



\$10K Bond For Broward Man Charged With Arson

Bond was set at \$10-thousand for the man accused of intentionally setting a fire at his Broward duplex.

Michael Grider appeared in bond court in Fort Lauderdale Sunday charged with first-degree arson. Grider was arrested after he allegedly started a fire that destroyed half of his duplex in Wilton Manors on Saturday.

The owner of the duplex, Barclay Garnett, said Grider set the fire after he served him an eviction notice.

"He just had a meltdown," Garnett said. "He's very frustrated with the system; not being able to practice law. I think it just really took a toll on him."

Neighbors said Grider used to be a lawyer in Georgia, but the Georgia bar said he resigned. In the meantime, Grider was said to be trying to pass the Florida bar exam, but things weren't going well.

Witnesses said they saw his apartment on fire and then spotted him in his kayak in the water behind the duplex.

When neighbor Robert Jankowski asked him if he knew his house was on fire, Grider replied "yeah." When the same neighbor asked him if he set it on fire, Grider replied, "yeah."

The fire caused extensive damage to the side of the duplex Grider lives in.

No one was injured in the blaze, but a neighbor rescued some dogs that were in danger.

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NEWS

Police search for bank robber

Police are searching for a man who robbed a South Florida bank.

The bank robbery occurred at the Iberia Bank near Northeast 10th Street and North Federal Highway.

The FBI released a photo of a man wearing a cap as walked into the bank and demanded cash.

The man escaped with an undisclosed amount of money.

If you have any information on this robbery, call Broward County Crime Stoppers at 954-493-TIPS. Remember, you can always remain anonymous, and you may be eligible for a reward.

Boy, 6, in critical condition after Pompano crash

Witnesses: speeding is a problem

A six-year-old boy was taken to Broward General Medical Center Sunday in critical condition after a car and scooter accident in Pompano Beach, Broward Sheriff's deputies said.

The accident happened near 800 NW 5th Ave. at around 1:40 p.m. Five people were taken to an area hospital after two cars crashed, hitting a child riding a scooter on the sidewalk, BSO said.

Several witnesses said speeding on the street has been a problem.

One dead, two critical in Pompano crash

Suspected driver faces multiple charges

A Miami woman was killed and two others critically injured following an early morning crash on Atlantic Boulevard in Pompano Beach.

At 12:35 a.m., Broward Sheriff's Office deputies and Pompano Beach Fire Rescue were dispatched to the 800 block of West Atlantic Boulevard after an SUV T-boned a passenger car. An eastbound 2007 Lexus SUV, driven by Jason Morgan, 37, of 3205 NE 8 Ct. #C2 Pompano Beach struck the driver's side of a 2000 Honda Accord, driven by Mary Hart, 22, of Miami. Hart was exiting the northbound off-ramp from Interstate 95 onto Atlantic Boulevard when her car was struck by Morgan's car.

Hart's passenger, Rudolf Georgeon, 24, of North Miami Beach, and Morgan's passenger, Lori Bardol, 35, of Coral Springs, were transported by Pompano Beach Fire Rescue to North Broward Medical Center with critical injuries. Hart was pronounced dead on the scene by paramedics.

Morgan was charged with one count of DUI manslaughter, two counts each of DUI with serious bodily injury and DUI causing property damage and one count of driving with a suspended license. He is being held in the BSO Main Jail in Ft. Lauderdale. BSO Traffic Homicide Unit detectives are asking that anyone who may have witnessed the crash to call BSO Traffic Homicide Unit Det. Carlos DeJesus at 954-321-4840 or Broward Crime Stoppers, anonymously, at 954-493-TIPS (8477), or online at www.browardcrimestoppers.org.

Suspect faces more allegations

A man already behind bars accused of shooting a cab driver could now face murder charges in a separate case involving the shooting death of a businessman.

Semie Robinson went before Broward Circuit Court Judge John Hurley Thursday morning. "Sir, you have been charged with first degree premeditated murder," the judge said.

Broward Sheriff's Office deputies first arrested Robinson in December for the attempted murder of a cab driver. The 30-year-old is now accused of stabbing Russell Buddie to death back in November. "He had the biggest heart in the world. He'd give you his last dollar and the shirt off his back," said Tom Buddie, the victim's brother.

Family members said the 53-year-old arrived to work early, as he always did, to open the family's air conditioning business. Buddie's father said he found him in a pool of blood. "He's my son, only son. He runs RNT Air conditioning, and I run Atlantic Supply, and we're right

Smoke, fog cause deadly crashes on I-75



The Florida Highway Patrol says 10 people have died in a series of early-morning crashes on a dark highway that was shrouded in haze and smoke.

A long line of cars and trucks collided one after another early Sunday on a dark Florida highway so shrouded in haze and smoke that drivers were virtually blinded. At least 10 people were killed.

Visibility was so poor that when rescuers first arrived, they could only listen for screams and moans to locate victims, police said. At least 18 people were hurt in the crash that occurred around 4 a.m., Florida Highway Patrol said.

