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Slocomb PD Makes Arrest

Stephen Crews
Geneva Newspapers

Slocomb Police Chief David Land says that his department recently got two breaks that led to the arrest of Grady White for at least six car burglaries in the Slocomb community. Land believes that White could be charged with several additional cases.

Land stated that his department first received a break in the two month old case when one of the homeowners who had been robbed received their cell phone bill. The owner's cell phone was stolen and used before the homeowner was able to have the phone disconnected. The phone calls placed to someone in the Hartford community were linked back to White.

The second break in the case came when a homeowner caught the suspect on video trying to break into his vehicle. This homeowner had already been hit by the suspect several previous times and was looking to help solve the case.

The video and cell phone log led the Slocomb Police Department to White, a 35-year-old black male living at 314 South Kelly Street in Slocomb, who has been living in the community for about nine months since moving in from Miami, Florida.

White is charged with five counts of unlawful breaking and entering of a motor vehicle and one count of receiving stolen property second. Other possible charges and arrests are pending.

According to Land, approximately 12 reports have been filed with the Slocomb PD about items being stolen from vehicles in the Tew Subdivision in Slocomb. It appears that White only tried to get into unlocked vehicles.

Some of the items stolen included cell phones, at least \$250 in cash, loose change, a pair of earrings, a digital camera, a power drill and a Dothan Police Department police bicycle.

Land believes that one way to curtail problems like these are by having neighborhood watch programs in the Slocomb community. Land will be looking into the possibility of starting the watch groups in the very near future.



The Sandbox Pre-K class celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday with a week full of activities. Pictured front row: Mara Bottoms; Paige Hendron; Landon Adams; Zachary Shirah; Meagan Smith; Jamison Adams; Peyton Walker; Dustin Sloan, and Jesslyn Culverhouse. Back row: Jesse Skinner; Luke Smithart; Carson Brackin; Mason Coskrey; Josh DeRouen; Adaela Peak; Karson Grant; Jaylee Stough; and Thomas Fain with their teachers Kerry Commander and Kendra Culverhouse.

Samson Man Charged with Child Solicitation

Arrest Stems from Undercover ICAC Investigation

Stephen Crews
Geneva Newspapers

A 39-year-old Samson man was arrested Tuesday on charges of child solicitation by computer and transmission of obscene material to a minor, following an investigation by the Dale County Sheriff's Department, the Alabama Bureau of Investigation, and the District Attorney's Office of Dale and Geneva counties. Charles Jerome Morgan was arrested in Ozark and currently is in the Dale County Jail, with additional charges pending.



Charles Jerome Morgan

The arrest follows a six-week undercover, online investigation by Dale County officers participating in the Internet Crimes Against Children program. During the course of the investigation Morgan corresponded via the Internet with an undercover officer posing online as a 13-year-old girl. Morgan was arrested at an Ozark motel after having made arrangements to meet his online contact, whom he believed to be the 13-year-old girl, at the motel.

Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, ICAC seeks to detect sexual offenders who use the Internet to commit crimes against children. ICAC-trained officers with the Alabama Bureau of Investigation conduct online, undercover investigations and conduct forensic analysis of computers seized in ICAC investigations. ABI agents also have trained officers at 10 ICAC satellite offices throughout Alabama, and have equipped these agencies with the necessary equipment to conduct ICAC investigations. ICAC satellite offices include the Calhoun, Dale, Dekalb, Elmore, Lee, Mobile, and Tallapoosa county sheriff's offices, and the Huntsville, Sheffield and Hartselle police departments.

Jail Issue Dead?

Stephen Crews
Geneva Newspapers

It appears that the issue of placing some type of revenue measure on the November General Election ballot is officially dead after Monday's Geneva County Commission meeting. In the end, Sheriff Greg Ward expressed his concern over the commission's actions that resulted in no action being taken on the jail issue.

"The commission has tied my hands, said Sheriff Greg Ward. "It looks like I will have no other option but to sue the county."

Early in the meeting, Geneva County Probate Judge Harry O. Adkison informed the commission that representatives from Domes International would be in Geneva on Tuesday morning beginning at 7:00 a.m. Commissioner Fred Hamic stated that he was against the dome facilities and that it was clear at Thursday

The commission has tied my hands. It looks like I have no other option but to sue the county.

Sheriff Greg Ward

Comments made after the commission's decision to not approve a wheel tax for a new jail.

night's meeting that the citizens were against the facilities also.

During the commissioner's time on the agenda, Commissioner Ray Minshew made a motion to do away with plans to build a temporary facility if Domes International failed to show up on Tuesday morning as they had stated. The motion received a second from Commissioner Hamic.

At this point Commissioner Larry Everett looked at the two commissioners and stated, "You don't quit! They are going to be built."

Commissioners Shields and Everett voted against the measure bringing the vote to a 2-2 tie. Adkison

broke the tie in favor of Shields and Everett.

Commissioner Hamic then made a motion to increase all car tags purchased in Geneva County by \$15 for the construction of a brick and mortar jail. Commissioner Ray Minshew seconded the motion.

There was then discussion about how big of a facility had to be created and whether or not the amount raised would even be enough to pay for a jail.

Eventually a vote was taken with Commissioners Minshew and Hamic voting in favor of the measure with Commissioners Gary Shields and Larry Everett voting against the measure. Adkison

broke the tie in favor of Shields and Everett.

