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The Herald www.herald.com WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2001 SECTION B

TODAY IN OUR INTERNET EDITION
BREAKING NEWS CONTINUOUSLY UPDATED

THE KEYS

KEYS BRIEFS

KEY LARGO

PAIR BUM CIGARETTE, THEN DEMAND WALLET

BY LISA FUSS
lfuss@herald.com

A man walking on Ocean Bay Drive was robbed at gunpoint Monday.

The victim was walking down the street smoking when a car with two young men inside pulled up and asked him for a cigarette, police said.

When the victim walked over to hand the cigarette to them, one of the men pointed a gun at him and demanded his wallet. The victim handed over his wallet, ran from the scene and called police from a nearby pay phone.

The suspects are believed to be driving an older-model black four-door Ford. The passenger is described as a man in his early 20s with a thin build, mustache and pale skin wearing blue jeans, a white T-shirt and a Miami Hurricanes jacket. He was carrying a small semi-automatic handgun with a chrome or nickel-plated finish.

A description of the driver was unavailable.

BIG COPPITT KEY

SIX CHILDREN ADMIT BREAKING INTO TRAILER

Six youths were arrested Monday after they told police they broke into a trailer and ransacked a storage shed.

The children, who were all between the ages of 9 and 12, were charged with burglary and criminal mischief.

Police said the children admitted to breaking into a storage shed and stealing a key to a nearby trailer last weekend. The youths said they entered the trailer and "set up house" inside, bringing cots, televisions, bed cushions and tools. They also cooked food and set off a fire extinguisher in the shed.

MARATHON

SOBRIETY STOPS SET FOR SATURDAY NIGHT

The Monroe County Sheriff's Office will conduct a sobriety checkpoint in Marathon this weekend.

Deputies will stop vehicles in the parking lot of a Marathon business on U.S. 1 between 11:30 p.m. Saturday and 5 a.m. Sunday. They will also check cars for safety violations.

MIAMI

LOBSTER TRAP CUTS SUBJECT OF MEETING

Officials from Monroe County Commercial Fishermen are urging spiny lobster fishermen to attend Thursday's Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting in Miami.

Commission staff will take public comment on lobster trap reductions starting at 9 a.m. at the Radisson Mart Plaza Hotel, 711 NW 72nd Ave.

Greg DiDomenico, executive director of Monroe County Commercial Fishermen, says state officials are considering whether to further reduce the number of lobster traps in Florida Keys waters.

COLORFUL CRAFTWORK

POLLY GETS A PAINT JOB

LISA FUSS/HERALD STAFF

Artist Cindy Hamilton braves Tuesday's chilly weather to paint a parrot carving at the Carvers Lair on Cudjoe Key. Hamilton's work – which includes wood carvings of fish, birds and nautical scenes – is displayed for sale along U.S. 1 near mile marker 22.

Suspect jailed in woman's beating

Man vowed to kill officer

BY LISA FUSS
lfuss@herald.com

MARATHON — A domestic dispute at a Marathon motel evolved into a manhunt involving law enforcement authorities from five agencies after the fleeing suspect vowed to kill any police officer who stood in his way.

A four-hour search of Marathon's streets and shorelines ended Monday when a Homestead Police Department K-9 dog found Kent Michael Kearney hiding in woods behind Gulfside Village shopping center.

Kearney, 38, had been wanted by police after his girlfriend, Melissa Ann Conner, told authorities that he had beat her for four days at the Sea Cove Motel in Marathon, police said.

It was not until after Kearney's arrest, however, that investigators learned of his lengthy criminal background. At the time of his capture Monday, Kearney was driving a black 1997 Ford F-250 pickup that police said he had stolen in Georgia. The convicted felon also was armed with a handgun.

Details of Kearney's past crimes, which reportedly took place outside of Florida, were unavailable Tuesday.

Conner, 31, also was wanted on an outstanding Tennessee warrant for violation of parole and possession of smuggled goods in jail. Police arrested Conner on the outstanding warrant Monday.

The manhunt began about 6 p.m. Monday when Conner told deputies that she had been beaten for days. Conner said Kearney threatened to kill her if she called police and warned that he would kill an officer to keep from going to jail.