Authorities were still trying to determine what caused the pileup south of Gainesville on Interstate 75 and mile marker 379, which had been closed for a time because of the mixture of fog and heavy smoke from a brush fire that may have been intentionally set. At least 12 cars and seven tractor-trailers were involved, and some burst into flame.

Photographs of the scene revealed a gruesome aftermath, with twisted, burned-out vehicles scattered across the pavement and smoke still rising above the wreckage. Cars appeared to have smashed into the big rigs and, in one case, a motor home. Some cars were crushed beneath the heavier trucks.

Reporters who were allowed to view the site saw one tractor-trailer that was burned down to its skeleton, charred pages of books and magazines in its cargo area. Bodies were still visible inside a burned-out Grand Prix. The rubber on the tires of every vehicle had burned away, leaving only steel belts.

State police estimated that wreckage was strewn for nearly a mile in both directions.

FHP advises drivers using northbound 75 to exit at the CR 318 exit which is near the 368 mile marker, then travel east until they get to US 441, and travel can resume northbound. For travelers using southbound Interstate 75, they will be required to exit at the Williston Road exit which is the 382 mile marker. Travelers can then travel west to US 27, to resume travel southbound.

Steven R. Camps, 23, of Gainesville, said he and some friends were driving home early Sunday morning in separate vehicles.

His friend was ahead of them as they headed toward Gainesville on Interstate 75 and called to warn them of heavy fog and smoke. The friend told Camps he had just seen an accident and warned them to be careful as they approached the Paynes Prairie area just south of Gainesville.

A short time later, Camps said traffic stopped along the

northbound lanes because of heavy smoke and fog.

"You couldn't see anything. People were pulling off the road," he said.

Camps said he and his friend began talking to a man in the car stopped next to them about the road conditions, when another vehicle hit them man's car.

Camps said the man's vehicle was crushed under a semi-truck stopped in front of them. Camps said his car was hit twice, but he and his friend were able to jump out. They took cover in the grass on the shoulder of the road.

"You could hear cars hitting each other. People were crying. People were screaming. It was crazy," he said. "If I could give you an idea of what it looked like, I would say it looked like the end of world."

He said cars and trucks were on fire and they could hear explosions as the vehicles burned.

"It was happening on both sides of the road, so there was nowhere to go. It blew my mind," he said. "It was like a war zone. It literally looked like someone was picking up cars and throwing them."

At least 18 people were treated at an area hospital.

Dr. Timothy Flynn, chief medical officer for Shands Healthcare at the University of Florida, said three of the six patients being treated in the trauma center needed surgery. Four patients remain in the hospital's emergency room, and eight people have been treated and released.

Flynn said most people had head and chest injuries or broken bones. Those treated at the trauma center had the most serious injuries.

All six lanes of the interstate -- which runs virtually the entire length of Florida -- remained closed at midday as investigators surveyed the site and firefighters sprayed foam on the wreckage to put out the last of the fires.

It was not clear when the highway would reopen because part of the road melted, Florida Highway Patrol Lt. Patrick Riordan said. That means transportation inspectors have to first sign off on the road before it can open to traffic again.

At some point before the pileup, police briefly closed the highway because of the fog and smoke, which came from a fire in the Paynes Prairie area south of Gainesville. The road was reopened when visibility improved.

Riordan said he was not sure how much time passed between the reopening of the highway and the first crash.

Traffic was being diverted onto U.S. 301 and State Road 27, Riordan said.

Authorities were still trying to determine what caused the pileup south of Gainesville on Interstate 75 and mile marker 379, which had been closed for a time because of the mixture of fog and heavy smoke.

Son bleached Pompano mother's murder scene

Pompano man facing first-degree murder charges in beating death of mother

A Pompano Beach man charged with beating his mother to death tried to clean the gruesome scene up with bleach, according to the arrest report read by a judge Friday.

Danny Martin, 30, is facing first-degree murder charges in the beating death of his mother, 48-year-old Heidi Mittica.

He was ordered held without bond in his first appearance in Broward court Friday.

Mittica's body was found Wednesday in the apartment she and Martin shared in the 100 block of N. Pompano Beach Boulevard after she didn't show up for work.

Mittica was "unresponsive on the floor, wrapped in a blanket, she had blood and bruising to her face," Broward Circuit Judge Jay Hurley said, reading from the arrest report. "She was pronounced dead by EMS on the scene a short time later."

Neighbors said they had heard a commotion coming from the apartment the night before, and witnesses said they saw Martin coming and going, Hurley said.

Another neighbor who was walking their dog also noticed a bleach smell coming from the apartment.

"It is alleged that you attempted to clean up the crime scene where there was blood with bleach on the couch, on the floor," Hurley said.



Danny Martin

Police say Martin fled the scene in Mittica's BMW, and was later found in the car in Boca Raton. Inside the car were garbage bags consistent with the crime scene cleanup, Hurley said.

Martin had cuts on his face and hands as well as bruises on his hands sustained during the beating of Mittica, authorities said. Mittica had defensive wounds on her body, Hurley said.

Hurley said the coroner determined the cause of death to be blunt force trauma.

Martin was being held without bond and said in court he had no attorney.

