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Police make progress after recent spate of robberies

By Sora O'Doherty



Plywood, recently painted, covers broken windows following a Feb. 23 robbery at Moraga Ace Hardware and Lumber. Photo Sora O'Doherty

Police in Lamorinda have been busy following a recent uptick in burglaries. After a series of commercial burglaries in Lafayette and Orinda in February, a suspect has been arrested who is believed to have been responsible for several of the incidents. According to Lafayette Police Department Sgt. Charlene Jacquez, a breakthrough resulted in the arrest of the suspect during the commission of another commercial burglary in Sacramento.

The suspect had been identified for a series of commercial burglaries over six days beginning Feb. 17 that included at least nine burglaries, five attempted burglaries and three bicycle thefts. In addition, the suspect is believed to have taken multiple credit cards from the businesses and used them to make fraudulent purchases. The burglaries were linked by a common method, the premises were breached by use of a crowbar.

Jacquez credits diligent citizens, cameras and business footage for helping police to identify two suspects. The information developed mostly linked a male suspect to similar crimes in Orinda, Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, Benicia, Sacramento, and Butte County, operating with the assistance of a local female. The suspect was detained on Feb. 27 but fled on foot. He was captured on March 6 while committing another burglary in Sacramento and is currently in custody in Sacramento County.

The suspect's name is not being released at this time, but it is known that he is from out of state. He is a white male adult in his 30s. The female suspect is a white female in her 30s. Jacquez said it was "definitely very frustrating for businesses going through so much with [the] pandemic, suffering so much, to be victimized in that way, it was horrible." Jacquez added that the authorities are very pleased to put a stop to the activity and hope to see justice through the judicial system, adding that there is no nexus to the burglary of the Moraga Ace Hardware store when an SUV rammed into its front glass door on Feb. 23.

Lieutenant Brian South of the Moraga Police Department reported that the investigation of that incident is ongoing. Two unidentified masked suspects loaded power tools into a shopping cart and fled the scene. The incident appears to be unrelated to another a day earlier, when rototillers were stolen from the storage area of the nearby Moraga Garden Center. Footage from traffic cameras is being analyzed to try to identify the vehicle used in the hardware store burglary. Other Moraga incidents in February included a package stolen from a residential mailbox and a license plate stolen off a car.

A suspect is now in custody for assaulting an Orinda police officer on March 1. The officer was conducting a walkthrough of the Rite Aid on Orinda Way when he was alerted by employees that a person was fleeing after stealing items. The officer chased the suspect on foot in an attempt to apprehend him. The suspect entered a vehicle in the parking lot, and when the officer tried to open the driver's door, the suspect struck the officer with his vehicle before fleeing on westbound Highway 24. The officer suffered minor injuries but has recovered.

Detectives from the Orinda Police Department and the Contra Costa County Office of the Sheriff were able to identify the suspect, who was spotted March 4 in Richmond. The suspect fled, leading deputy sheriffs from the Sheriff's Office J-Team in pursuit until the suspect's vehicle became disabled on Adeline Street in Berkeley. He was arrested by deputies after a foot chase. The suspect is identified as 28-year-old Delvente Murry of San Francisco. He is being held at the Martinez Detention Facility on the following charges: assault with a deadly weapon on a peace officer, felony evading, obstructing a peace officer, and probation violation. Anyone with any information on this incident is asked to contact Sergeant S. Valkanoff of the Orinda Police Department at (925) 253-4217. For any tips, please email: orindatip@cityoforinda.org or call 866-846-3592 to leave an anonymous voice message.

According to Orinda PD Sgt. Valkanoff, recent burglaries in Theatre Square have cost victims thousands of dollars; the department is following leads and awaiting surveillance video from Theatre Square. There is a chance, Valkanoff said, that the incidents may be tied to one suspect. On the village side of Orinda, a suspect is in custody and charges have been filed in connection with an armed robbery at McCaulou's. Clean Cleaners in the Village was also burglarized in February.

There has not yet been an arrest in the home invasion robbery, now the main crime being investigated in

Orinda, Valkanoff said. On the afternoon of Feb. 28, Orinda police officers responded to Don Gabriel Way for a report of an armed robbery at a residence. The victim was confronted by two men, one of whom was armed. The suspects stole valuables and then fled. The victim, who was not injured, called the police. Police searched for the suspects using a helicopter, drone and a police K-9 but were unable to locate them. Orinda PD Chief David Cook told the city council March 2 that while they have not been able to identify the suspects, the vehicle associated with the crime was taken by the sheriff's office after executing a warrant.

The suspects are described as two African American males. One was wearing a green florescent construction vest, black hoodie jacket with a red stripe, black pants and white shoes. The other was dressed in a baby-blue hoodie jacket, black pants, and black and white shoes.

Contra Costa Sheriff's Director of Public Affairs Jimmy Lee asks that anyone with any information on this incident contact Sheriff's Office dispatch at (925) 646-2441, email tips@so.cccounty.us or call (866) 846-3592 to leave an anonymous voice message.

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