

Burglary suspects: Law unjust

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OURAY — Members of an independent Christian group say they are taking a stand against an unjust law. The Ouray County Sheriff's Office alleges, however, that three members of the Piecemakers movement committed burglary late last week when they removed property from the homes of their tenants.

Ouray deputies arrested Doug Follette, 54; Kerry Parker, 53 and Jean Moller, 64, on suspicion of second-degree burglary and theft April 10. They are free on bond.

The Piecemakers are based in Costa Mesa, Calif., where they operate a country store, with crafts, and a construction business. According to reports in California newspapers, the group has in the past been at loggerheads with public health officials who wanted to inspect their tearoom and it also has a history of litigation with various other parties.

According to the L.A. Times, the inspection case ended with Piecemaker founder Marie Kolasinski, another woman, and Follette being sentenced to probation, since terminated. Follette said Monday that he, Parker and Moller came to Colorado to help the family who rented trailers he owns on behalf of the Piecemakers, but moved to evict them after learning of their rental history.

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Doug Follette

Piecemaker member



Contact information for the tenants could not be located. Follette said the Piecemakers had provided the tenants with furniture and a car, even putting the power in the names of Piecemaker members and waiving the first and last months' deposit. He said he became concerned the tenants would damage their property, especially if eviction notices were served. Instead of going that route, he and the women went to the rented trailers and, he said, removed church-owned property. “They got us for burglary,” Follette said, contending he and the women went to their own property in “broad daylight” and had first advised the sheriff's office what they were doing. The sheriff's office said however that the tenants left for a motel room because they didn't have power. When they returned the next day to retrieve their items, they found the homes' door-knobs removed and most

everything they owned — including personal photographs — gone, Ouray County Sheriff Dominic “Junior” Mattivi said. Mattivi said deputies discussed the case with the district attorney's office. “He said basically what they had was burglary. It (eviction) doesn't give a landlord the right to go in and take personal possessions,” he said. Mattivi said investigators and the Piecemakers' former tenants found their things and photographs at a thrift store in Ridgway. “That's when we contacted the DA's office and the DA's office said we did have a case for burglary. We can't say if they're guilty or not. That's up to the court to decide.”

Follette also said items were taken to the thrift store, but that the church owned them. He said Piecemakers didn't want to start civil eviction proceedings, because they believed the tenants could have remained in the homes rent-free during the process. He also alleged the rental property was filthy and unkempt.

“They are protected, big time. They can stop paying rent, live there and destroy your property. We took a stand to hopefully set a precedence and get some of these laws changed,” Follette said.

He alleged a deputy told a neighbor that he, Parker and Moller were guilty. He said the deputy should be jailed for false arrest, but Mattivi

said his claims were “far from the truth.”

Mattivi said investigators were going over e-mails allegedly sent by the Piecemakers to the tenants. Follette said the e-mails the OCSO received had been altered.

Kolasinski said in a letter faxed to the Daily Press the tenants had violated their lease. She wanted to know who protected the landlords. “When the law becomes so corrupted that it is no more a protection for the righteous, then it is that we find anarchy somehow more righteous than the law,” she wrote. “By the way, Jesus broke just about every law devised by man and cursed the lawyers who wrote the laws.”

Follette hoped the DA would not proceed with charges. “If they are stupid enough to carry this case out, they're probably going to be sorry. These are the kinds of things that are just so unprofessional,” he said. “The laws are not always right. There's a time when we have a responsibility to stand up against bad laws.” But Mattivi said the suspects should have followed civil procedures to evict their tenants. “There is a process you go through. They tried to go around the process,” he said. Follette, Parker and Moller are due in court in Ouray Thursday morning. **(This article is about three Piecemakers arrested for protecting our own property.)**