

Driver escapes after high-speed pursuit through shopping center

by Cheryl McDermott

BEND, Ore. — A 28-year old Madras man wanted on outstanding arrest warrants led deputies on a high-speed pursuit on Highway 97 in Bend Saturday afternoon when he sped away during a traffic stop and eventually turned into a shopping center, narrowly missing several pedestrians, shoppers and vehicles as he sped through the parking lot at speeds near 50-mph. Deschutes County Sheriff's Sgt. Gary Cima stopped a 1986 Cadillac Coupe De Ville for a minor traffic violation about 1:40 p.m. at Hunnell Road and Cooley Road, and the driver, Carl Jake Williams III, first gave a false name but was then identified as a man with outstanding arrest warrants for felony parole violations out of Jefferson County.

20-year-old Azrael Rose Mary Wiersch of Prineville was a passenger in the vehicle, Cima said. During the stop, Williams sped off southbound on Highway 97, pursued by Sgt. Cima and other law enforcement officers. Witnesses later told deputies that Williams was driving erratically and ignoring traffic lights. Because of potential risk, deputies terminated the pursuit when Williams turned onto Robal Road and then into the Cascade Village Shopping Center. Cima said as Williams sped away into the shopping center, his vehicle nearly struck numerous pedestrians, moving vehicles and shoppers. Witnesses said the Cadillac was traveling at more than 50-mph in front of Starbucks, Ross Dress for Less and Joe's. The car was found, abandoned by the driver and occupied only by the passenger, between parked vehicles south of JC Penney's, Cima reported.

Wiersch was found with methamphetamine and hashish in her possession, and a more thorough search turned up a ½ ounce of what is believed to be cocaine in a "concealment area" of the vehicle, the sergeant stated.

The passenger was arrested on drug charges and released at the scene, Cima said.

Williams was seen by witnesses running east from the shopping center, crossing Highway 97 and then the railroad tracks. A search by deputies, Bend Police officers, Redmond Police and a Redmond Police K9 unit was unsuccessful. The investigation is continuing, Cima said, inviting anyone with information about the suspect or incident to contact the sheriff's office.

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