

THEFTS

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between \$200 and \$500 worth of stuff taken from every house they hit."

Husted said the series of burglaries began as long ago as last May.

"But the ring, as far as we can determine, wasn't organized until November, then things really started rolling," he added.

In a single block, he said as many as five homes were burglarized during the three months the burglary ring was operating at its peak.

Most of the loot recovered was stored in Saavedra's house, officers said. The suspect, however, denied any knowledge of the crime and told police the articles in his home were recovered by him after his home was burglarized.

The mystifying case was solved almost by happenstance, Husted said.

It was reported to him by a local school principal that a youth was attempting to sell a watch at school.

"We looked him up, saw the watch, and thought it was quite a bit more expensive a watch than a boy his age ought to have," Husted went on.

Upon questioning, the boy admitted the watch had been taken in a house burglary, and implicated a second youth.

"One thing led to another, but it wasn't all that easy," Husted said. "For example, we had to research all the burglaries that had occurred in Vallejo in recent months, determine from the reports the methods used and the sort of merchandise that was taken."

"We think we have cleared up 53 house breakins — there may be more."

The youths that were booked either have been released in the custody of their parents, or are being detained in Juvenile Hall, Fairfield.

Thacker said the boys told him they were paid specified amounts for items stolen, such as \$30 for the electric organ, \$25 for a hunting rifle, and varying sums for jewelry, depending on its value.

"These kids were as clever as adult professionals," Thacker added. "They always wore gloves so they wouldn't leave any fingerprints, and they never carried burglar tools."

They also never committed any acts of vandalism in any house they entered. Entry, incidentally, almost always was gained by smashing a window, or opening a screen.

"It's a relief to have these burglaries cleared up," Sergeant Thacker commented. "The whole department has been working night and day to solve them."

No date has been set for the Municipal Court arraignments of Saavedra and Myers. The youths' cases will be taken up in Juvenile Court.