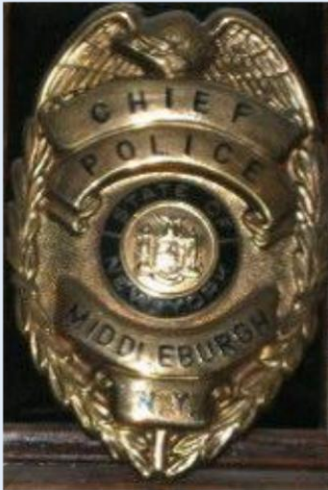


# *All in a Night's Work*

*by Frederick Wickert*



I was the police chief in the small town of Middleburgh, NY. The chief in a small town works just like any other patrolman with additional administrative responsibilities. This evening, another patrolman named Fred was going to be my partner until midnight.

The evening began pleasantly enough. There was a strawberry and ice cream social at the Catholic Church. Across the street was a summer band concert on the front steps of the high-school building.

During the band concert, the teen aged daughter of an old friend approached me. She told us she was having a bunch of the kids over for a party that evening at their house, and invited Fred and I to stop by later. I believed in keeping a good friendly relationship with the teenagers in town so I told her we would try to find the time.

After the ice cream social and band concert were over and traffic returned to normal, Fred and I went to the party. We enjoyed conversation with the kids, had some cold cuts and macaroni salad, washed down with a cold soda. After about an hour at the party we resumed our patrol.

Later, around 10:00 P.M., we dropped in at the Fire House where a chicken Bar-B-Q and a dance were in progress. It was a community fund raising event for the Fire Department.

We had been at the Fire House for nearly twenty minutes when suddenly the parents of the girl who invited us earlier to her party came rushing up to us. They were visibly upset and angry. Ray looked like he was ready to explode. He demanded to know what was going on. He informed me that I knew full well he never allowed drugs at his house and his children were not involved in drugs.

Somewhat surprised at his actions, I replied that indeed, I did know that. I then told him I had no idea what he was getting at and asked him to calm down and explain to me why he was so upset.

Ray informed me one of his neighbors called him at the Fire House, and told him the police had conducted a drug raid with guns drawn at his house because the kids were having a drug party. I was dumbfounded someone told him such a thing.

I explained to him that his daughter had invited us over to the party and for a bite to eat. I told him we were there, but certainly not with guns drawn and certainly not as a drug raid. I told him the patrol car was parked in his driveway, but the kids had done nothing wrong and the visit was purely social. Ray felt better then and calmed down, only to get all worked up again at his neighbor for calling him with such rubbish.

After all was calmed down, we left the Firehouse and resumed our patrol. At midnight the other Fred went off duty and returned home as I resumed patrol alone.

Around midnight, the town seemed pretty quiet. I parked the patrol car and began checking the doors of businesses to insure all was secure with them. Suddenly two girls came out of an alley and rushed up to me. They told me there was an intruder in their apartment. They were frightened and wanted me to get whoever the intruder was, out of their apartment.

The two girls had just graduated from high-school and got an apartment together on their own. One of the smaller stores had gone out of business and they rented the empty space to use as an apartment. There was a double bed in a room in the rear, and little else in the way of furnishings. They had just come home and entered the back door. They heard someone thrashing around in the dark and ran back out. They ran for help and found me.

The empty store rooms in the front with the large plate glass windows were lighted and the door unlocked by the girls. I told the girls to stay outside and entered the front. I could hear the intruder making a racket in the back and I followed the noise.

When I entered the room, I turned on my flashlight. A man was on the bed attempting to climb up the wall. When he saw the light, he dropped on to the bed and attempted to crawl under the mattress to hide. I dragged him out from under the mattress and put the cuffs on him. When I asked him what he was doing there his responses were unintelligible.

The man was severely under the influence of drugs and alcohol. I got him to the police car and the girls told me nothing was missing or broken. Other than the boot marks on the bedroom wall, all was well in the apartment.

I transported the man to the Sherriff's office for processing. The town did not possess facilities for that. En route to the Sherriff's office the young man was blaming all his troubles on his older brother. His brother was an official of some kind in the Jehovah's Witness Church and had been instrumental in having him expelled from the church.

After arrival at the Sherriff's department the combination of drugs and alcohol caused the man to go berserk and he became violent and unmanageable. I sprayed him with Mace, to no effect. I and the other officers were amazed that it did not faze him at all.

We placed him in the "Fish Bowl." A room with solid steel walls, a concrete floor and a steel ceiling so high that one could not reach it if they were standing on another's shoulders. It had little windows of bullet proof glass in two of the walls, and one in the door. Under the windows was a round perforated cylinder which allowed one to speak through to a prisoner inside. They were usually used for visitors to talk through. Prisoners could also be observed through the windows by the officers. There was a single light bulb in the ceiling.

While the prisoner was in the "Fish Bowl" cooling off, I worked on the paper work required for arraignment. After an hour, the man had calmed down and we took him out of the "Fish Bowl." As I was finger printing him, he asked, "Which one of you guys sprayed that stuff in my face?" I informed him that I was the one. He asked, "What did you do that for? That stuff burned my eyes." It was the first we knew the Mace had any effect at all.

Later, he was arraigned and locked up in jail until he could get bailed out the next day. A very tired police chief put away the police car and headed for home, trying not to hit a deer on the way. Another day's work had come to an end.