



***TAMPA BAY TIMES**
fast news you can use

Thursday, June 22, 2006

1 lost cell phone, tons of static

Nicholas Confessore New York Times

Dirty Harry had his .44. Sherlock Holmes had his brain.

Evan Guttman had his computer, the Web and a few thousand people he had never met. That was enough.

Three weeks ago, Guttman went on a quest to retrieve a friend's lost cell phone, a quest that ended with the arrest of a 16-year-old on charges of possessing the missing camera phone, a Sidekick model that sells for as much as \$350.

But before the teenager was arrested, she was humiliated by Guttman in front of untold thousands of people on the Web.

The tale began when Guttman's best friend Ivanna left her cell phone in a taxicab, like thousands of others before her. After Ivanna got a new Sidekick, she logged on to her account - and was confronted by pictures of an unfamiliar young woman and her family, along with the young woman's America Online screen name.

The 16-year-old, Sasha Gomez of Queens, New York, had been using the Sidekick to take pictures and send instant messages. She apparently did not know that the company that provided the phone's service, T-Mobile, automatically backs up such information on its remote servers. So when Ivanna got back on, there was Sasha.

Using instant messages, Guttman tracked down Sasha and asked her to return it. "Basically, she told me to get lost," Guttman recalled. "That was it."

So he set up a no-frills Web page with a brief account of what happened, and posted the pictures of the girl and her family. Within hours, Guttman had hundreds of e-mail messages. Then thousands.

Some readers began visiting Sasha's MySpace page and bombarded her and her friends with e-mail messages. Others found her street address and drove by her family's building, taking videos or shouting out "thief" in front of neighbors.

To read the ordeal: <http://www.evanwashere.com/StolenSidekick/>



New York Times

Evan Guttman

Meanwhile, lawyers and police officers sent Guttman e-mail instructing him on the finer points of property law and advice on how to navigate the police bureaucracy.

A reader in Orlando recorded a song about the missing Sidekick and posted it on MySpace. (Sample lyrics: "Materialistic-kleptomaniac/please just give her her Sidekick back.")

Guttman kept exchanging e-mail messages with Sasha. Then he heard from her older brother, Luis Pena, who said he was a military policeman and warned Guttman.

Guttman posted the exchange.

Within days, he was contacted by dozens of active and retired soldiers. They told Guttman that making such a threat was a violation of military policy and promised to report Pena.

Guttman posted it all.

"I don't want people to be punished," he said last week. "I just want them to give the Sidekick back."

Sasha's mother, Ivelisse Gomez, confirmed that her son was serving in the Army and had been in trouble with his superior officers after some of the visitors to Guttman's Web page called in to complain. She said the Web site was harassment and that the family might sue him.

"They told him to come pick it up," Gomez said. Guttman, however, said that the offer to retrieve the phone was accompanied by a threat of physical injury. (Sasha's instant message to Guttman: "i am give u the sidekick so I can hit you wit it.")

Last week, police arrested Sasha and charged her with possession of stolen property.

Sasha seemed to be feeling the heat on her MySpace page. This was the only message Wednesday night:

yoooo u stupid ass pp better stop messing wit me id have ya f---ing phone ya better stop messing wit me ya dont no who u
messing wit so leav me the f--- alone iii donnnnnnt haveeeee yourrrr f-----iinggggg phone soooooooo
leav me aaaaaaallooone