Kearney's threats "certainly made it a high-profile case for us," said Becky Herrin, spokeswoman for the Monroe County Sheriff's Office. "We knew he was armed, so that especially put everyone on alert."

It was not long before deputies spotted Kearney's truck with three men inside near 39th Street. Police attempted to pull the truck over after the men stopped at a liquor store but they fled north on U.S. 1, at one point driving on the sidewalk before turning into Gulfside Village.

Kearney, who was at the wheel, drove behind the shopping plaza, jumped out of the truck and fled into nearby woods. The two men with Kearney surrendered and were arrested.

Baby Sam's biological dad settles suit

TAMPA — (AP) — The biological father of a 4-year-old boy at the heart of an interstate custody battle has settled his lawsuit against the adoption agency that placed the child with an Alabama couple.

The agreement includes a confidential lump sum cash payment, said Clearwater lawyer Lawrence H. Liebling, representing biological father Christopher Vietri of New Port Richey in what has become known as the Baby Sam case.

But the question of who will raise the child — Joseph Samuel Johnson — has yet to be worked out. The two families are working with the Alabama courts to try to reach a compromise.

Vietri settled with Adoption By Choice during the weekend, just before trial was to begin in Tampa on Monday.

Vietri sued in 1998, contending adoption proceedings were started without his consent and sought to end his parental rights.

Liebling said Vietri is "very satisfied with the settlement and looking forward to moving on."

ARTS CALENDAR

MUSIC

Today
- Mike Lee, 7 to 11 p.m., Durty Harry's, Key West.
- Gary Blodgett, 3 to 7 p.m., and Lenny, 7 p.m. to midnight, Rick's Bar, Key West.
- Eddie Kirkland, 9 p.m., The Hurricane, Marathon.

Thursday
- Duo, 7 to 11 p.m., Durty Harry's, Key West.
- Barry Cuda, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Lenny, 3 to 7 p.m.; and Steven Neil, 7 p.m. to midnight, Rick's Bar, Key West.
- The Smokin' Section Band, 9 p.m., The Hurricane, Marathon.

Friday
- Barry Cuda, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Lenny, 3 to 7 p.m.; and Steven Neil, 7 p.m. to midnight, Rick's Bar, Key West.
- The Smokin' Section Band, 9 p.m., The Hurricane, Marathon.

Saturday
- Marl, 9 p.m. to midnight, Durty Harry's, Key West.
- Barry Cuda, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Lenny, 3 to 7 p.m.; and Steven Neil, 7 p.m. to midnight, Rick's Bar, Key West.
- The Smokin' Section Band, 9 p.m., The Hurricane, Marathon.
- Hooked on Classics free concert, presented by Keys Community Concert Band at Founders Park, mile marker 87, 4:30 p.m. Call 305-853-7294.

Sunday
- Barry Cuda, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Gary Blodgett, 3 to 6 p.m., Rick's Bar, Key West.
- Sunday Night Jam, 9 p.m., The Hurricane, Marathon.
- Drummer Hal Howland and guitarist Joshua Breakstone join bassist Lonnie Jacobson, 9 p.m., Virgilio's, 524 Duval St., Key West. Call 305-296-8118.

Monday
- Duo, 7 to 11 p.m., Durty Harry's, Key West.
- Gary Blodgett, 3 to 7 p.m., and Steven Neil, 7 p.m. to midnight, Rick's Bar, Key West.

ART
- Showcase artist VeEtta Baldwin's scratch artwork at Artists in Paradise Gallery, Winn-Dixie Shopping Center, Big Pine Key, through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Call 305-872-1828.

PERFORMANCE

Today
- Tango Mujer, an all-female international tango ensemble, Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center, College Road, Stock Island. Tickets are $27 to $45. Call 305-296-1520.

LENDING A HELPING HAND

Crew members of the 110-foot Coast Guard cutter Nantucket recently volunteered their services to the Wesley House, a subsidized child-care facility in Key West. The group spent a full day cleaning up and assisting with maintenance duties.

EDITOR: JAY DUCASSI jducassi@herald.com 1-800-HERALD-5 ext. 3557

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