previously been a passenger in the vehicle who was smoking before he was dropped off. Salazar asked where the man was dropped off and Martin said Cortez.

Salazar questioned Martin's story, saying the smell was too strong for someone who had been dropped off three hours earlier.

By this time, an officer with a drug dog arrived on the scene. The dog did a walk around the vehicle and had hit on the driver side door.

Salazar said with this information, there we a strong indication there were drugs in the car and asked again for permission to search. If permission was not granted, he said, the vehicle would be towed in and police would get a warrant to search the vehicle.

On the other hand, if permission was granted and only a little marijuana was found, he would be given a non-traffic citation and allowed to leave.

Martin said he had about five or six joints in the vehicle and a smoking pen to smoke THC oils. He agreed to allow the search.

The search came up with 10 joints in a hard black container in the center console as well as a pipe to smoke marijuana. Deputies also found three marked containers for oils and an electronic cigarette.

Salazar told Martin he would be charged with bringing in marijuana from Colorado as well as possession of drug paraphernalia.

Dinner and a Stabbing

4/20, Gallup

Reports of a stabbing on the 20 block of Bishop Drive brought MCSO Dep. Brandon Salazar to the scene, where he encountered a victim with a bandaged, bloodied hand in the doorway.

The man pointed Salazar to the kitchen, where he said the man who attacked him was sitting and eating a burrito. Salazar watched the man, and noticed a child peek out of a bedroom door before scurrying back in.

Salazar asked the man to stand and put his hands up, but the man argued with him, finally throwing his burrito onto the table and kicking a chair out of his way. Salazar said he was acting “very aggressively,” according to the report.

Salazar was able to restrain the man, who was then identified as Lucas Martinez, 31, of Cochiti. Once Martinez was taken into custody, Salazar returned to the scene and found the weapon used against the victim, a kitchen knife he described as “similar to a steak knife” in his report.

Martinez was charged with aggravated battery with a deadly weapon and booked.

Laptop Larceny

4/20, White Cliffs

MCSO Dep. Anthony Morales was dispatched to the 120 block of Bishop Drive just before 4:40 pm over reports of a burglary in the area. Morales spoke with the victim, a 51-year-old woman who said she came home to find her residence “trashed,” according to the police report, with several valuable items missing.

Among the stolen possessions were a 50-inch television set, an Xbox, another gaming system and game equipment, and two laptops—one of which belonged to the district attorney’s office. The value of the stolen items totaled $3,500, according to the itemized police report.

Morales noted damage to the victim’s front door, which had visible marks from someone prying it open. Morales informed the woman that there had been a number of burglaries in the area. Police did not have any further leads or suspects.

Couldn’t Catch Fake Casher

4/20, White Cliffs

A women alleged to officers that her son’s friends had stolen from her, after she received word form the bank that her account was overdrawn. She told MCSO Dep. Anthony Morales that a man cashed $350 into his account in Albuquerque using a stolen check, which she discovered missing from her checkbook soon afterwards.

The woman recognized the name of the man who deposited the money, though she was unable to get in contact with him, and couldn’t give officers any information on his age or location. The bank issued a stop-payment on the remaining missing check numbers, though police were unable to track down the suspects.

Vandalism at a church

4/20, Gamerco

MCSO deputies are trying to find how who shattered one of the glass windows at a Gamerco church.

Devin Dillinger, a youth pastor for the Gamerco Church of God, told deputies that one of the double-paned windows on the northeast side of the building had been shattered sometime earlier that day or the night before.

He had no suspects and although deputies looked for footprints in the area of the window, they could find none. They also could find no motive for the vandalism.

The case is still under investigation.

Road rage in Tohlaikai

4/19, Tohlaikai

A Tohlaikai man reported being attacked by four men in what is being viewed as a case of road rage.

Melvin Cornfield, 33, told McKinley County Sheriff deputies he was driving south from Tohatchi about 4 pm when he noticed that a car was following him.

“When they passed me, they flipped me off,” he said.

He noticed that they pulled into the Giant Gas Station at Tohlaikai and decided to confront them, even though he could see three men in the vehicle.

He said the driver of the vehicle got out and shoved the door at him while one of the passengers got out and pushed him.

“I pushed him back and the next thing I’m fighting four guys,” he said.” I don’t know where the fourth guy came from. I fought back and the next thing I got kicked in the head and they took off.”

He said a female witnessed the whole event and called out for the men to stop beating him.

The police report said Cornfield had scratches on his right ear and on his face, bruises on his forehead, and a bump on his left temple. He said he also had scratches on his chest and back.

The vehicle in question was described as a maroon SUV but while a license plate number was given to police, it turned out not to be valid.

The easy way

4/17, Gallup

Gallup police arrested a Gamerco man for reportedly pulling out a handgun to steal two bottles of liquor from a Gallup supermarket.

Christopher Begay, 26, was charged with armed robbery and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Gallup Police Department Officer Kelsey Francisco reported going to Albertson's Supermarket about 6:30 pm and talking to Lambert Yazzie, the store's manager.

Yazzie said customers came up to him and reported being confronted by a man with a gun who demanded their change. He said when he went to the store's liquor department he saw a man matching their description putting two bottles of liquor in his pocket.

Yazzie said he confronted the man and told him to show his pockets. The man's response was to say, "You want to play this the easy or hard way."

Yazzie said he backed off, afraid that the man would use the gun and watched as he left the store.

Police were called and a little later Francisco heard that a community service aide, Kari Smith, had reported seeing a man matching that description walking behind the El Capitan.

By the time Francisco arrived on the scene, Begay was surrounded by several police officers and detectives. He had already been searched and handcuffed.

The officers didn't find a gun but they did find two syringes and a glass pipe in his pockets. They also found two liquor bottles.

As Francisco was being led to a police unit for transportation to jail, he began yelling profanity at the officers. During his transport, Begay continued to yell profanity at the driver.

Before he was taken to the jail, he was transported to Albertson's where he was identified as the man who stole the liquor and pulled out a gun.

Gun gone

4/16, north of Gallup

MCSO deputies are investigating a break in that occurred at a residence north of Gallup on U. S. 491 on April 16.

The occupant of the house told deputies that when he arrived home, he found the door unlocked. There was no sign of forced entry so Smith said he might have forgotten to lock the door.

When he entered the house, he found his rifle case on the couch. Two rifles and a handgun, described as a Ruger Blackhawk 44 magnum, were missing.

The rifles were described as a Marlin and a Savage. Deputies were told they had been next to each other leaning on the wall when he left his house.

Police have no suspects.

Staff Reports