Sheriff: Taxi Driver made up story

Sharon Strauss  Jan 19, 2008

ADA COUNTY - Reports made by Boise City Taxi driver Mary Jo Stolle that she was kidnapped and assaulted by a fare are false, according to Ada County sheriff's investigators.

The Boise cab driver had a history of weaving a web of similar false crime reports from New York to the western states, Sheriff Gary Raney said Friday. Stolle may
face charges of filing a false report of a crime, a misdemeanor that could cost her six months in jail or a $300 fine.

Through their investigation, detectives determined no violent crime had been committed and that the report was unfounded.

"After meeting today with sheriff's Detective Craig Durrell, Boise City Taxi supports this conclusion," Mike Murphy, a manager of Boise City Taxi, said Friday.

Stolle had been on the job only about 12 days when she reported being kidnapped, beaten and robbed after picking up a fare the night of Jan. 7. She had claimed the male passenger tried to rape her before putting her in the trunk of her taxi.

"For the life of me, I can't even begin to guess," Murphy said when asked by the Idaho Press-Tribune why Stolle may have fabricated the incident. "As an independent contractor, the only one she would be stealing from is herself. Perhaps she's just looking for attention."

Murphy screened Stolle before she was hired.

"She really struck me as a decent, solid person trying to earn a living," he said. Just like every independent contractor hired, Stolle completed state and federal criminal and background checks.

Stolle, a Boise resident in her mid-40s, told police she was kidnapped at knifepoint and forced into the trunk of her taxi in Kuna. The woman had said she was able to call Boise City Taxi to report the incident by using a cell phone she had inside her jacket pocket. She appeared to have suffered a bruise to her face and a 3- to 4-inch cut to the side of her neck during the incident.

The wounds were real, but Raney would not comment about whether they were self-inflicted. The bruises did provide an important clue for investigators using forensics techniques, he said. "The timing of their appearance and the specifics of what a bruise looks like were not consistent with the crime she was describing," Raney said.
Detectives follow clues

In addition to the bruising, other clues led investigators to believe the crime never occurred.

"One of the suspicious things was finding other reports in other jurisdictions across the U.S. that were surprisingly similar in circumstances," Raney said. "At least one had been disproven as a false report."

Raney said Stolle was linked to four other strikingly similar reports. About five years ago, she made similar claims in Las Vegas.

"The circumstances with that one in particular were extremely similar to this one," he said. "The vehicle, the story, the evidence - overly coincidental similarities."

Detectives received dozens of tips from the public after releasing a composite sketch of Stolle's alleged attacker.

Raney said this case has left him "puzzled and disappointed" and worried that the woman's story would make people less willing to call in tips in the future when police need help cracking a case.

"We want to make sure this doesn't desensitize this community about the terrible crime and rape and kidnapping," he said. "We want to express our appreciation of the dozens of calls that came in with very legitimate tips. That is the way we solve crimes when they are real. It could have been a legitimate crime and we appreciate those calls."

Woman reports assault

Stolle had told police that the incident began sometime between 10 and 11 p.m. after dropping off a passenger at a South Vista Avenue business. She said a man walking from a nearby alley flagged her down and asked to be driven to a bar in Kuna.
According to her report, during the drive, the passenger disabled the dispatch radio and destroyed the connection. He then pulled out a knife, placed it to her neck and demanded that she drive through Kuna to Swan Falls Road, where he told her to pull over.

She said the man forced her to the floor of the taxi and pulled the car off the road, then forced Stolle out of the car. He aggressively tugged at her clothing and touched her before forcing her into the trunk, she told police.

The woman reported hearing the man call someone for a ride, and then a vehicle arrived about 5 to 10 minutes later and the man left the area. That's when she said she called her employer to report the incident.

"Boise City Taxi has cooperated fully and freely with the Ada County sheriff's department during every stage of this investigation," Murphy said. "We would like to remind the public of the valuable service the taxi industry provides to the community, and that while this incident appears to have never happened, crime against taxicab drivers is very real and increasing in frequency in our community as it continues to grow."