

McKownville hit

Three burglaries in one block

By Melissa Hale-Spencer

MCKOWNVILLE — Jewelry was stolen from three houses on the 1400 block of Western Avenue last Wednesday, according to the Guilderland Police.

No one was hurt and nothing but jewelry was taken, said Sergeant William Ward with the Guilderland Police.

front door. It was slightly ajar."

She didn't think anything of it at the time, though, because the woman who lived across the street babysat for the Harausz twins and was frequently in and out with them and her own child, going from one house to the other, said Harausz.

"At least a week later, it was

'They might pawn the stuff.'

One person was home at the time of the burglary but didn't realize someone was in the house, Ward said. All three of the burglarized homes were on the south side of Western Avenue.

Don Reeb, president of McKownville's neighborhood association, circulated an e-mail last week describing the burglar as "a white male, 6 feet tall, maybe 200 pounds."

Ward told *The Enterprise* this week that was an accurate description of a person that witnesses saw in the neighborhood last Wednesday.

"We can't say the person seen is involved in the burglary," said Ward.

"We've looked into our database here," said Ward. "We look for likely candidates that have done things in that part of town or western Albany."

Two witnesses gave similar descriptions, he said, of a person in the area Wednesday. Police will show those witnesses photographs of suspects generated by their database search, Ward said, to see if the witnesses can recognize one of them as the person seen on Wednesday.

"We'll see if we get lucky," he said.

Meanwhile, fingerprints have been sent to the Department of Criminal Justice Services, but the department's analysis could take a month or two, Ward said.

Also, he said, "They might pawn the stuff." Some of the jewelry was distinct enough to be identified, Ward said, declining to give any descriptions

Martha's birthday. She went to get out the good silver...It was wonderful antique silver; it had been her grandmother's...It was gone," he recalled.

It was then the Harauszes realized they had been burglarized.

"The State Police caught the guy," said Harausz. "They came and took fingerprints, even though it was more than a week later...The guy was living at the Tom Sawyer Motel. We live directly across from the Tom Sawyer," he said of what was then a modern motel, since torn down to make way for a new office and motel complex.

"He had a long arrest record and was accused of a number of other burglaries. He was put in prison for a long time...They never did find our silverware," said Harausz.

After that string of burglaries, the McKownville neighborhood-watch groups formed, he said.

"I doubt if they ever thwarted crime," said Harausz. But, he added, he and his wife have always felt safe in their home and still do.

"I love it here. Burglaries, crime can happen in any neighborhood...It's very open, very accessible here. Probably 1,000 cars an hour go by. I think it's a great environment to be in."

"Know your neighbors"

Ward said he was not aware of any neighborhood-watch groups currently active in Guilderland, although there have been some in the past.

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to give any descriptions

Déjà-vu

A quarter of a century ago, a similar string of burglaries spurred residents of McKownville to form their own neighborhood-watch groups. The signs announcing them have since come down but the sentiments remain.

McKownville is an established suburban neighborhood near the state university and close to the Albany city line.

"We look out for one another here," said Reeb. He said there had been three active neighborhood-watch groups — on Glenwood, Parkwood, and Elmwood.

"These things are going to happen from time to time in any neighborhood," said Reeb of burglaries.

Stephen Harausz isn't fazed by last week's burglaries in his neighborhood. He and his wife, Martha, have recently retired and are spending more time at home than ever before. They moved to their Glenwood home in 1975, he said.

Harausz remembers being burglarized 25 years ago as vividly as if it were yesterday.

He was in Albany, working. "Martha came home from teaching. She used the back door," he said. "She thought she heard someone going out the

"I always tell residents that the best thing they can do is know your neighbors. I ask, 'Do you know who lives next door?'"

Most times, said Ward, people don't.

"People are just too busy these days," he said. "A lot of times, they don't know their neighbors. A lot of times, with two-income families, parents don't even have time to talk to their kids.

"The best thing you can do," Ward said, from a police point of view, "is have neighbors talk to each other....The people are our eyes and ears when solving crimes.

"If they see anything strange in their neighborhood, they should tell us. They can take down a license-plate number and give us a call."

Asked if security systems or locks help prevent home burglaries, Ward said of the homes hit last Wednesday on Western Avenue, "Some were locked, some weren't."

He went on, "It's good to lock your house. But, if a person wants to get in your house, they'll get in."

He concluded of the McKownville burglaries, "We're working on it as diligently as we can. We're grateful for any information. And all information will be kept confidential."