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Teenagers accused of stealing 71-year-old man's cash and candy

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January 5, 2009 - 4:30 PM

[Amanda Millard](#)

Retired Navy Seal Bill Kopple was watching the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles battle the Minnesota Vikings with a friend Sunday night.

The only light came from the glowing TV in the living room.

That's when they heard a noise around 9:30 or 10:30 p.m.

"At first we thought it was an explosion," Kopple said.

But the loud boom turned out to be three men breaking down the back door.

"They asked me to hand over all my money," Kopple said.

The trio wore bandanas to hide their faces and long coats with hoods.

"All we could see on the three of them was their eyes," Kopple said.

They also went from room to room searching for valuables, Kopple said.

The robbers took \$300 cash, about \$20 in quarters and four candy bars, according to a warrant affidavit signed by Gastonia Police Officer J.W. Hughes.

Kopple said the men took a BB&T envelope filled with \$5 and \$10 bills and regular sized Milky Way, Musketeers and Reese's candy bars.

"It was a very scary ordeal," Kopple said. "They had threatened me. They had a stick in their hand. They were holding it over my head and all."

Kopple's 40 years as a Navy Seal meant he was trained to handle threatening situations, but things happened so fast and Kopple, 71, feared for the safety of his female friend.

"Everything was rushing so fast. I didn't know if they had a gun on them. The main thing I was trying to do was to protect my friend," Kopple said. "I thought twice because there were three of them."

Kopple said he isn't sure why thieves would target his home on the dead end New Beginnings Drive, especially with a police presence frequently in the area. Police were at New Beginnings Drive that night.

"As they were heading up that way they were in the wrong place at the wrong time," Kopple said.

An arrest warrant states that Gastonia Police Officer R.D. Gantt caught Larry James Watson Jr., 19, of 301 N. Morris St., with the cash. A K-9 officer caught Cody Jerrod Perkins, 17, with the quarters and the candy bars in his possession, according to a warrant affidavit.

The arrest report does not mention a captured third suspect. Hughes was off-duty Monday and could not be reached for details. Gastonia Police spokeswoman Donna Lahser said that a report appeared to show that police captured all involved since there was no description of a third suspect.

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Cody Jerrod Perkins

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