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Pursuit in Salhaven

(Jonathon Landings now stands where Salhaven used to exist) Salhaven used to be a single home residential retirement community that was located on the East side of Alternate A1A, South of Indiantown Rd, and covered a good range of property between the Intracoastal waterway. This community existed during the early 1970's which also had several canals that reached the Intracoastal waterway. There was a large area at the South end that was still un-developed. The community contained residents that were mostly retired. The community was a gated and had security guards posted in guard shacks at each entrance way into the community.

I recall one wintery cold evening during a midnight shift in the early 1970's, that I was patrolling an area by the Old Boy Scout Camp located off Frederick Small Rd. when I received an alarm call to respond to one of our local businesses. While passing the Salhaven community and enroute to the alarm call, a Security Guard from Salhaven frantically flagged me down and informed me that there was a major problem within the community he guarded. He stated that a drunk in a station wagon had driven past his guard shack and failed to stop taking out his gate, and that the culprit was currently running over mailboxes, light poles, bushes and causing major damage.

Salhaven was in the County Jurisdiction, so I informed the Palm Beach County Sheriffs Office (PBSO) of the situation over our hand-held radio. During the early 1970's, a Palm Beach County Deputy had a very large area to cover. His zone began at 45th Street to the north County Line, and from the ocean, West to the Martin County Line off the B-Line. Our communications with PBSO consisted of a handheld radio with 3 channels.

Our primary radio that was used on the force was a CB radio operated off of channel 3. After informing PBSO as to the situation, they requested our assistance as the closest available deputy was at 45th Street and it would take a while for him to respond to our location. So basically, PBSO just deputized the Jupiter Police Department to act as their emissary on this case.

Prior to entering the community, I turned off the patrol cars engine and listened to determine where the suspect was. I could clearly hear the speeding car accelerating and could hear the suspect vehicle crash into things. I proceeded in the direction that I heard the vehicle and clearly saw damage that was left behind. I saw mailboxes and light poles down, bushes that were run over and some vehicle damage. As I got closer I could hear the vehicle still crashing into things. I

located the vehicle in the southern portion of the community and began to pursue the vehicle with blue lights and siren. I had illuminated the vehicle with the police spotlight which was an aircraft landing light and was very, very bright. The suspect continued to run over things that he had already damaged and then noticed that I was behind him and tried to speed away. He struck a couple more mailboxes, took out another light pole and went through a set of bushes that were twice as tall as the station wagon. The suspect ignored the speed enforcement and stop signs that were about the community.

The suspect turned off his lights as a means to elude me. However, the spotlight illuminated his vehicle as if he was driving during daytime. All this was occurring roughly 2:00 am. My partner was on duty until 3:00 am when his shift would end. As the pursuit of the suspect vehicle continued, my partner already checked the alarm call to make sure it was clear and proceeded in my direction to give assistance. The suspect drove up and down several roads which were paved. He would make U-turns periodically driving off and then back on the paved roadway.

Finally, he drove off of the pavement area and into the field area South of the community, heading mostly in a southerly direction. I was not familiar with the area and could not advise my partner where I was exactly. As we proceeded off the roadway, I allowed a large space between my vehicle and his. I continued to light his vehicle with the spot light as the suspect continued to drive without lights.

My partner located me by listening for the siren and spotting my emergency lights. He caught up to us and remained behind me. Both of us were aware that we were in sugar sand and could bog down at any time, or drive into one of the many ditches and canals that were south of the Salhaven community. We wanted to drive fast enough not to bog down, but did not want to be directly behind the suspect vehicle. The entire pursuit lasted somewhere between 10-20 minutes.

As we proceeded further south traveling in circles several times, the suspect vehicle all of a sudden disappeared from sight. We stopped our vehicles on solid ground and ran up to the area where the vehicle had disappeared. In the middle of the canal, we could see the tail end of the station wagon sticking up out of the water with the rear axle visible. The guy was climbing to the back of the station wagon, where it had

not yet gone underwater.

We illuminated the interior of the vehicle up with our flashlights. The station wagon began to slowly sink out of sight. As it was going under, the suspect in the back of the station wagon was waving "good bye" to us. Now any other time we would probably keel over laughing, but the car had disappeared and we were preparing to go into the water after the guy. (We laughed about it later).

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At first my partner suggested that we flip a coin to see who would go in as it was very cold out. But he said he would because he gets off in an hour. He shed his gun belt, kicked off his shoes and stripped of his jacket and shirt in seconds and prepared to dive into the water.

That's when the guy popped up to the surface. My partner jumped in and got behind the guy and brought him into shore. The only problem with that is, he took him to the shore line opposite me and I could not assist him immediately. As my partner was standing up, I could hear the guy thanking him. The suspect then grabbed my partner by the pant leg and began to pull himself up saying: "Thank You, thank you, now I have got to kick your butt" (He didn't exactly use the butt word, but I was being nice).

As he pulled himself to a standing position, the guy fell over backwards and back into the water again. My partner dove in after him again taking him out of the water for a second time. This time my partner knelt on him as I collected his clothing and equipment and found a way to drive to the opposite side. We handcuffed the guy and stuffed him in back of the car, and the suspect quickly passed out because of intoxication. Palm Beach County Fire Rescue arrived to check him out medically.

PBSO arrived and they began to take reports of all the damage. North County Towing arrived, dove into the dark water, located the vehicle and towed it out. I continued to finish the rest of my shift.

As it turned out, we were not done with this call yet. Around 5:00 am we received a call from PBSO again asking for our assistance in Salhaven.

As I reported back to the scene of the canal, I met with the deputy that was working the scene at Salhaven and we were now looking for a possible body in the water. The suspect advised the jailers that his buddy was in the car with him and was now missing. When we were in pursuit, the arrestee was the only 1 in the vehicle that was visible. We searched for a body without any result. The deputy and I were later informed that PBSO detectives had located his friend at his residence in PBG where he was safe and secure.

And finally a very entertaining evening came to an end.