

SUN-SENTINEL South Florida

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR CONFIRMS HUNCH

By

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When southern Palm Beach County started getting hit with a rash of jewelry heists in upscale, gated communities, private investigator Daniel Riemer figured it could mean only one thing.

The Dinnerset Gang is back.

Riemer's hunch was validated last week with the arrest of two men associated with the notorious gang — an extended family of professional jewel thieves who have bedeviled homeowners and rankled police hot on their trail throughout South Florida. The gang — dubbed the Dinnerset Gang because they slip into homes while the homeowners are at dinner — has been around since the 1960s.

Anthony Greulich, 49, and Dale McClain, 43, were arrested Dec. 6 after a homeowner in the Mizner Country Club west of Delray Beach noticed them walking across his backyard dressed in dark clothing, according to a Sheriff's Office report. Shortly afterward, a deputy stopped their 1993 white Cadillac and charged them with attempted burglary and possession of burglary tools.

Greulich told sheriff's Detective Juan Gonzalez that they came to Palm Beach County to commit burglaries, the report said. Gonzalez confirmed that the men are associated with the gang. When contacted at home, Greulich declined to comment. McClain could not be reached for comment.

McClain, of Davie, has seven arrests in Florida, including three on burglary charges, state records show. Greulich, of Hallandale, has 12 arrests in Florida, including five burglary charges.

Riemer chased the gang years ago while working as a sheriff's detective west of Delray Beach. Now retired from the force, he again is investigating them, this time for clients who have hired him. In October, a Delray Beach physician enlisted the private investigator's help to find out who robbed him of about half a million dollars worth of jewelry.

Dr. Ross Clark said a faulty deadbolt lock allowed the thieves to break into his home in the Addison Reserve development on Oct. 1. That same week, burglar alarms in two nearby homes were tripped, but no one broke in, he said. That's because the thieves likely were testing the Sheriff's Office's response time, Riemer said.

Clark said his alarm shows the thieves were inside his home for three minutes. They raided all of the couple's valuables, accumulated over 32 years, from bedroom closets, including a safe.

The men even carried the 80-pound safe out of the home. Clark said he donned scuba gear to look for the safe in the development's drainage lake. Sheriff's Office divers also searched, but couldn't find it.

"[The police] feel the stuff is out of the state," he said. "They should have had a task force long ago. All of these [thefts] have the same M.O."

While the gang has operated in South Florida since the 1960s, Riemer said his investigation shows they're active again in southern Palm Beach County, where police from different agencies have reported multiple burglaries. Gonzalez said they've had at least 17 jewelry thefts from upscale homes in the unincorporated areas of Delray Beach since July.

"We had a hunch it was them," he said.

Riemer said the Broken Sound development in Boca Raton also has been hit in recent months. Boca Raton police said only that they're investigating a rash of burglaries. So far, no arrests have been made.

Riemer told Clark that until police put surveillance on the Broward County thieves, they'll be unable to stop them. That's because they get in and out of homes quickly and are rarely caught in the act. McClain and Greulich were arrested only because of an alert resident, and because they were not caught with any stolen merchandise, they likely won't do any jail time.

Riemer said he tells clients not to keep their jewelry and valuables in dressers and closets in the master bedroom because it's the first place thieves look. He suggested keeping them in hidden locations throughout the house.

Many of the Dinnerset Gang's members are loosely related, and various factions have clashed in the past and no longer work together, Riemer said. In addition, the original members have passed on their know-how to the new generation of burglars, he said.

One of the gang's ringleaders, Peter Salerno, became a federal witness against a reputed Mob boss during the early 1980s. While testifying in court, Salerno admitted to at least 100 burglaries, some committed by swimming across the Intracoastal Waterway and scaling walls to get inside luxury homes. Salerno's son, Nick, also worked on heists with his father. Like other members, he was arrested and convicted.

Others gained access to waterfront mansions by approaching in inflatable rafts from the ocean side, and slipping in unnoticed while the owners hosted elegant dinner parties.

Another former leader of the gang, Walter T. Shaw, claims in his Web site to have committed more than 3,000 burglaries, netting more than \$70 million in stolen merchandise.

Shaw, a self-described "mob-connected master jewel thief," says he retired from that life in 1993 after serving 11 years in prison and has reformed. He said he now helps people avoid falling victim to jewel thieves, and has made an instructional videotape on the subject.