

3 charged in Port St. Lucie home invasion

By TERESA LANE
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PORT ST. LUCIE — A trio of Fort Lauderdale men were arrested Thursday in connection with last week's home-invasion robbery and rape and told authorities they randomly chose a house in Port St. Lucie because they were "tired of robbing people in Broward County," police said.

Troy Carroll Vaughan, 20, John David Ponder, 23, and Clyde Abney, 21, were charged with two counts of armed robbery, one count of armed burglary and armed sexual battery in the Feb. 13 attack of a Southwest Ray Avenue woman and her boyfriend.

The couple said they were sleeping when the gunmen pried open a back window and bound and gagged them before raping the woman and ransacking the house in search of valuables.

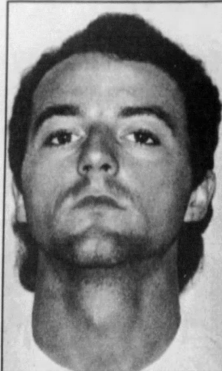
The attack lasted 30 minutes, and the victims said guns were held to their heads throughout the ordeal.

Port St. Lucie Detective Jeff Harsh, who worked with Broward County Sheriff's deputies to unravel the case, said Abney gave a taped confession in which he said the trio randomly chose the Port St. Lucie exit off Interstate 95 and drove down several streets before spotting an open window on Ray Avenue.

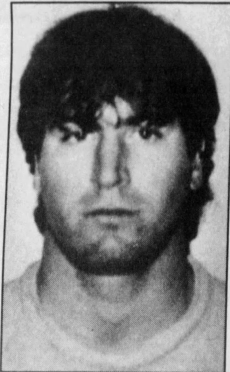
An attempt to open the sliding window failed because it was secured with a stick, but the men managed to pry open a back window that was closed but not locked, police said.

After crawling inside and loading the couple's two cars with electronic goods, a .38-caliber gun and jewelry, the men stole the two cars and began driving south on I-95, Harsh said.

The trio abandoned one stolen



Officials say they received a tip that John David Ponder had stolen goods in his home.



Troy Carroll Vaughan was arrested Monday by Broward County sheriff's officials.

Please see **ROBBERY/2B**

Florida - Clyde Abney, Troy Vaughan, John Ponder

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