

Woman charged with making false rape report to UGA police

Posted: Saturday, February 03, 2001

By Stephen Gurr
Staff Writer

University of Georgia police charged an 18-year-old woman Friday with making a false report of rape at a UGA family housing unit.

Officials said Shannon Gresham, a non-student who was living with a relative at a unit on Rogers Road, created an unnecessary scare on campus when she claimed she was sexually assaulted by a stranger Wednesday morning.

"You have somebody who makes a false report that may scare the daylights out of a lot of people in the community," said UGA Police Chief Chuck Horton. "It takes up our time, the public gets scared, and I'd just as soon folks not do that."

Gresham is charged with false report of a crime, a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail or a \$1,000 fine.

Women are rarely charged with falsely reporting rape, local authorities said. A UGA student who several years ago falsely reported she was abducted and raped near the campus track was not prosecuted, though authorities did move quickly to make the information in the case public.

Athens-Clarke Police Lt. W.J. Smith, a veteran rape investigator, said he could not recall police ever charging a woman with falsely reporting rape.

"We have had what we believed to be false reports in the past, but I don't think I've ever filed charges," Smith said.

Gresham initially told police she was attacked inside the home at about 11 a.m. Wednesday by a stranger who pushed her down and raped her before

fleeing. Horton said after investigating the claims, police found some inconsistencies in Gresham's story.

"She did later confess that it didn't happen," Horton said. "She was with somebody she knew, but it was no rape."

Horton said he had an idea of the girl's motivation in filing the false report, but would not elaborate.

Wednesday's report created a stir in the family housing community, with housing officials distributing flyers and the incident receiving prominent play in Friday's editions of The Red & Black, the student-run and privately operated campus newspaper.

"We ended up with a number of phone calls from some very nervous students worried about their safety," said Ken Goyen, UGA's manager of public housing.

Goyen said officials distributed a second flyer Friday informing residents that the report was false.

Both flyers included safety tips for students.

"It served at least to remind folks of some things they may not think about, even though it's frustrating, because people's hearts are beating a little faster when they shouldn't be," Goyen said.

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