

Area woman recants allegation of rape

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A Spartanburg County woman, claiming she was forced by her boyfriend to fabricate a sexual assault charge against another man, was arrested yesterday on a charge of perjury.

Charges against the man she had accused of sexually assaulting her were dismissed.

Anthony B. Gaines, 25, of 113 Allen Avenue in Spartanburg, though somewhat bitter about the ordeal, expressed relief yesterday that he had been cleared of the first degree criminal sexual conduct charge.

"I felt from the inside out that the perception was that I was guilty until proven innocent," said Gaines. "I am bitter toward the woman and the justice system. I am somewhat relieved, but this definitely has affected my sleeping patterns."

He was accused of the charge by Catherine Conklin, 28, of 1112 Glendale St., Clifton, who called police yesterday morning to "tell the truth," she said while sitting in the magistrate's office at the Spartanburg County Courthouse. She was charged with perjury and with filing a false complaint and was released on \$5,000 bond.

Conklin reported to Cowpens police on Feb. 3 that she was sexually assaulted by a man who posed as an employee of a utility company. She claimed that a man kicked the door open, grabbed her by her hair, forced her to the floor, put a knife to her throat, threatened to kill her and sexually assaulted her.

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MIKE BONNER PHOTO

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Anthony B. Gaines

PERJURY

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Police determined through medical examinations that Conklin was six weeks pregnant at the time of the alleged incident.

During the investigation, the woman picked Gaines from police photographs, and Gaines was arrested on Feb. 9. Gaines said police had his picture because he had been booked on a traffic charge.

He remained in jail for about four hours before being released on \$5,000 bond, and he was suspended from his job without pay, according to Paul Briggs, district manager for Duke Power Co. in Spartanburg.

Gaines said he plans to report back to work Monday.

The woman testified during a preliminary hearing March 19 that Gaines sexually assaulted her. Based on her testimony and identification of Gaines in the lineup, the case was sent to the grand jury, where the charge was pending.

After the preliminary hearing, Conklin moved to Florida with a boyfriend, according to police. She returned two weeks ago to live with

a brother in Clifton, claiming that her boyfriend had abused her and that she feared for her life.

"She contacted the detective (yesterday) by phone and said she wanted to tell the truth," said Capt. John Blackwood of the Spartanburg County Sheriff's Department.

"I felt it was right to tell the truth. I don't think anyone should have to go through this like him (Gaines). I was told I could have just stayed in Florida and had the charges dropped, but I didn't want that hanging over the man's head," she said.

In her statement to police yesterday morning, Conklin said she and her 31-year-old boyfriend had fabricated the story.

"She told us she was coerced by her boyfriend and threatened to go through with the story and the identification," Blackwood said. "Unfortunately things like this happen. It's not the first time ... and it won't be the last."

Police are unsure where Conklin's boyfriend is. A warrant was issued yesterday for his arrest on a charge

of subornation of perjury, said Blackwood. The warrant had not been served late last night.

"She told us she was fearful of him. Together they fabricated the story. She said she did it out of fear," said Blackwood.

Blackwood said she "could tell the truth now because her boyfriend wasn't around, she had left him and she wasn't fearful of him."

Gaines, a 1983 Wofford College graduate, had been working for Duke Power Company for about three years as a line technician when the allegation was made. He said he went to Conklin's duplex on Saluda Street in Cowpens to check her water heater for rate verification.

"He is a fine employee. It would be my recommendation at this point that he be paid for his time off the job, since he was falsely accused. He did his job. There was never any question of that," said Briggs.

Gaines' college fraternity brothers, coworkers and relatives have been helping him pay his bills during the investigation.

Gaines' legal expenses are more



Catherine Conklin.

than \$3,000.

Conklin said she was forced to fabricate the story when a neighbor told her boyfriend that a man had been at her house on Feb. 3. "He accused me of having sex with him," she said yesterday.

After the preliminary hearing, she said her boyfriend forced her to go to Sebastian, Fla., where they lived with Conklin's grandmother for several weeks.