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Shackled-Girl's Father Says Truants Vandalized Home Police Arrest Girl, Boy

By Scott E. Williams
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GALVESTON, Texas -- A man accused of shackling his daughter because she wouldn't attend school said he caught two truant students inside his trailer home trying to set it on fire.

In October, Ronnie Eugene Robbins was charged with shackling his 12-year-old's ankles together. He said he did it to make sure the girl attended school after a justice of the peace warned him to do "whatever it takes" to make sure his often-truant daughter attended school.

Robbins is awaiting trial on felony charges of endangering a child and injury to a child.

Robbins said his family was evicted from the trailer home and was in the process of moving when they found a boy and girl inside. The two fled after setting a small fire, Robbins said.

Police later arrested a 14-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy, who face charges of criminal mischief, criminal trespass of a residence and truancy, *The Galveston County Daily News* reported Tuesday.

Child Protective Services spokeswoman Estella Olguin said the agency was attempting to get money for the family to help pay rent, but eviction proceedings had begun before Robbins' Oct. 31 arrest, after a woman saw his daughter with her legs chained at a gas station.

Robbins has been living in a tent until his trial and plans to move in with a relative in Santa Fe.

His daughter was in her mother's care, and Robbins said he hopes to help find accommodations for them.

Defense attorney Tad Nelson said Robbins wasn't trying to hurt his child.

"He went to great pains to avoid hurting her," Nelson said. "What he did was no doubt more extreme than what an average friend of mine might do, but in his case it was the only thing to do.