

79-Year-Old Home Owner Surprises Burglar

by K_Guice

Jo Eva Lunsford had been relaxing on her patio Saturday, June 17, reading a book and thought nothing of having her garage and side door open. It is what she regularly did when she was going back and forth from the garage to her home in southwest Bend.

"I went inside and headed back towards the bathroom," Lunsford said. "I saw this man's hand on the door as he was closing it."

Lunsford said she doesn't know why, but she wasn't scared. "I was angry," she recalled. "I thought, 'Who is this man in my house? He doesn't belong here.'"

"I yelled out asking, 'Who is here? Who is this? Who is in my house?'" Lunsford said. He didn't answer so, she ran to the kitchen to get her phone and dialed 911. "It was busy," Lunsford said.

Meanwhile, the suspect who was later identified as John Eric Emmingham, 40, had made his way to the garage. "He hit the button to make the garage door raise and I got there before it had gotten up very far and hit it again to close it," she said.

There she was faced with her burglar. "He was facing me and was looking at me and I thought, 'what do I do now?' and then he ran out the side door," she said.

As Lunsford was calling 911 again, a neighbor saw Emmingham running from his neighbor's home.

Three police cars arrived within a matter of minutes. "They came and talked to me and one car had a police dog," she said. They took the canine out and began scouting the neighborhood.

According to a Bend Police Department news release, a neighbor told officers of seeing someone matching the suspect's description running toward a nearby construction site.

The Bend Police canine "Amor" located the suspect hiding under heavy bushes in a vacant lot about a block away. According to the police department, Emmingham was aggressive toward the canine and was injured by Amor when he was taken into custody.

The suspect was taken to St. Charles Medical Center-Bend for treatment of minor injuries, then brought to the Deschutes County Jail and booked on first-degree charges of burglary and criminal trespass.

Lunsford, who celebrated her 79th birthday just the day before the incident, later learned the burglar was a neighbor. "It turned out to be the guy across the street," she said. "He hadn't been here long and he wasn't a permanent neighbor."

According to Lunsford, the homeowner had taken him in after he had recently been released from jail. "He got some of my medication," she said. "He was on probation out from prison for drugs, so that is what he was here looking for."

"My neighbor came over; he was very hurt that the guy had broached upon my place," she said. "The guy was trying to help him get back on his feet."

She says that is the sort of neighbors she has in her quiet, close community. Lunsford says she will not let this incident change how she feels about The Parks. "Everybody has always felt very safe here and I still do. This is the kind of incident that would likely never happen again."

John Eric Emmingham
Photo Credit: Deschutes County Jail

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