

Police: Woman Made Up Rape-kidnap Story

Police: Rape-kidnap Claim Was Phony Police: Woman's Kidnap Claim Was Phony Woman's Abduction Said To Be A Hoax

August 29, 1999|By DANIELA ALTIMARI And PHIL LEMOS; Courant Staff Writers

WEST HARTFORD — A local woman's shocking tale of being sexually assaulted and kidnapped was unmasked as an elaborate hoax she staged to win custody of an acquaintance's children, police said.

Lois A. Morin, 37, was charged Friday night with falsely reporting an incident, making a false statement and fabricating physical evidence. She was being held for an appearance in West Hartford Superior Court, scheduled for Monday.

Police said her fantastic, frightening allegations began unraveling almost immediately after she was found, bound with duct tape and apparently beaten, along a riverbank in Canton shortly after noon on Tuesday.

Conscious but somewhat incoherent, Morin told police that three masked men had entered her house on Newington Road, blindfolded her and driven her to Canton, where they sexually assaulted her and abandoned her in the woods.

"The idea of masked people taking someone away at 7 in the morning is not a usual occurrence here," Police Chief James Strillacci said. "We had our concerns from the get-go."

Morin reportedly identified one of the assailants as West Hartford resident Robert Jutras, an acquaintance whose children she and her boyfriend had grown close to. In fact, Jutras said, Morin -- a mother of two who is licensed by the state to be a foster parent -- was so attached to his two sons, 11 and 14, that she persuaded Jutras, a single father, to sign a legal document granting her custody if he were unable to care for the boys.

This wasn't the first time Morin had steered police to Jutras. Last month, she filed a criminal complaint alleging that he had threatened to harm her. She said he wanted to stop her from testifying against him at a hearing in which a relative of Jutras' sought temporary custody of the children. Jutras was charged with tampering with a witness and spent the weekend in jail, which he said caused him to miss the hearing. Ultimately, the relative won temporary custody.

Morin told police she feared for her safety. Officers were alerted to watch out for her during their routine patrols of her Newington Road neighborhood.

So when Morin told police about the abduction, detectives immediately sought to question Jutras. They staked out his house on Gerthmere Drive, searched his van and interviewed his girlfriend, Jutras said.

Jutras said he took two polygraph tests and was interrogated by detectives for three or four hours.

"For somebody to make something like this up, it's just very sick," Jutras said Friday, after learning of Morin's arrest. "I can't see how anyone could do this to someone. I just thank God the detective squad was intelligent enough to figure this out."

The investigation was just hours old when discrepancies in Morin's story began to emerge.

When investigators found her green Plymouth Neon near the site where she was found, Morin said the kidnapers drove her there, ditched her car and ran. But, police wondered, why would the perpetrators flee on foot and risk a much greater chance of being caught? Investigators now believe Morin drove herself to Canton. She was not bleeding and showed no visible signs

of injury or sexual assault. The only injuries were small scratches on her stomach and forehead, police said. She briefly slipped out of consciousness and was transported to Hartford Hospital, where she remained until Friday.

Police even questioned the duct tape, which bound her so loosely "a 2-year-old could have squirmed free," according to one investigator.

On Friday morning, West Hartford and Canton police met with the Hartford County state's attorney's office. The meeting ended with a decision that the crime scene was staged and the allegations false.

Morin, a computer technician for a Hartford insurance company, faces up to 6 1/2 years in prison if convicted. No additional arrests are anticipated.

West Hartford and Canton police, as well as the state police Western District Major Crime Squad, spent hours and thousands of dollars investigating the case.

"This has been an enormous waste of time," Strillacci said.

http://articles.courant.com/1999-08-29/news/9908300555_1_morin-phony-police-custody