

Say Security Tight With 'Pillowcase' Loot

By HELEN RICE

REDFORD Stinging under charges of lax security in handling the return of jewelry and other items claimed by victims of the "pillowcase burglar," Redford Township police want the public "to get the true facts."

"It's a bunch of lies, and if

she doesn't make a retraction and return things that don't belong to her, I'm going to charge her with larceny," an angry Redford Township police detective replied to a letter in the Readers Forum in the Aug. 12 Observer Newspapers.

The letter signed "Disgusted Citizen" charged police with "allowing legalized looting" of items on display in the township police station for burglary victims to check and re-check for recovered property, Thursdays from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

THE LETTER-WRITER, a Farmington Township woman, had given her name and address as required, but had requested use of the pen-name for publication. Her accusation of lax security infuriated Detective Sgt. Edward Livingston who has been in charge of

the case starting with the July 21 arrest of Mrs. Helen Ann Haynes, 28, of northwest Detroit.

Termed the "pillowcase bandit" because of the two dozen pillowcases full of jewelry and other small items she told police she took from homes on daily 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. forays, Mrs. Haynes was scheduled for pre-trial examination in District Court Monday, Aug. 17.

Her arrest followed the report from a Livonia Mail store that a customer was attempting to use a Redford man's credit card which had been reported stolen. The store clerk had the customer's auto registration number which police used to trace her. When they called at her home to question her, Mrs. Haynes told them, "The stuff you want is in the attic."

FOLLOWING her arraignment in the 17th District Court the next day she offered to cooperate with police in trying to identify the recovered property so it could be returned to the owners.

The detective bureau secretary, Mrs. Alice Beadle, spent the weekend sorting and arranging quantities of jewelry and other small items for burglary victims to identify and claim.

ONLY THOSE who had filed reports with their local police were allowed in to view the display and to claim items. Receipts are on file from each claimant, Sgt. Livingston said.

But an exception was made for the Farmington letter-writer, he explained. "She kept insisting on seeing what we had, although the Farmington Township detectives told her we couldn't have any of her family's missing coins or guns. Her house was broken into at night, and we had no reason to believe any of this property was taken except during the 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. hours that Mrs. Haynes was out."

Chief Edwin Gleza said a few persons were allowed to examine the recovered property despite the fact that there was little or no reason to expect they would find their missing items.

"Our security measures were as thorough as they possibly could have been. As you know, we let in only a few persons at a time and always had them under surveillance by two or more of our staff. We tried not to be conspicuous about it," Gleza said.

DETECTIVES from other communities accompanied some claimants, bringing their reports that listed missing property. Some of the detectives signed receipts for recovered items when the householder was unable to appear.

"When anyone identified property that wasn't in a report on file, we made them go back and file a report before we released the things," Chief Gleza said.

Amazed at the trouble many

people took to be honest, Sgt. Livingston and Mrs. Beadle both mentioned numerous persons who had come back to return watches, rings and other things they decided on further examination weren't theirs.

"Just yesterday a man came from the far end of West Bloomfield to turn back a Timex watch. You know how easy it would be to make a mistake on one of those. He said the band didn't have a scratch that he remembered on his," Mrs. Beadle said.

POLICE EXPLAINED that Mrs. Haynes told them she discarded a large hoard of stolen items Feb. 14 and occasionally "dumped" things in bushes along roads.

"They're just lucky to get anything back," one of the detectives said.

The Redford Township police station is continuing to hold "open house" for burglary victims to check and re-check for recovered property, Thursdays from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Almost every day they say someone comes back with a string of imitation pearls or a bracelet or other items, saying "It's not mine after all but it may be worth something to the owner."

The Redford Observer had checked frequently on the operation and can support police statements about their security measures in handling the property claims.

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Redford Chief Writes A Reply To Police Critic

EDITOR:

As Chief of Police of the Redford Township Police Department, I wish to reply to the charges made by a "Disgusted Citizen" who implied that the Redford Township Police Department allowed legal looting by the victims of the "Pillowcase Bandit." It is obvious that the letter writer was misinformed and not aware of the facts when she made the charges which I emphatically reject as false.

Immediately after the large quantity of jewelry was recovered, we separated the valuable items, such as diamonds and precious stones, from the costume jewelry. We insisted that any such valuable items be listed on a police report or insurance company report before said items could be released to the owner.

The costume jewelry and personal effects were sorted and displayed in our all-purpose room in such a manner as to expedite viewing. All known victims were advised that they must contact their local police department and obtain a copy of the police report before they would be permitted to view the items. Only in certain instances were people allowed in without reports. This procedure eliminated the sightseers and those intent upon making false claims.

In most instances, the detectives who investigated the original burglary accompanied the victim through the viewing process. The staff of the Detective Bureau, assisted by the Traffic Bureau Clerk and the police explorer scouts, observed all persons viewing the items at all times. We allowed no more than four to six victims to view the items at any one time. It was this restriction which resulted in the long lines outside the viewing room.

After 11 victims recovered their property, a police report was written listing the property and its description. To reclaim such items of jewelry which were considered precious or valuable, the victim had to describe such items to the satisfaction of the detectives before even viewing said items. In some instances of valuable property, the police report itself was sufficient in that the item was described therein. Where extremely valuable items were involved, the reclaimed property was photographed and attached to the theft report.

As Chief of Police, I conferred with the Township Attorney prior to the viewing, relative to the releasing of coin collections in which positive identification was almost impossible due to the similarity of these items. I was instructed by the Township Attorney that American and Canadian monies, which could not be positively identified, were to be confiscated and impounded for 120 days, at which time these monies would revert to the Redford Township General Fund. Only those coin collections which were positively identified were released to their owners.

I must admit that we had to depend upon the basic honesty of the individual involved, since it would be a physical impossibility for anyone to describe every single item of costume jewelry which is usually stored in a jewelry box. Our faith in the honesty of people was confirmed, when, on many occasions, victims of the burglary actually returned to our station to return some items of costume jewelry which they later realized they had mistakenly identified as their own.

I feel that the criticism against the Redford Township Police Department in this matter was unwarranted. The mere fact that we had only three complaints out of the 357 people who viewed the property, testifies to the effectiveness of the procedure we had established.

If the writer can suggest a better method, I would indeed be appreciative.

EDWIN J. GLEZA
Chief of Police
Redford Township
Police Department

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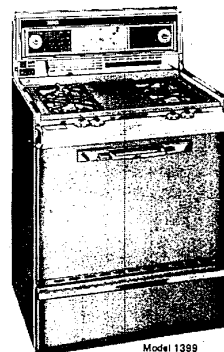
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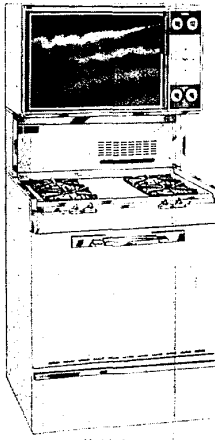
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