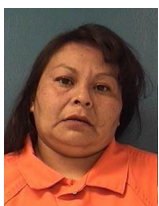


Weekly Crime Blotter

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 29 April 2016 04:51



4/27, COLEMAN SERVED SEARCH WARRANT

A source close to the Sun says that Steve Coleman, a local proprietor and former Gallup Police Department officer, is facing five to 15 years in prison. He has two cases – one in federal court and one at the district court level. It stems largely from when Coleman was arrested Jan. 21 from shooting a neighbor's trespassing dog, mushrooming into a full-blown investigation.

To explain, Coleman is a registered felon and not permitted to possess firearms. According to the affidavit for a search warrant, issued April 26, 11th Judicial District Attorney Chief Investigator Richard Malone made some disturbing connections to the firearms and Indian art at Coleman's Thoreau residence on Jan. 21.

But it looks like a case against the beleaguered business owner had been brewing for some time.

"(Malone) has reviewed police reports prepared by officers from the Gallup Police Department regarding high end burglaries of Indian artifacts, items of artwork, jewelry and firearms throughout the city over a period of many years," the affidavit states, adding that Malone "conducted a criminal investigation into activities of Steve Coleman, including the recovery of multiple stolen firearms and stolen Indian art from Coleman's residence" on Poor Farm Road.

Witness testimony, some who have past dealings with Coleman, identified items in his residence as items that went missing when their homes were broken into. One report dates back to 1996.

Meanwhile, Coleman is in hot water for the death of one of two of his neighbor's dogs that were on his property, reportedly trying to get at his female dogs in heat. Coleman has a hearing in District Court Judge Aragon's courtroom May 6 at 9 am.

He faces one count of possession of a firearm or destructive device by a felon; two counts of extreme cruelty to animals; one count of negligent use of a deadly weapon; four counts of criminal damage to property (under \$1,000); five counts of negligent use of a deadly weapon.

Coleman's U.S. District Court trial starts June 6 at 1:30 pm, 333 Lomas Blvd. S.W. in Albuquerque. He faces multiple charges in relation to the firearms, and also the unlawful sale of migratory birds.

4/27, GRABBED & STABBED

A man claimed that he was stabbed by three men when walking in the hills north of a residence off U.S. Route 491. According to McKinley County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Elreno Henio's report, Navajo Police officers were not immediately available, so he provided security for emergency personnel.

The victim was taken to a local hospital. Navajo Police took over from there. His condition is unknown.

4/24, FIVE FINGER FUMBLE

A determined Family Dollar clerk, at the Second Street location, got the best of Vernall Ray Watchman, who thought he could make off with some padlocks without paying, according to Gallup Police Department Officer Terrance Peyketewa's report.

When the female clerk confronted him and followed him outside, he got a little cocky, and despite her pulling the door closed, he came back into the store through another door and grabbed an armful of DVDs. He tried to make off with the DVDs, but the determined clerk started plucking the movies from his arms. Another customer coming toward the store grabbed the rest of the DVDs from Watchman's arms.

Peyketewa reviewed the video footage and recognized Watchman. In a stroke of luck, he saw the suspect crossing the street near the store, easily nabbing him. During booking, Peyketewa took a call.

At this time, Watchman's handcuffs were removed, and he took the moment to reportedly say that he was going to jump the counter and kick the officer's a-s. Watchman proceeded to throw a blood pressure at Peyketewa, hitting him in the lower stomach.

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Watchman was booked for burglary, shoplifting, larceny theft from building, and for battery upon a peace officer.

4/21, TRAGIC ACCIDENT

Felton Atkins, 37, died when his vehicle fell on him while he was making repairs to it. According to MCSO Deputy Ivan Tsethlikai's report, NPD was already on scene and two Med Star first responders had confirmed that Atkins was deceased. Tsethlikai stayed at the scene to assist onsite personnel.

4/21, □ DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND

It's hard to tell what prompted an 11-year-old girl to speak provocatively to a fellow student taking a test, then grab her crotch, then her rear, but the alleged incident reportedly took place at Chee Dodge Elementary School.

According to MCSO Merlin Benally's report, the girls were taking a test that morning when the suspect whispered "Hey baby" "Hey what's your name?" The victim reportedly ignored the questions.

During the afternoon testing, the young suspect sat next to the victim and allegedly grabbed her crotch. The victim rebuffed her advances, but the persistent suspect put her hand on top of the victim's hand.

It didn't end there, though. When class was over, the victim asked a friend to stand between she and the suspect, but the suspect stepped in front of the friend and reportedly grabbed the victim's buttocks.

What's even stranger, as the victim reported the incidents to her teacher, the suspect reportedly touched the victim's buttocks. The teacher notified the principal. The suspect student was

suspended for three days and the case referred to the District Attorney.

4/21, NEW WIFE'S REVENGE?

Sophina James told MCSO Deputy Jasmine Jaramillo a strange tale, but the charges she received don't match up with the story she told, at least what can be gleaned from the report. Jaramillo was called to the Red Mesa Express as Metro Dispatch advised that there were reports of a woman breaking windows.

The deputy noted that there was a vehicle fire on the west side of the building. James started her story from the beginning – at her house on 101 Blue Medicine Rd. She said that her husband's ex-wife Debra came by for a chat. James said that she asked Debra to leave several times. Debra must have been sitting in her car during the meeting, because James reportedly pulled her from the car and punched her in the face a couple of times.

James, 35, then jumped in the driver's seat and began to drive off, but Debra jumped in the passenger seat. "James stated that she was going to take Debra to an unknown place and kill her," the report stated. To get police's attention, James said she ran several stop lights heading north on U.S. Route 491. Debra got out of the vehicle at a gas station, and James took off. She claimed the car malfunctioned and caught fire.

James was charged with aggravated battery, improper handling of fire, and vehicle fire.

4/21, FLOWER POT ASSAULT

A woman living in the Sagebrush Apartments grew concerned when confronted by four men about a physical altercation that happened the day before involving her and one other woman. According to GPD Officer Joe Roanhorse's report, the woman called Lane Ortiz to the scene. She said when Ortiz arrived, all four men started beating on him.

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She said Benson Joe, 33, grabbed a flower pot and struck Ortiz on the head, rendering him unconscious. When Ortiz awoke, he had a large cut on the top of his head and blood was pouring down his face. He was taken to a local hospital where he received nine staples in his head. He was then arrested for trespassing and for two outstanding warrants.

Joe, was arrested along with Arman J. Martine, 33, Brandon Yazzie, 35, and Matthew Curley, 33. Joe was charged with aggravated battery and the other three with battery.