

Detectives return stolen pet bird, save Christmas

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Two El Paso Police Department Burglary Division detectives have helped an East Side woman "discover Christmas exists after all."

For a while, Ann Zotz thought the Grinch had stolen it.

Dec. 13, burglars broke into her home on Glen Campbell and made off with the family's bright-colored cockateel, Herbird.

Burglars had hit the home twice in the past several years. Even when burglars stole a television, hairdryer, stereo equipment and a telephone in the latest heist, Mrs. Zotz wasn't particularly bothered, because each item could be replaced.

However, the affectionate, whistling Herbird, the family's pet of five years, and two small ceramic horses given to her by a friend were personal losses.

But detectives Milton Duntley and Ed Lisowski helped Mrs. Zotz recover some of her lost Christmas spirit Dec. 16 when they arrested a man and two youths and recovered about \$10,000 worth of stolen property — including Herbird and other items taken from Mrs. Zotz's home.

Duntley said he and Lisowski cleared three East Side burglaries with the arrests. He said almost all the appliances, electronic gear, and tools taken in the burglaries were recovered and returned to their owners.

Charged with burglary were Mark Antonio Zuniga, 17, of 11384 Bob Mitchell, a J.M. Hanks High School student, and two juveniles 15 and 16 years old.

Apparently one of the juveniles had given Herbird to a friend. The bird later was recovered from a Ranchland area home, Duntley said.

Mrs. Zotz said she appreciated the return of her pet, especially when the detectives probably were working other cases at the same time.

"I think they took a personal interest in me," she said.

Mrs. Zotz sent a card to Duntley and Lisowski with a message that read: "I just want to thank you again for recovering Herbird and our belongings. It's amazing! — I suddenly discovered that Christmas exists after all. ... You saved us a lot of pain, anguish and money. Herbird is well and seems happier than ever. Your effort was far more than the call of duty demanded ... much lost sleep, vacation ... and we fully appreciate those sacrifices. May God bless both of you, and if we can ever do anything for you, please let us now. Stop by and visit Herbird sometime. Gratefully, Ann Zotz."