

## **Image of ‘Grinch’ is raised in arrest**

By **Matt Gryta**

News Staff Reporter

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A Buffalo man with a long criminal record, described by a veteran detective as “truly the Grinch who stole Christmas,” was arrested Wednesday afternoon while sitting with a friend on a plush sofa allegedly stolen on Grand Island during a daylight burglary over the holiday weekend.

Anthony Mills, 48, was arrested in his home in the 400 block of 14th Street.

Erie County Sheriff Timothy B. Howard said his Detective and Narcotics bureaus are working with area police agencies to link more than \$10,000 worth of goods seized when Mills was arrested.

Mills is currently on parole after spending two years in prison for lying to a grand jury about \$45 he stole from a Williamsville teacher’s purse eight years ago.

He was scheduled to be arraigned in Grand Island Town Court this morning.

Howard, Senior Detective Alan N. Rozansky and Detective Brian O’Hara said Mills—who has 42 arrests and 10 prior felony convictions locally since 1980 — has been charged with second-degree burglary, grand larceny, possession of stolen property and possession of burglary tools. He also faces a parole violation count.

The charges are linked only to a daylight burglary on Harvey Road on Grand Island on Friday morning, but Howard said Mills is suspected of leading a burglary ring that involved several other break-ins.

The sheriff said he could not believe “the boldness” of Mills, who allegedly recruited two teenage boys and a female friend to help him stage daylight burglaries, primarily using rental cars.

A neighbor of the Harvey Road burglary victim called 911 at about 11:30 a. m. Friday, after the teens knocked on her door and were shocked when she answered, Howard said.

The teens fled, and one of them dropped an unloaded pistol while leaving the scene. Sheriff's investigators have the .38-caliber pistol, Howard said.

Mills, and a 39-year-old Mills Street woman, and the two teen males, 17 and 18, from Buffalo, likely will be charged with at least four recent daylight home burglaries — three on Grand Island and one in Elma committed since early November, the sheriff said.

Rozansky said detectives also seized a backpack containing a pair of gloves and a hammer— now being tested—when arresting Mills.

During a mid-evening news conference at the County Public Safety Campus, deputies displayed the stolen sofa, four large flat-screen televisions, recording equipment, jewelry, laptop computers and a large telescope seized during Mills' arrest.

One of the break-ins that Mills is suspected of masterminding involved the theft of one family's entire trove of wrapped Christmas presents two weeks ago.

“He truly is the Grinch who stole Christmas,” Rozansky said.

Howard said detectives so far have determined that Mills and his associates would drive through local municipalities looking for isolated homes and go to the front door.

If someone came to the door, those involved on Grand Island, at least, would say they were lost and looking for the way to the casino in Niagara Falls, the sheriff said.

If they got no response, they would break open doors or windows and ransack that residence, looking to sell stolen property on Buffalo streets, the sheriff said.

A neighbor got the license plate number and description of the van being used in the attempted burglary Friday, which helped lead them to the burglary ring, the sheriff said.

“If you see something [suspicious],” Howard said, “say something [to law enforcement].”

Mills also is under investigation for a series of recent home break-ins as far east as Pembroke, Howard said, and detectives are working with area police agencies to try to trace the owners of much of the stolen property seized when Mills was arrested Wednesday afternoon.

The sheriff credited Rozansky and O'Hara and Detectives Daniel J. Granville, Timothy F. Carney and Warren K. Hawthorn and Deputy Shawn C. Young of the Evidence Bureau with breaking the investigation and taking part in Mills' arrest.