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2 suspects waive hearings in Amity burglary

Pair linked to 2010 crime by DNA, police say

Steve Henshaw <http://readingeagle.com/articlephotos.aspx?id=418900>
Reading Eagle

Two men investigators said were linked by DNA evidence to an Amity Township home break-in nearly three years ago have waived hearings in the case.

Thomas H. Bieber, 21, and John S. Benner, 23, neither of whom have permanent addresses, were returned to Berks County Prison in lieu of \$20,000 bail each following their appearances Wednesday before District Judge Victor M. Frederick IV.

Bieber and Benner are charged with criminal trespass, criminal mischief and conspiracy.

They were in jail on other charges when police filed the latest charges in July based on DNA results of blood collected at the scene, investigators said. Benner previously lived in Boyertown, and Bieber previously lived in the same block where the Amity break-in occurred on Jan. 16, 2010.

Detective Jeffrey Smith gave this account:

Police responded to a home burglar alarm in the 1300 block of Old Swede Road. Officers found no one inside but saw a broken window in the laundry room and found blood on a nearby washing machine.

Officer Thomas M. Gauby Jr. took the blood samples to the state police crime laboratory.

About 15 months later, Smith was notified that the samples matched the DNA profiles of Bieber and Benner in an offender database.

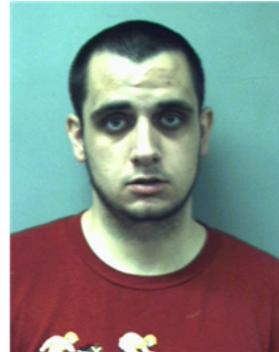
Benner told Smith in the prison that he and Bieber had broken into the house but left empty-handed when the alarm went off.

Since nothing was taken from the home, Smith said, the two could not be charged with burglary.

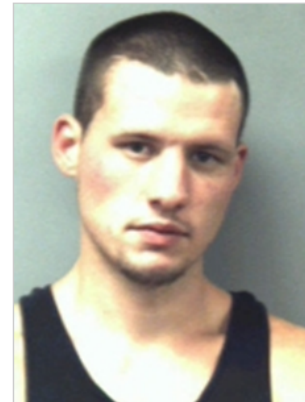
Bieber was sentenced by Judge Scott D. Keller in September 2010 to 18 to 26 months in state prison after pleading guilty to burglary and related charges in Birdsboro in May 2010.

Keller sentenced Benner in November to six to 23 months in the county prison after Benner pleaded guilty to stealing a vehicle in Boyertown in May 2010.

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John S. Benner



Thomas H. Bieber