

# *The Night of the Bull*

*by Frederick Wickert*



*Road seven area coming off Route 30 in the moonlight*



*Deer grazing in the area*



*Deer running after being startled in the area near where the bull was hit*

“God help them if I ever find out who it was!” Those words shook me a little. They were spoken by a Game Warden, named Bill. Bill lived in the town of Conesville and West Conesville was a little hamlet within the town. My family lived a mile East of West Conesville, in the middle of nowhere.

In West Conesville was a small store with gas pumps in front. It carried cigarettes, ice cream, soda pop, a few canned goods, bread, milk and cereal. You could buy a pair of work gloves or a hat, and there were a few magazines in addition to a few daily and weekly newspapers. It was called Gallaghers Store, and the only place around for several miles where those items could be obtained.

I was in the store for something, and observed Bill, the Game Warden there. His Buick was parked outside with a noticeable hole in the middle of his left front fender. In those days, game wardens and constables were required to work with their own cars. The government did not furnish cars to them.

Bill had only had the Buick for a few months and he was a bit partial to it, being careful to keep it clean and polished, concerned always, about getting any blemishes on it at all. After all, it was only the finest car he had ever owned. He had made the outburst in reply to Mr. Gallagher’s question about how he happened to get that hole in the fender of his car.

It was just a couple of days after Thanksgiving weekend. My oldest sister and her husband Merle had come to our house for the weekend, and my next oldest sisters boyfriend Walt was there also. The subject of our conversation was of course, deer. Deer season was in full swing. Around 9:00 P.M. I suggested that we might see some deer if we drove around a while, as it was a full moon on snow covered ground. The light of the moon reflecting off the snow should provide ample light to see them, and maybe we could spot a real nice buck or two.

Because I was the most familiar with the area and had just turned seventeen, eager to always drive at any excuse, I took the wheel and Merle, Walt and myself took a ride looking to see deer.

Because we were looking to see deer, and because it was a bright moonlit night, we unknowingly attracted the attention of Bill, the Game Warden. We were, in his mind, acting suspicious. He suspected we were looking for deer, and we were doing just that. He believed we were looking with the intent of jacking a deer. We didn’t even have a gun in the car, but Bill had no way of knowing that.

Bill stayed at a distance so we wouldn’t notice, and followed us with his headlights off. He was certain to catch us, believing that if we spotted a deer in a remote area, we were going to shoot it, put it in the trunk of the car and hurry home with it. It was light enough that driving without his headlights was rather easily done.

As we traveled around, I decided to drive through Road seven. Road seven was a dirt road, poorly maintained. It served primarily as an access road to the New York City water supply gatehouse. New York City has a large reservoir in the area, and they take the water from the reservoir by means of a 47 mile long underground tunnel, which empties into Esopus Creek, and travels to another reservoir closer to the city. The gates controlled the flow of the water through the tunnel. Road seven follows the shoreline of the reservoir.

Road seven is a short cut from Route 23, between Prattsville and Grand Gorge, to Route 30 in Gilboa. The first half mile from the Route 30 end is between farm fields and pastures before getting into wooded area.

As we turned into Road seven from the Route 30 end, Bill followed at a distance without headlights. As we entered the wooded area, Bill sped up a little to get closer to us. In the wooded area the road was darker and shaded by the trees. He could be closer without us being able to see him.

As Bill was entering the wooded area, a bull came out of the shadows in front of him. Driving without lights, he didn't see the bull until he was on top of him. He and the bull collided. The bull's horn went right into his fender. The stunned bull staggered for a moment or two and went on his way, not seriously hurt. The fender of the Buick was sporting a two-inch diameter hole in the middle of it.

Bill was an unhappy man. He was no longer able to pursue us, due to the time lapsed in being obstructed by the bull. He never got close enough to fully identify the car we were in, and never got the license number. We were not doing anything illegal, but he sure believed we were. In any case, he blamed us, me actually, for the hole in the fender of his car, without knowing whom it was.

I never let on that I knew anything about it, putting on as innocent a face as I could. I found the incident amusing, but dared not show it, nor could I share it with my friends or even with my kid sister. Bill's young sister was in my class in high school. The community we lived in was one where word traveled like lightning. Everyone knew everyone else and everyone knew everyone else's business.

Neither Merle nor Walt lived in this community, so I did tell them of it, but never mentioned it to anyone else who might know the participants. Bill passed away a few years ago, not long after he retired as a Captain in the Conservation Officer ranks. I saw him every now and then before he retired, but never mentioned it to him.

Now I think I am safe in telling it. If not, I guess I'll have a spooky story to tell about it.