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## Jackson case a real-life mystery

**Case of missing jewels earns Officer of Month honors.**



It was the kind of case meant for Sherlock Holmes.

On March 8, Jackson Police Detective James Cornelius took on the case of the missing diamonds. A woman had reported more than \$50,000 in jewelry missing from her north Jackson home. Seventeen high-dollar items were stolen, including a Cartier drop necklace, sapphire and diamond bracelet, Rolex watch and Tiffany double pearl earrings with diamonds.

In talking with the jewelry owner, Cornelius discovered she'd let a friend host a birthday party at the residence the day before, and about 98 people attended. That was the first clue. "We figured someone at the party went into the lady's personal bathroom and took some of her jewelry out of the jewelry box," Cornelius said.

The party was full of doctors, business professionals and social elite. Finding the thief out of the bunch was not going to be easy, he said. "They supplied a list of everyone who came to the party. I began interviewing people who (were) there, then I went to the pawn shops to see if anyone on the list had pawned anything lately," he said.

Cornelius, who works in JPD's pawn shop unit, knows the ins and outs of the pawning business. He searched pawn shop after pawn shop looking but came up empty. What he did find was his next and biggest clue. Of all the people on the list, only one, a woman, had ever pawned something. He discovered that fact through the **LeadsOnline** pawn broker database.

"I called the (person) to try and interview her but she declined, so I had the crime lab review the fingerprints taken from the scene," he said. When the results returned, Cornelius went to the guest's house, told her her rights and explained her fingerprints were found on the jewelry box. "She began looking down, then she started telling me what she did," Cornelius said.

While everyone else was distracted by the party, the woman slipped into the homeowner's master suite, took the jewels and put them in her purse, he said. The woman led Cornelius to her vehicle, where she kept some of the jewels in a plastic bag. The others were in her jewelry box. "She was wearing the woman's jewelry. She stated she was going to wear them a couple more days, then she was going to pawn them," Cornelius said. Police said the woman was then going to use the money to pay bills. Each one of the missing jewels was recovered.

It took a week to crack the case, and for doing so Cornelius was named Officer of the Month by the Jackson Police Department. Cornelius' supervisor and fellow detective Jaye Coleman said Cornelius consistently conducts thorough interviews and uses all the resources available to solve cases. "This is actually the fifth time he's won the award," Coleman said. "He has a knack for getting information out of people who are reluctant to come forward. He's definitely one of our better detectives."

Cornelius said the jewelry owner did not want to pursue charges once she got her jewelry back and the guest seeks treatment. Since the guest has not been charged, police are not releasing her name.

The homeowner would not comment.

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