Commissioner Everett stated that the vote would be a mute one because a measure couldn't make it through the legislature this late in the session.

Commissioner Shields later told the group that he would be in favor of the car tag plan as long as it was earmarked for just a brick and mortar facility. "I want us to keep all options open on what type of facility we are going to build," Commissioner Hamic responded saying, "the people made it clear what they wanted on Thursday night."

Following the actions, Sheriff Ward stated that he was disappointed in the decision made by the group and that he had made it clear to Judge Adkison that he intended to do something and that the deadline was set for that something. No other information was given as to what Ward meant.

Large Crowd Shows for Jail Meeting

Stephen Crews
Geneva Newspapers

A large crowd showed Thursday night to give their opinions on a new jail for Geneva County. The group seemed to be unified in the idea of a "wheel tax" and a brick and mortar structure. The group also made it clear that they didn't want any type of dome structure that are now commonly being called "igloos".

The event, hosted by Commissioner Fred Hamic, was well received by the citizens as approximately 100 people showed up for the event. Several elected officials were also in attendance

including Sheriff Greg Ward, Commissioners Ray Minshew and Gary Shields, Probate Judge Harry O. Adkison, District Judge Charlie Fleming, Samson Mayor Clay King and Geneva City Councilman Archie Howell.

Each citizen was given the opportunity to share their thoughts for five minutes. During this time the citizens could also ask questions to elected officials in regards to a jail.

Many citizens spoke up during the meeting and share their thoughts. "I think we should let the people in jail pay for the jail," said Coley Andress. "I don't see a problem with a wheel

tax and I don't have a problem renting the extra space to other counties."

Former State Representative Riley Seibenheiner shared how he felt the citizens would react to a tax of any kind for the purpose of a new jail. "People are generally not going to vote for a tax," said Seibenheiner.

While many like the idea of a wheel tax and increased court costs, other ideas were also shared:

- Geneva resident John Woods suggested an increase on income tax for county residents;

- Geneva Attorney Joe Paul voted in favor of a property tax. Paul also believes

that one solution to the overcrowding might be to cut down on the amount of people being sent to jail.

Commissioner Fred Hamic stated that several nearby counties had used a variety of methods to pay for their jails. The methods included property taxes, court cost increases, lodging tax increases and some just paid for the jail out of their own county budgets.

In the end, a vote was taken among those in attendance. All but one voted for a wheel tax over any other tax measure. The group also voted in a favor of a brick and mortar jail over a domed fiberglass jail.

Jury Finds Ricky Wilson Guilty of Theft by Deception

Special to Geneva Newspapers

On Wednesday, March 8, 2006, a Geneva county jury took about four hours to convict 31-year-old Ricky Wilson of Theft by Deception in the First Degree. Wilson, a former contractor in Geneva County, was found guilty of deceiving James and Linda Strickland, both senior citizens, out of approximately \$22,785.00 for remodeling and construction work on their home.

Ricky Wilson, who was represented by attorney David Harrison, agreed to do contract work for James and Linda Strickland in August 2003. "He did

some work for them and continued to string them along until he got all he could get and then he left and never went back," stated Geneva County Assistant District Attorney Stephen Smith during opening arguments. According to the Smith, Wilson never completed any part of the work he started and never started the other work he was contracted to do.

The Strickland's paid Wilson every payment that was to be given to him except for the one due at completion of the work. Wilson quit coming to their home to work about a month prior to receiving his last draw from the

Strickland's. On November 21, 2003, Wilson appeared at the Strickland's home and promised to complete work on their bathroom before Thanksgiving if Mrs. Strickland gave him another payment. Linda Strickland gave him a final payment of \$2233.02 on that date. Wilson never came back to work at their home after that date.

The State introduced bank records to show that Wilson simply cashed most of the checks he received from the Strickland's. Jimmy Hand, Investigator for the District Attorney's office, questioned Wilson prior to being charged and Wilson acknowledged that he had not purchased ma-

terials that he was to use for their home. Wilson claimed to have receipts for some purchases but never produced any proof of any purchases to Hand. Wilson also never made any effort to complete the work while the case was investigated. Linda Strickland gave him the money because he made that promise and she trusted him to keep his word. The bank records showed that on that day Wilson had a negative balance in his account which was the only reason he returned according to Smith. "It was just a scam" said Geneva County Assistant District Attorney Stephen Smith during closing arguments, "it was

a way to get money from people he could manipulate"

Ricky Wilson was found not guilty of the same charge for taking over \$69,000 from Jerry and Mildred Grimes in January 2005. The deception preyed upon the Grimes occurred prior to the deception levied upon the Strickland's. Mildred Grimes testified in the Strickland trial and told the jury how Wilson had deceived them. This evidence helped the jury see what Wilson's intent was from the beginning, to deceive the Strickland's out of their money according to Smith.

"Senior citizens as well as every other person in

this judicial circuit can be assured that this office will always prosecute those who prey upon citizens in this manner" said Kirke Adams, District Attorney. "People like Wilson who use deception and lies to con people out of money will be brought to justice."

Circuit Judge P.B. McLaughlin presided over the case and will set a sentencing hearing upon completion of a Pre-sentence investigation by Geneva County probation officer Greg Hughes. Wilson could receive a sentence from 2 to 20 years in the state penitentiary and a fine up to \$10,000 and will be ordered to pay restitution.