

Four arrested in POINT operation

Itemizer-Observer staff report

POLK COUNTY — On Dec. 14, detectives from the Polk Interagency Narcotics Team concluded a five-month long investigation into the illegal distribution of heroin and methamphetamine.



Rodriguez

The investigation concluded with a traffic stop by the Oregon State Police in Salem, where investigators seized a total of \$31,229 in cash, 1,572.1 grams (3.4 pounds) of methamphetamine, 0.9 grams of cocaine and a residue amount of heroin from Felipe Rodriguez and Ronald Selby.

The investigation also led to the seizure of five safes in which investigators seized 9 mm, 40 caliber and 44 caliber ammunition, drug records, drug use paraphernalia and a shirt for concealed carry of a firearm.

No firearms were seized as a result of the investigation. The following subjects were arrested and charged with the following crimes:

Felipe Rodriguez Jr., 33, possession of methamphetamine — super-substantial quantity; possession of cocaine; delivery of methamphetamine — super-substantial quantity; two counts of delivery of heroin — substantial quantity; possession of heroin — substantial quantity; and probation violation.

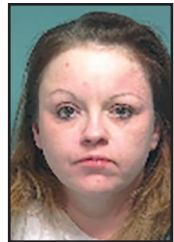
Ronald Selby, 48, possession of methamphetamine — super-substantial quantity; and delivery of methamphetamine — super-substantial quantity.

Monique Somora, 33, hindering prosecution and tampering with evidence.

Jesse Ayala, 48, possession of heroin.



Selby



Somora

POINT is a cooperative effort between law enforcement agencies within Polk County with a mission to directly impact the negative effects of unlawful activities involving controlled substances within all jurisdictions of the Polk County community. POINT member agencies include the Polk County Sheriff's Office, Oregon State Police, Monmouth Police Department, Independence Police Department, Dallas Police Department and the Polk County District Attorney's Office.

Other agencies that assisted POINT with this investigation include the Salem Police Street Crimes Unit, Dallas Police Department and Polk County Sheriff's Office.



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Three Dallas Fire & EMS firefighters returned home Dec. 20 after more than two weeks battling fires in California.

Dallas fire returns from Cali

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Dallas firefighter Zach Leigh wore a T-shirt emblazoned with the words "SoCal Ablaze."

He should know — he and two other Dallas firefighters returned on Dec. 20 from a 16-day trip fighting the wildfires in California.

Leigh, Jesse Friedow and Austin Champ drove thousands of miles in a Southwest Polk fire engine to join the Linn County Taskforce assisting with the battle on the Creek and Lilac fires. Then they moved to the Thomas Fire, which is the second largest in California history, burning in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.

The Thomas Fire burned 272,800 acres and was 65 percent contained as of Friday, according to Cal Fire.

The crew left on Dec. 5, after a multi-state conflagration began that pulled fire crews from the across the

West to the aid of California firefighters.

Dallas Chief Fred Hertel said the system is similar to what happened during the Chetco and Eagle Creek fires in Oregon this year, but at a multi-state level.

"Never thought I'd see one of our trucks down near the Mexico border," Hertel said. "They were in San Diego."

Friedow said the fires were like nothing they had seen in Oregon, noting the dryness, how easily plants burn, and the winds that push fires to consume acres at an unbelievable pace.

"Other than rock, there's nothing there that's not going to burn," Leigh said. "It's all dry."

Leigh said he was on a fire line at night during one of the crew's shifts watching the glow of fire burning on the other side of a ridge. Firefighters on the line debated whether it would creep over the ridge.

He said one ember

jumped over the top. It ignited and blazed back up the hill toward the fire over the ridge.

"That one little spot, once it flared ... I bet it burned 40 acres in 20 minutes, just poof, gone," Leigh said.

"It kept doing that throughout the night. It would spot down and then burn up," Friedow added.

Fast moving winds didn't help matters. Leigh said fighting a fire in Santa Barbara was complicated by "sundowners," an offshore wind that develops in the late afternoon or early evening.

"(They're) similar to Santa Anas, but they called them sundowners," Leigh said. "There would be nothing and five minutes later, there would be a 30-mph wind."

Friedow said he was apprehensive when he got the call to head south. He knew the conditions would be unfamiliar.

"It was a little bit of disbe-

lief in the beginning because, you know, it's December," he said. "On the way down there, it was kind of nerve-racking because it's a different place you are going to where they have different fuels, different everything. I spent a lot of time on our way down researching about the fire activity."

Leigh said though the timing around the holiday was inconvenient, he was happy to help the residents and fire crews in California.

"I'm glad I got to go on this one because I learned a ton on it," he said.

Back at home, the three-man crew was exhausted and happy to return before Christmas.

A welcome party gathered at the Dallas Fire Station to greet them after their long trip home and help them unpack the engine.

"Thankfully, I got my Christmas shopping done," Friedow said. "The joy of technology."

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