

Bandits make off with Wild Basin Park funds

JIM BERRY American-Statesman Staff

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By JIM BERRY

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A benefit screening of the movie "Breakaway" had barely started at the Paramount Theatre last night when two youths tossed a stinging substance in the face of Wild Basin Park chairperson Janet Poage and grabbed her money box.

"We thought everybody loved us," Mrs. Poage said this morning of the 8:30 p.m. robbery and loss of an estimated \$850 collected for the Wild Basin Park. "I don't think they (the two robbers) knew what it was for — just saw the opportunity."

Mrs. Poage was not seriously injured by the solution she said the robbers carried in a paper cup. Police be-

lieve the liquid was a mixture of ammonia and water.

"At first I was terrified, afraid that it was acid," she said.

"But the girl at the concession stand ran over and splashed water in my face and then I went to Brackenridge Hospital where they washed my eyes out," she said. "My eyelids are a little swollen, but I don't think there is any permanent damage."

She said the solution burned her hands and face. "I don't know what it was but there was a strong stinging effect for about 20 or 30 minutes."

Mrs. Poage said about 300 persons had already paid \$3 a ticket for the 8 p.m. benefit screening when two youths

about 18 years old entered the lobby where she was collecting money and putting it in a cigar box.

"They were late," she said. "The inside doors had just been closed. We were a little late in getting started."

One of the youths asked the price of admission.

"He took out a \$10 bill and as I reached in the box to make change, he threw this substance in the cup in my face," she said. "The other boy grabbed the cigar box and they ran back out the door."

University of Texas student Yvette Rosser, walking past the Congress Avenue theatre, saw the pair run south and disappear on foot into the darkness of the alley east of Congress. No one, police said, reported seeing a getaway car in the area.

Police said this morning no suspects had been arrested.

One of the robbers was described as about five-foot-six, 160 pounds, stocky, with long wavy black hair, wearing a white T-shirt with a black design on the front. The other, also dressed in a T-shirt and blue jeans, was about the same height but slender, about 140 pounds with short black hair.

Mrs. Poage said she hopes that if the robbers learn the money was to help establish a wilderness park it will be returned.

"Mother Earth will put an evil eye on them unless they return the money," she said.

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