Human skull found by teens in Hollywood lake Saturday

Officials have confirmed the skull discovered by two teens is that of a human.

Hollywood Police crime scene investigators returned to the scene of a disturbing discovery Monday morning and are searching for other body parts.

According to authorities, two teens found remains resembling a human skull near Douglas Street and North 56th Avenue in Hollywood, Saturday afternoon. The remains were taken to the Broward County Medical Examiner's office for tests, and officials have confirmed that it is a human skull.

One of the teen's mother said she believes the skull could be that of a child because of its size. "They were like, 'Mom, come in the backyard, we have something to show you.' He brought this skull home, and we called the cops and that was it," said Brandy Fischer.

Fischer said the teens were trying to clean up the murky lake when they removed a shopping cart, and then discovered the skull, which was inside of a clay pot.

Police are staying on the scene to preserve the area for further investigation.

Home sales down in December

Pending home sales plunged again in December, according to the National Association of Realtors®.

The Pending Home Sales Index,* a forward-looking indicator based on contract signings, dropped 3.5 percent to 96.6 in December from 100.1 in November. The data reflects contracts but not closings.

Pending home sales in the South slipped 2.6 percent to an index of 101.1 in December.

The Fog of War

Pompano Pioneers
by Bud Garner



A telephone call to Oscar Johnson of Pompano Beach in August 1998 from a person with a strong, barely understandable accent re-opened an episode that had remained out of his mind since Johnson's bomber was shot down from 32,000 feet and captured by German soldiers outside of Hamburg, Germany on December 31, 1944.

Oscar K. Johnson was born and raised in Pompano, the son of a pioneer family among the original settlers in the area near the turn of the century. Oscar was attending Pompano high school when WWII erupted in 1941. Upon reaching the age of 17 years, Oscar joined the Army Air Corp with hopes of becoming a pilot. Because the quota for cadet training was filled, Oscar trained as an air crewman, attended gunnery school in Arizona and became a ball-turret gunner on a B-17 four engine bomber.

After training, he was stationed in England. Oscar says, "On our 24th mission, returning from a raid on Hamburg, we were attacked by German F/W 190 fighters." After an initial flurry of fighter runs and after Oscar believed he had destroyed two of them from the ball turret, he saw a fire had started in the wheel-well of the #2 engine which was visible only to him at this time.

His report on the intercom of the fire resulted in the order by the pilot to bail-out. He depressed his twin 50 caliber guns which allowed him to climb out of the turret and back into the plane, he says he snapped on his chute and jumped out of the rear exit door into that minus 20 degree air.

"All the crew made it safely out, except the pilot and co-pilot. They were still in the plane when it exploded. I thought they were dead," Oscar recalled. But later on they showed up in a POW camp alive and well, having both been

blown out of and clear of the plane.

Floating to the ground, Oscar was concerned with the German fighters that circled around him and the other crew members as they drifted down in their parachutes. The German fighters left only after the bomber's escort of P-47s arrived and drove them off. Reaching the ground, the crew was quickly rounded-up by German soldiers and trucked off to a stockade.

After spending the remainder of the war in a POW camp, Stalag 15, Oscar was liberated by the American Army at the end of hostilities. He, along with some of his crew members were moved around, and eventually flown to camp Lucky-Strike in La-Harve France, and there by chance, he met up with a Pompano native and good friend, Bill McClellan, also an air crewman on a bomber who was returning home after being shot down, wounded and held as a POW.

Oscar said he was the first person he had met that he knew since going overseas. Johnson and McClellan returned to the States and on to the separation center and finally they returned to Pompano together.

Oscar returned to school and continued on with his life. It was after receiving this phone

Addressed like this it came to the Post Office in Pompano Beach. The letter delivered to City Hall, and a letter was sent to the American Legion Post #142. In turn, the Legion got in touch with Oscar and this letter is in his possession along with a letter from the Department of the Army in Belgium.

The Army sent a letter to Oscar with 20 questions and expressed a desire to write a story for the local military newspaper, it being such a unique story and one that must be preserved for history. (Jean Blum had contacted them in 1995 and had apparently turned over the "portfolio" to them and they had sent them to Oscar hence, their knowledge of these happenings.)

The letter that Jean Blum sent to Oscar through the City of Pompano follows:

Sir,
I accidentally enter into possession of a portfolio having been the ownership of an American soldier of the World War 1940/1945. Staff Sergeant Oscar Kelly Johnson 14185089. Enlisted in Air Corp on 19th August, 1943 Army Air Force, Miami, 6 Florida. Citation for meritorious achievement while participating in heavy (sic) bombardment over continental Europe 350th Bombardment Squadron (H) 100th Group (H) signed by command of Major General Partridge F.E. Fitzpatrick, Capt. Air Corp Assist. Adjutant General N.B. Harold Brigadier General USA Chief of Staff

As civilian, this courageous boy was: Johnson, Oscar, Kelly. Serial # 14 185 089 Address Pompano Florida. Student, 17 years of age in 1943. Green Eyes-brown hair-ruddy complexion-66 inches in height.

As I go into all the details, I hope you are able to do what is necessary to know what has become of him or his family.

Jean Blum.