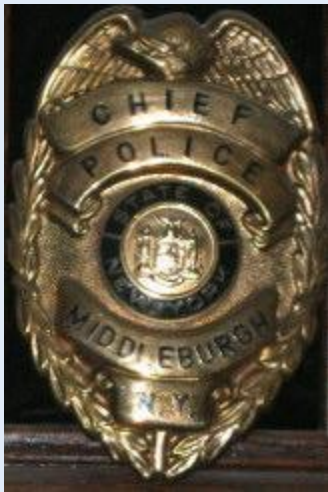


# *An Arrest Gone Wrong*

*by Frederick Wickert*



There was a basketball game at the high school that night. The parking area was filled to the brim with cars and buses. The opposing team and the home team were strong rivals and I needed to be sure there was a police presence when the game let out, first to direct traffic and second to prevent hostilities between the boys of the two schools. Sometimes after these games, tempers flared out of control.

As the Chief, I positioned myself to assist in getting the school buses out and on their way quickly and safely. After the school buses and most of the traffic were gone, I was walking towards the patrol vehicle when I heard tires squealing.

I looked to see where the sound was coming from and observed a black Camaro with tinted windows speeding down Main Street towards the intersection of Route 145 and Route 30. I jumped in the cruiser and took off in pursuit. They rounded the corner on to River Street, heading North on Route 30 towards Schoharie, the next town.

At first I was able to keep them in sight. When they passed beneath the streetlights I could see that there were a number of people in the car. After leaving town, they began putting distance between us. Soon, they were doing 100 MPH. My police cruiser could not go any faster than that. The Camaro I was in pursuit of was exceeding that speed and rapidly putting distance between us.

I feared that a deer might come out in front of them or of myself. The consequences could be disastrous. The road had many curves in it and soon, I could no longer see the vehicle I was chasing.

I got on the radio and reported what was happening together with a description of the car. I requested that a roadblock be set up at the entrance to the next town, Schoharie, to stop them and hold them for my arrival.

Fortunately there were two Schoharie units and a County Sheriff deputy all in the Schoharie vicinity and they were able to quickly establish a roadblock. Almost immediately I received a radio message that they were in custody. I acknowledged the call and told them I was almost there.

When I arrived, I indeed saw the Camaro I had been chasing. Upon close inspection, it was dark green rather than black, but in the dark it is hard to tell. There were eight teen-aged boys in the vehicle.

We escorted the car and the occupants to the Sheriff Department, which was nearby. I got the identity of each of the boys, and then called their parents to come to the Sheriff Department to get them. I kept the driver until last.

There was something about the vehicle that didn't ring true. The boys had readily admitted speeding from the basketball game to Schoharie, but the driver and front seat passengers insisted they did not exceed eighty-five miles per hour. They also denied seeing the red lights of the police cruiser. I was not satisfied that I had the right vehicle.

After some further questioning, I realized that I had the wrong ones and I did not chase that vehicle. I knew the car I was after, after it got out of sight, had pulled off to hide somewhere or had gone up a different road and evaded the police. It was purely coincidence that the roadblock picked up the one we had.

I learned that both vehicles, looking very much alike one another, had a game with each other to see which could get to Schoharie the quickest. I also learned the boy who was driving the vehicle we had, was generally a decent boy, never in trouble, and worked hard to help his mother, who was dying from cancer.

I lectured the boy. I told him he knew and had admitted his wrongdoing. I reminded him of the danger that he put himself and the other boys in. I told him I was not giving him any tickets, because I now knew his

was not the car I observed in violation. I had not read him his rights before he admitted guilt under questioning.

With his mother in the condition she was in, I did not want to cause her any more grief. I explained that to the boy, and impressed upon him that he should not give her any more problems than she already had. He said he understood and that he was ashamed at what he had done. I then released him and told him to drive home safely.

In the next two days, I discovered what had happened. The other boy also had a load of kids in his Camaro. He also had a very hot car. His uncle and uncle's partner owned an auto repair service. Both had raced cars in their younger years, and the uncle's partner participated every summer in demolition derbies as a hobby. They had taught him how to soup up his vehicle to get more speed out of it. It was a hot car indeed.

His uncle's place of business was also on the route I was pursuing him on. When he got to his uncle's place of business, knowing he was out of sight of the police, shut off his headlights and drove behind his uncle's garage. There they waited until I went by in the police cruiser. Then they drove back to Middleburgh where the chase had begun, laughing all the way because they had put one over on the police.

After I learned all the particulars, there was little I could do about it. I had never actually caught up with them and I had no way of proving it, so there was no evidence to charge him with. He got away with it that time.

As for the boy driving the car that was caught in the roadblock, he did indeed lose his mother to cancer less than six months later. After he graduated from high school, he got a job working as a dispatcher in the county Sheriff Department. He turned out to be a really nice guy. He spent most of his spare time studying and wanted to pursue a career in law enforcement. After working as a dispatcher for a year and a half, he got accepted to a state university where he majored in Criminal Justice. I have never heard what became of him after that, but have every reason to believe he has done well.