

One Man Crime Spree Stopped In Virginia

Written by Steve Frank
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James Brandon Smith proved himself to again late yesterday to be a menace to society, something he has stated with his actions over much of the month of June over a wide area of the Foothills and High Country, shooting at lawmen in the Hickory area, breaking into properties in Watauga. Last night, he took his one-man wave of terror across state lines. Smith, 35, was being transported by an Alexander County deputy from Alexander County to face charges here when he somehow produced both a key to the restraints holding him fast, then produced a pair of needle-nose pliers that he held to the throat of the deputy, forcing him to pull over on the lot of the Food Lion store on Old US 421 just east of Boone. That was about 4 yesterday afternoon, and the alert issued on James Smith caused the Watauga Sheriff's Office to ask us to issue a lockdown alert while using the reverse 9-1-1 system to call all the residences from an area including the old Hollar and Greene property, Archie Carroll Road, Roby Greene Road and surrounding, residents asked to lock themselves and their vehicles and stay inside. The information reached the residents, but just a little late for one, who as lawmen from an expanding pool of agencies followed Smith's path, first finding parts of his orange jail jump suit, then the restraints in a creek—they then found a woman's brown 1998 Toyota Rav4 was missing from her property. That alert was issued shortly after 5, and within minutes residents reported the vehicle with its distinctive front tag making its way up back roads heading toward the Tennessee line. With a State Patrol chopper joining the search, the vehicle was finally spotted in southwest Virginia, and after yet another chase with lawmen, James Brandon Smith was recaptured, still in the stolen SUV. Watauga authorities have a number of new counts to pile onto Smith's recent arrest records, Sheriff Len Hagaman saying last night that they hope to extradite him back from Damascus Virginia to Watauga County in the very near future—and probably with a lot of security.