The Herald

Rape report that roiled Appalachian State was a hoax, police say

By Mark Washburn - mwashburn@charlotteobserver.com

September 18, 2014 02:21 PM
Updated March 02, 2015 05:32 PM

A violent rape reported last week by a student at Appalachian State University was a hoax, authorities said Thursday.

“It has been determined that the incident did not occur and there is no ongoing threat to the university community,” ASU police said in a statement.

Shortly before midnight Sept. 8, campus police received a report from a woman who said she was struck, choked and raped on Greenwood Trail behind a group of tennis courts near Kidd Brewer Stadium on the ASU campus.

She told investigators the attack occurred about 1 p.m. Aug. 29. She gave a detailed description of the assailant, saying he was white, mid-20s, 6 feet tall and 200 pounds, with light brown hair and green eyes. She said he had a buzz-style haircut, scruffy beard and sleeve tattoos on both arms, shoulder to elbow, police reported.

No reason was publicly given for the weeklong delay between the alleged attack and the time it was reported, but the woman came forward after there was abundant publicity about a missing ASU freshman, Anna Smith.

Authorities searched for Smith for 11 days until her remains were found Saturday morning in a rugged thicket at the edge of campus after a neighbor noticed a suspicious odor. Smith, who had been emotionally troubled in her first weeks of college, left behind a note, and her death appears to be a suicide by hanging.

Because both mysteries came at the same time, they rattled the campus of about 18,000 students and the surrounding community of Boone, where high-profile crimes rarely occur. Statistically, for both violent and property crimes, Boone is one of the safest cities in North Carolina, ranking with wealthy suburban Charlotte towns such as Matthews, Mint Hill, Huntersville and Cornelius, according to FBI crime numbers.

With a population of 17,000, Boone reported four rapes last year and six robberies. Through July this year, it reported six rapes and six robberies.

Campus police, assisted in the investigation of the rape by the State Bureau of Investigation, said Thursday their findings would be forwarded to the Watauga County District Attorney’s Office, which would decide whether criminal charges are brought for filing a false report to law enforcement.
Meanwhile, in the Smith case, a service is scheduled for the 18-year-old High Point woman at 7 p.m. Friday at Archdale United Methodist Church. A drive on the website GoFundMe.com to raise money to help Smith's parents defray expenses has raised more than $15,000.

https://www.heraldonline.com/latest-news/article11575271.html